

**THE ABABUKUSU TRADITIONAL WIDOWHOOD RITES AND THE  
EFFECTS ON WIDOWS IN THE CONTEXT OF FRIENDS CHURCH  
IN WESTERN KENYA**

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of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of the Masters of Arts in  
Religion of MasindeMuliro University of Science and Technology.**

**May, 2021**

**DECLARATION**

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my precious family: My husband George King Nabibya my two sons Nathan Mwasamia and Raymond Seth Nabibya and my nephew Eric Wafula for their prayers and encouragement.

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## ABSTRACT

Religion, life and death are entwined and the knowledge of one requires the knowledge of the other. Religions have addressed the question of how one should live with awareness of inevitability of death. Consequently, societies have developed systems of belief and practice to help their people cope with the prospect of death and the attendant sorrow and grief. Drawing interest from the complex intertwinement surrounding death and religion, the main problem of the study was to investigate the extent to which the Interphase between the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church cultures with regard to widowhood had caused suffering to the widows. Examining death phenomenon from a gendered perspective, the main objective of the study was to assess the Interphase between Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals and how it subjugated the Ababukusu widow. The study was guided by structural functionalism by Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) and Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903) and how it functioned abnormally from a gender perspective. Structural functionalism theory informed the study that the rites and rituals performed after death of husband enhanced solidarity and stability of the society, yet this was at the expense of the female gender. This study adopted a descriptive and explorative survey designs to describe the experiences of the widow after the death of a husband. Probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques were used that involved purposive and stratified random sampling. The study also used both library and archival materials. The main data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview schedules and observation method. The validity of instruments was established by expert assistance from the school of arts and social sciences (SASS) of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). This study found out that the Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals repositioned widows in society as objects of men's sexual desires and beings to be economically deprived. As the Friends Church watched and even supported tacitly as was the case in some instances, the traditional rites and rituals subjected widows to patriarchal customs, discrimination on inheritance rights, isolation, psychological torture and caused them to suffer abuse in the context of ritual cleansing and suspicion of infidelity and complicity on the demise of the spouse. This study recommends the application of combined force of ubuntu values and Christian church compassion towards widows (Which appear to be non-functional) that provides the best opportunity for embracing Ababukusu Christian widows in particular and African Christian widows in general out of subjugation. The study advises in this regard that the rites and rituals should not be abandoned but instead be infused deliberately with humane values as befits ubuntu and biblical teaching of love and care with regard to widowhood.

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## **LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AYM</b>	African yearly meeting
<b>DYM</b>	Dini Ya Musambwa
<b>EAYM</b>	East African Yearly Meeting
<b>FAM</b>	Friends African meeting
<b>FDA</b>	Food and Drug Administration
<b>SASS</b>	School of arts and social studies
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>MMUST</b>	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

## **GLOSSARY**

<b>BIJENJE</b>	Leg jingles
<b>BIKOLONJO</b>	Potsherds on which food was served for the widow
<b>BUKHUCHAKULI</b>	The clay and special ash the widows smeared themselves with when they were taken to the nearby stream to immerse themselves in water.
<b>KAMATOCHE</b>	Widows sat with their legs stretched under the right hand side eaves of the house
<b>KUKHALA KUMULINDI</b>	A cleansing ritual where a widow was expected to have sex with a stranger after the death of her husband.
<b>KHULIA CHIMBEBA</b>	(Eating rats) Being unfaithful to a marriage partner.
<b>KHUKHALA KIMIKOYE</b>	(Cutting ropes). This is a ritual that was performed one to two years after the death of a husband. A widow wore goat's skin inside out or plants around the neck, arms and ankles, this was cut.
<b>KHUSINGA LIKOKHE</b>	(Washing the ashes). One being cleansed from impurity caused by death.
<b>KHUSWALA KUMUSE</b>	A ritual performed after burial, it is done with an intention of preserving the deceased memory as an ancestor and ensuring the community's social cohesion, survival and continuity.
<b>KHUMALA BILINDWA</b>	(Smearing or mudding the graves) this was a ritual that was performed to welcome the deceased fully into the ancestral world.
<b>LITUNGU</b>	Traditional seven stringed lyre.
<b>LUFU</b>	A hair shaving ritual- Meant to rid of the condemnation caused by the blood and the breath of the deceased.
<b>NAMULEKWA</b>	A widow or widower

<b>SILINDWA</b>	Grave
<b>SILILI</b>	Traditional single stringed lyre
<b>SININI</b>	A ritual held that aims at letting the soul of the dead go away in order to keep it from returning and bothering the living.
<b>SISIENO/SINANINGA /SINANYENJE/SINAMUTINGA</b>	Bad Spirits
<b>NAMWIMA/WETILI</b>	Traditional shrines

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter constitutes of the technical foundation of the study that includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance of study, scope of the study, limitation to the study, assumptions, theoretical framework, operational definition of terms, and location of the study.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Religion has been perceived variously by different scholars. To some like Mawson (2005) religion seem to have its roots in the prevalence of the puzzlement with the physical world throughout time and across cultures that equally explains the persistence of the philosophy of religion and metaphysical thinking. This puzzlement is the one Schopenhauer (2010) once referred to as, ‘the pendulum which keeps the clock of metaphysics in motion.’ From this perspective religion is conceived as those systems of thought that view physicalism (that the physical world is on its own and by itself) as false, and that claim then that there is something outside the physical world that accounts for the world. This position holds that there is something beyond the world that natural sciences describes and that, that something explains why there is a world for us to deliberate on, and why there is an us to do the deliberation. Consequently, the physical world as a whole continues to strike us in our reflective moments as it did then, as a question to which an answer is required and yet the answer is sadly elusive. This perspective to understanding religion is the one often echoed by the social scientists when they view religion as the attempt to answer the more crucial existential questions, such as; ‘is there life after death?’ and ‘how does the universe work and what’s our role in it?’ This approach to religion highlights its functional role as serving specific social ends.

The religious view as a response to the physicalism puzzle has always been more popular. As one ancient writer once summed up his observations about the nature of world cultures: one can find cities without kings; without walls; and without coinage, but there has never been found a city without gods. The religious view, as provided by the physical world, recognizes the truth of this question. This accepts the fact that the physical world is a question that requires an answer. Specifically, the followers of each religion whether African Religion or Christianity claim that their religion provides the answer to this question. It is however at the juncture of what sort of thing the various religions of the world say this answer is that we come to the great divide among the world's religions. Often, Western religions view the answer to the question in terms of a personal agent, while Eastern and African religions tend to view the answer as an impersonal force. Whether a personal agent or an impersonal force this is often the epicenter; the eventual ultimate of religion as a phenomenon.

Scientists and poets have for a long time recognized that life, death and religion as part of the puzzlement of the physical world are so intimately entwined that knowledge of one requires knowledge of the other. Religions have been addressing the question of how to live with the knowledge of inevitable death for a long time. Religions ' response has often been based on the illusion of a life after death. Societies have therefore built belief and practice structures to help their people cope with the prospect of death and grief. Finally, this inevitable recognition of death becomes an important part of the experience of the individual in which hope conflicts with fear and trust with doubt.

The history of death as a phenomenon is definitely long and with mythical overlaps. Kastenbaum (2003) in an attempt at a historical documentation of death in what he calls the 'history of darkness,' brings us closer in time to this phenomenon. As far as death is concerned, he observes that the twenty-first century inherited from the past an

anxiety closet filled with collective memories of disturbing experiences. This history when analyzed critically conceals threats from predators and enemies; Kastenbaum cites cases of child-bearing women and their young children who suddenly turn pale and die and terrible plagues that periodically ravage the populations. In some instances, it would appear that the dead themselves are sources of terror when resentful of the living. The fear surrounding death in many cases implied that though contact with corpses was inevitable, this had to be managed with diligence, lest the departing spirit be offended. This history also indicates that the spirit world often intervened in everyday lives including death moments, and gods, demi-gods and aggrieved or truculent ancestors had to be pacified by gifts, ceremonies, and conformity to their wishes. Animal and human sacrifices are equally common in relation to death, and were intended to protect the lives of the community by preventing catastrophes or assuring good crops. Everyday life is permeated as a result of death by rituals designed to confuse or reward the religious forces that governed life and death. Fairly common were customs such as not speaking ill of the dead and preserving the magical charms of home and man. In this 'history of darkness' Kastenbaum further notes that particular diseases too had left their lingering marks. For example, tuberculosis terrified many generations for a long time as young men and women suffered long periods of suffering before horrific deaths. The industrial era was no exception, as it did much to raise rather than diminish the fears of slowly dying and in great distress. For example, syphilis created its share of horrific images as gross disfiguration and dementia decline afflicted many victims towards the end of their lives.

'The history of darkness' as puts espoused by Kastenbaum, is related here at length because it helps us understand how all of these past encounters and more have bequeathed anxieties with regard to death that still influence attitudes toward death

today. We also created the basic responses that people who die and people who lose loved ones are going through in an attempt to find meaning in the event of an inevitable tragedy called death. All cultures have their own death-related customs and beliefs and each community has its own approach to dealing with the loss. Most of the rituals have their basis in people's traditional and religious systems. This idea is supported by Mbiti (1969) and Opoku (1978) who asserts that the African concept of death and rituals are closely linked to and influenced by traditional religion. In general pain, grief and sorrow typically color the thinking of the one dying as well as those closest to them in many African cultures. Death is surrounded with mystery, is cloaked in darkness, and is surrounded by fear and apprehension (Tjibeba, 1997:19). The reaction of the primitive man to death has been terror. Man in Africa still responds with fear to death in this enlightened age. Death remains unknown. Clearly no one has ever died and come back to tell us what death really is like.

Death is marked by a sequence of social ceremonies and passing rites that sometimes tend to be known as the living dead and continue to influence the living's actions (King, 2013: 223-231). The death of the husband in most African communities impacts negatively on widows. Though death is a mystery to all according to Tjibeba (1997), widows become extremely vulnerable upon their husband's death with the lives of many being turned into a living hell not just by in laws, but also by the society in general (Tjibeba, 1997:126-137). This is not only due to traditional African culture but also due to the interface between Christianity and the later despite Christianity's supposedly message of love. This results into emotional economic and social sufferings on the part of the widows. In many African communities, upon the death of a husband a widow is expected to keenly observe and adhere to all rituals before and

after the burial of the husband which include the shaving of the hair, exoneration from suspicion and slaughtering of animals (Mbiti 1969:153).

A study carried out among the Bapedi tribe in South Africa, revealed the fact that a widow was forbidden from attending family and community functions, visiting neighbours and was to wear black clothes (Baloyi, 2008: 236). A research by Manyedi et al. (2003:69-87) analyzed widowhood perspectives and assumptions about the cycle of mourning marked by practices of the people of Botswana. The results suggested that widowhood is complicated among the people of Botswana by the social beliefs and customs that may be traumatic for widows. Rosenblatt makes similar observation when he asserts the fact that death rituals stretched over a year and in some way estranged widows from the entire society, and that some of the practices that are done are oppressive and humiliating to women (Rosenblatt, 2007: 67-85). A lot of sanctions are placed on the widows by the society that makes it difficult for women to express their new point in widowhood.

African people before Christianity had African Religion, different beliefs, customs and rituals observed when death occurred. Christian missionaries brought Christianity to Africa amid their traditional religion. As Moyo points out, the advent of Christianity made the mistake of thinking that they had to be separated from their native culture in order to become a Christian people (Moyo, 1983 in Haar, 1990: 13). What Desmond Tutu once identified as a form of religious delusion that plagued African Christians is the result of having to reject the indigenous culture before being converted to Christianity. African religion was seen as an evil to be dealt with. Christian missionaries believed that traditional religion and religious practices had to be removed before Christianity was recognized. It is often a more popular position that all these missionary activities have not existed without opposition or difficulties, and

that has given rise to the phenomenon that can be seen in today's religious beliefs as religious syncretism. (Bahemuka, 1982:30). It must be noted as is the tentative position of this study that in some instances however, there were compromises between the African cultures and the Christian Church positions particularly in areas of convergences as may have been the case with patriarchy dominant in Christianity and African worldview and cultures.

Almost all world societies whether Christian or traditional African are male dominated. Such societies are structured such that women are bound by convention to fulfill certain roles and obligations. A mother for example is usually the wife with a duty of rising and looking after their children every minute of every day hence basically primary care givers, as the father is the head of the family. This division of roles in the family that put man at an advantageous position as the head of the family are also at play with reference to funeral rituals and not without ramifications on the general standings of widows in the society. This division of roles that subjects women to limitations has increasingly been called into question with both feminist and masculinist authors decrying such predetermined roles as unjust.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The systemic consideration we merit has yet to be extended to death-related issues. For instance, widowhood is a prime example of misery and injustice in the wake of death in third world nations. Manala (2015) has raised concerns with these widowhood rites and rituals in relations to the resultant interface between traditional African culture and Christian positions. Manala noted that while traditional Africans teach ubuntu values of family, mutual respect, compassion, and so on, they often don't speak about widows ' care. On the other hand, Christian cultures preach unconditional love

in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, especially for the poor, oppressed and helpless, yet there is a significant lack of action with regard to the care of widows. Therefore, there is a deceptive contract in the form of an obvious insensitive, arrogant, racist, impolite and unjust treatment of widows in African societies, given the ubuntu ideals and Christian teaching which emphasize love and caring, particularly for the grieving and therefore vulnerable widows. As a result, Widows in our era tend to be ignored and even marginalized. The missionaries introduced Christianity in Africa on denominational lines in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In western Kenya, Friends church was established among the Ababukusu people. The Ababukusu had their religion and culture that outlined and guided them on the rituals that were to be performed after the death of a husband. It is due to the foregoing that the main problem of this study was to critically examine the interface between the Ababukusu traditional and the Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals with special reference to the suffering to which they subject African widows. To this end the study posited; To what extent had the combined Interface of both the Ababukusu cultural and Friends church widowhood rites and rituals subjugated the widow in Western Kenya?

### **1.3 Objectives**

The major aim of this study was to critically examine the interface between the Ababukusu traditional and the Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals with special reference to the suffering to which they subject African widows. To do so, this study adopted specific objectives as follows:

1. To examine death phenomenon from a gendered perspective with special reference to the Friends Church and Ababukusu cultural point of views.
2. To assess the interface between the Ababukusu widowhood rituals with the Friends' church rites and rituals.

3. To investigate the extent to which the Interphase between Friends church and Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals had caused sufferings to the affected widows.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the gender dimension to death phenomenon as viewed from the perspectives of the Friends Church and Ababukusu cultural point of views.
2. What is the nature of the interface between the Ababukusu and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals?
3. To what extent has the interface between Friends church and Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals caused suffering to the affected widows.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The challenge presented by the neglect and maltreatment of widows has not received enough considerations as contemporary scholarship exhibit a lot of reluctance to with reference to reflecting on the traditional Rites and effects of African widowhood. Many scholars are cited as lamenting about this Lack of research on international and African widowhood rituals and practices despite the fact that widows in all societies make up a large part of the female population. Despite the injustice they present widowhood rites and rituals remain hidden, unchallenged and fuzzy in spite of the pain they inflict on the widows and their violation of many basic principles contained key international human rights conventions. The enjoyment of life is part of living and an entitlement to all; male or female.

The study therefore provides insight into ways of understanding the salient factors hindering gender equality and enjoyment of life irrespective of one's gender as this is core to the integration and unity in the society. This study also brings out the plight of

Ababukusu widow in relation to the widowhood rites and rituals terrorist activities in Kenya since 1990s.

The study further contributes to better understanding of the interface between the African traditional and Christian culture in dishonest pacts that add to Africa's woes. In particular, this study highlights the fact that more work is still required to gain a better understanding of the role of sex in the culture of the twenty-first century and how the changing needs of the post-industrial age influence these roles and the cohesion they impose on society.

### **1.6 Scope and limitation of the study**

This study was carried out among the Ababukusu of Western Kenya. The content scope involved the examination of Friends Church and the Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals. This study was limited to Friends church and Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals in Western Kenya. There are many rituals practiced by Ababukusu people before and after birth, initiation, marriage and death. This study was only concerned with rituals performed by the widow after the death of a husband in this community.

### **1.7 Assumption**

Most of the Ababukusu people were Christians. All the respondents would cooperate by giving correct information. All questionnaires would be returned.

### **1.8 Theoretical framework.**

This study was based on a critical review of the structural functionalism (a combination of contributions of Emile Durkheim 1858 – 1917 and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) as it functions anomalously from a feminist perspective that explains the resultant subjugation of women in society.

Functionalism is a theory-building philosophy that views society as a complex system whose parts function together to foster unity and stability. This theory states that religion and society are inseparable. Durkheim saw religion as a reflection of the concern for the society. He strongly emphasized that all religions are never just a matter of beliefs, but also constituted regular ceremonial and ritual activities in which a group of believers met together. In collective ceremonies, a sense of group solidarity is affirmed at a time when people are forced to adjust to major changes in their lives. Durkheim argued that rituals separated the spiritual from the natural, but enhanced key values in doing so. In Durkheim's opinion, ceremonies and traditions are important to keeping a group's members together. That's why they are used not only in daily worship circumstances, but in different life crises as well. For example, as major social

changes are undergone in birth, marriage and death, rituals and ceremonial activities are observed on such occasions in nearly all societies. Death ceremonies provide a way of accommodating the bereaved to their changed circumstances (Giddens, 2006: 537-539).

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) embraced the philosophy of functionalism by Emile Durkheim, who looked at society as a whole in terms of the roles of its constituent elements, namely norms, practices, rituals and institutions. Spencer described these parts of society as organs working towards the body as a whole's proper functioning. He referred to the metaphor of a human body just as the structural parts of the human body, the skull, the muscles and various internal organs worked individually to help the whole body survive, social structures worked together to sustain society.

Therefore, structural functionalism attempts to explain the nature of social order and the relationship between the different parts (structures) of society by analyzing each individual's functionality to assess how it contributes to the stability of society as a whole. The claim that gender inequality, while supposed to lead to stability, is of great importance to this study is bad for society in general and women in particular because it prevents women from reaching their potential. Because of their biological role in pregnancy and breastfeeding, women are primarily responsible for child care in nearly every culture and society around the world, limiting them to the domestic sphere as the more lucrative public sphere becomes a preserve for men. Likewise, men have historically been responsible for hunting and fighting because of their relatively larger size and strength; a circumstance that has often contributed to gender inequality.

Of course, the study acknowledges that gender inequality is a complex issue with many underlying determinants but adopts structural functionalist perspective as it

misfires in an attempt to maintain social order by providing and ensuring the stability, of such functional prerequisites based on gender category. Although gender roles are beneficial in terms of contributing to stable social relationships according to the functionalist viewpoint, it has been argued that gender roles are patriarchal and should not be maintained. For example, the feminist movement takes the position that functionalism neglects women's exploitation within the family and stresses the role of patriarchy in preserving women's oppression.

Structural functionalism theory as it functions anomalously was relevant to this study because death rituals as culturally assigned social roles among the Ababukusu are supposed to contribute to stable social relations, yet anomalous functioning of the theory sees the death rituals contribute instead to neglecting of the suppression of women within the family as is the argument from the feminist perspective. The gendering of death rituals as a result of social construction from the Interface between Ababukusu traditional and Friends church cultural positions was subjected to scrutiny from feminist perspective to establish its relationship with gender inequality among the Ababukusu people.

## **1.9 Operational definition of terms**

### **1.9.1 Rituals**

It refers to actions that the Ababukusu people undertook or performed at a fixed time in the same way. These actions were based on the rules prescribed by the society.

### **1.9.2 Beliefs**

These are the traditions that the Ababukusu people hold on to be true.

### **1.9.3 Christianity**

This is a religion that is based on the life and teachings of Jesus. Christianity was introduced among the Ababukusu people by Christian missionaries.

### **1.9.4 Indigenous**

The Ababukusu people had prescribed laws that originated from the African society. Their daily actions depended on these rules and regulation set by the African society.

### **1.9.5 Tradition**

These are customs of the Babukusu community that are handed down from generation to generation. Failure to observe the customes of the society led to consequences.

### **1.10 Location of study**

This study will be carried out among the Ababukusu of Western Kenya and particularly those who subscribe to the Friends Church.

### **1.11 Study population**

This study will concentrate on the Ababukusu people who have settled in western Kenya

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1.0. Introduction

In this chapter, written materials related to African and Christian widowhood rites and rituals are reviewed from a general to particular perspective. The chapter also highlights the areas of convergence and the Interphase between the two that is African and Christian widowhood rites and rituals and the motivations behind them. Finally, widowhood rites and rituals are critically analyzed from a gender perspective in the context of the Interface between African culture in general and the Ababukusu traditional culture in particular on the one hand and the Friends Church death rites and rituals on the other.

#### 1.1. Death in the Modern Scientific Context

In the scientific study from a general biological perspective, death is considered dissolution, an occurrence to be endured, a deprivation of consciousness and therefore destruction. Specifically, however, there are many divergent scientific views with regard to death. Today for example, medical personnel will likely talk of brain death in which the human brain stops functioning while the heart is beating (Mugambi 1990, 272). This is despite the medical dictionary defining death as the cessation of all vital function of the body including heartbeat, brain activity, brain stem and breathing (<http://medical-dictionary.the freed>). This confirms the scientific controversy as to when one is actually dead with some arguing that one is dead when his higher brain function ceases while others argue that it is when the whole brain ceases (<http://www.uky.edu/clasThisses>).

Technology too is not without ramifications on the modern scientific understanding of death as a phenomenon as can be seen in the increasingly blurring line between life and death from a medical point of view. At what point does a person really die? To

some it is the moment the heart stops beating, yet to others it is when the brain enters a “vegetative” state. This is further complicated by the fact that today the heart can be forced to keep beating in which case a person continues to grow, develop and even give birth after experiencing ‘brain death. This controversy is perhaps what prompted a committee at Harvard medical school in 1908 to put forth an article stating that there was a second kind of death; Brain dead, even though the heart was still pumping and you were still able to breathe on a ventilator, but the brain stem is down. This theory was made law in 50 states in 1981 in the US. In the same US there are today two kinds of understanding death: real death (cardiopulmonary death) and pretty death (brain death) (<http://io9.gizmudo.Com/5915339>).

However, just like before, death still remains a menace to human beings and presents a form of uncertainty that often finds fulfilling ‘coming to terms’ through transcendental reference. In all their efforts therefore, modern persons are nevertheless merely concerned with postponing death as long as possible and at any cost. In the hospitals, these attempts can be seen in the artificial prolonging of the lives of the dying persons even if only for a few days. In fact, most of the activities that people engage in are geared to either postpone the fateful moment or to distract one’s mind from it, and so forget all about it for a while. This resonates with what Mbiti (1969) meant in his famous observation that death was death. French psychologists, Ignance Lepp, underlined the same position when he said that;

The frantic pursuit of pleasure, sensual as well as aesthetic and intellectual, is for many people unconscious flight from their anxiety about death, but the rationalization, meditation and avoidance or postponement of death remains futile. We are going to die and we are going to die alone, each one individually. Despite his progress in hygiene and medical science, man can only postpone

death. But again, whether one dies at the age of forty or ninety does not alter his mortal condition, it still remains a reality, he is dead (Baros 1972, vii-viii)

### **1.2. Meaning and causes of death from African point of view**

From the African perspective, death can be considered as one of the rites of passage that an individual must go through. It is from this perspective that death is described as an inevitable natural phenomenon without escape. Death continues to ramify human societies from all angles as we see Mugambi (1990) capture from an African Religion angle; a state of spiritual growth, a moment when the individual has to separate himself from earthly group in order to be united with the ancestors (Mugambi; 1990, 272). Van Gennep (1977) summarizes the same sentiment about Africans when he observes that death means a change from being born and to be re-born both for the individual and the group in different ways. (Van; 1977, 189-199).

For the Africans therefore death has been conceived as a transition of life from this to a different supernatural state in a journey to the land of the ancestors. All in all, death still remains a mystery and a strange intrusion in the normal sequence of events in life as the proverbs and the mythologies communicate. Among the Maasai for example, death came to the first man on earth called Leeyio. The creator advised Leeyio with the wives that” when man dies and you dispose of the corpse, you must remember to say man die and come back, man die and remain away.” When a neighbor’s child died, Leeyio was called to dispose the body and he said man die and stay away, so after that day no man survived death (Massek, 1978:9).

Among the Kalenjin, death was brought by the foolishness of a certain hunter. One day he stopped to drink from the pool and noticed a strange image in the water. The image slowly developed into a human form and watched him. He became curious and

quickly drew an arrow and shot it. No sooner had he done that than he was swallowed into the thunderous rain and so caused death. (Ljyungu 1972:119).

Mugambi and Kirimi in their book, *the African religious heritage* has recorded general myths of origin of death among the African communities. They state that God sent two animals. To one he gave a message of life that man should be immortal and live forever. To the other god gave the message of death that man could not live forever but expected to die. For some reason the animal with the message of immortality was overtaken by the other one carrying the message of death and therefore man began to and continued to die. (Mugambi 1976: 93-95).

Among the Bakiga of Uganda the origin of death is through the visit of a man to an old woman during famine. The man since he was hungry asked for food. The woman promised to give him food on condition that he could grant her power to arrest whoever was stealing her fruits. The man complied with her request. This time however it was death that came in the absence of the woman to steal her fruits. She returned and found death stuck on the tree. Death was physically shaken and terror stricken realizing that he could not gain his freedom without her help he promised not to kill the woman if she released him. At this time people were dying and coming back to life. The agreement was sealed and death was released among the people. Whoever dies since then never comes back to life. (Turyanikayo, 1983:70-71).

Other stories say that God gave people a bundle or a vessel with a secret in it and forbade him to open it. Overcome by curiosity or others through mistake, some opened the vessel and the bag, and out came death, (Mbiti, 2010:116). These and many more myth emphasizes the fact that, death came almost by mistake and since then, it has remained among men. The blame is upon people themselves, animals, spirits and curses. When people break taboos or oath and fail to respect elders; they attract curses

which eventually cause death. It is for this reason that it is believed that you can have life and prosperity if ancestors are happy with you but if you anger them, they may cause death. This explains the reason why the body of the deceased is handled with a lot of care among African communities. Mbiti (1975) identifies the major cause of death as witchcraft. When someone dies people often try to find out who performed witchcraft against the dead person. The relatives of the deceased person revenge (Mbiti, 1975). Even though all these myths speak about how death comes about, there are no myths in Africa about how death one day might be removed from the world. Death spoilt the original paradise of man according to African beliefs and this separated God from men and brought about many sorrows and agonies upon men (Mbiti, 2010:117).

It is clear from the foregoing that Proverbs and Mythologies as communication media also referred to as pre-philosophical in some quotas clearly constitute religious language that on the one hand, blames humans for the responsibility for the advent of death while also explaining death as a natural phenomenon. From these proverbs and the Myths among African communities' contradictions are also apparent and underlie the mysteries that surround death, yet death does not necessary annihilate life. To revert to our earlier assertion, death is final and inevitable and in many societies, the most disrupting phenomenon of all rites of passage in human life. In summarizing the place of death in the African worldview Mbiti (1969) concludes that the phenomenon stands between the world of human being and the world of between the visible and the invisible (Mbiti; 1969:149).

### **2.3 Death and death Rituals in Africa**

African worldview has been viewed on religious basis. As Gyekye noted “the reflective impulse is manifested in African religious thought, it is generally accepted

that Africans are religious people in the sense that they possess elaborate systems of religious beliefs and practices that deal with such fundamental questions as the meaning of life, the origin of things, death and related questions. As was clear in the introductory background, religion as a phenomenon is a mechanism used to seek answers to issues such as the meaning of life, the origin of all things, death and related questions. In religion we seek answers to questions of ultimate existence” ( Mhaka, 2014: 372-373).

According to Obasi (2002), an interpretation of the African world view includes the study of a specific ethical system, the conduct of thought in the nature of the universe, and so on, based on the African people's culture and experiences (Obasi, 2002:24). The African world view is not limited to a single African ethno cultural group, but represents a fundamental historical continuity, historical knowledge, and cultural cohesion that offers an interpretation of African issues and what it means to be African (Grills, 2002:12). This means that there are different African issues, there is a common African philosophical structure, and there are cultural practices that vary from other concepts in supporting the African reality.

The African world view refers to how Africans interpret their environment, which in turn affects their ways of knowing and doing things, including their special and unusual reaction to death. African world view envisages the process of human life in three stages of selfhood starting at birth, or perhaps earlier in a reincarnating ancestral spirit. Secondly, through death, a cultural or experiential human community and, thirdly, an ancestral selfhood after biological death (Baloyi, 2008:235). So an African life begins long before birth in this scheme and continues long after death. It is worth noting that this selfhood does not exist as autonomous sovereign and in isolation from the point of view of the indigenous African community. We are interdependent,

interrelated and coexist collaboratively and collectively, hence the collective or interdependent self-concept (Mkhize, 2004). The self is described and understood in relation to others and gets sense together with other universal life forces with whom they form equilibrium from their relationship.

Experiences of life and developmental stages, including death, are not considered distinct from each other, given their encompassing scope. As people die, they ascend into the spirit world to be in company with ancestors, protect and direct those in the physical realm, and are therefore highly respected, venerated, and very important to the living community (Kings, 2013).

Death may be postponed by the spirit world, according to the people of Shona. Karanga claims that sorcery can prolong the death of an ill person. Men are said to eat a tortoise's heart or use a python's fat to reinforce themselves. The people who use this sorcery die a painful and slow death. A tortoise's heart is said to take a long time to stop breathing after the creature is killed. Similarly, a person who used the creature's magic will continue to beat his heart when the rest of the body is disabled (Mhaka, 2014: 375).

Such traditions in Africa offer insights into why there is still a need to conduct specific rituals in times of need with communities to preserve the bonds of communion between the living and their ancestors and the world balance (Magesa, 1997:79).

As a consequence, death in African cultures is marked by a series of cultural ceremonies and passing rites that sometimes go on for the duration of the dying process as long as the living dead are still remembered and continue to influence the actions of the living. Therefore, in a desecrated sense, the mourning period and grieving cycle cannot be connected or limited to a certain period of time. Baloyi (2008, 236) notes

that this is why Africans take time off work when their loved ones are dead to conduct rituals that bind them with the deceased externally. Death is the final stage of physical life on earth. Mbiti in his book *introduction to African religion* says that at death, one ceased to live physically on earth but proceeded to live in the spirit world. He acknowledges the fact that after joining the spirit world, the dead had the task to watch over the living to ensure that all was kept in order, (Mbiti, 1969:149-152).

As the most common and enigmatic events of human life, death stands between the human world and the spirit world and the ontological separation of someone involving ceremonies designed to merge the two realms. It should be remembered that this is a term which demonstrates that Africans believe in the continuity of life after death, which is why Africans strive to maintain their relationship with their ancestors. Therefore, as Mbiti (1990) puts it, the being of an African does not exclude spiritual connection with the world of the living dead, the divine involvement in the affairs of the living and becoming a participant in the company of spirits is considered to be in the state of personal immortality; confirming death as not total annihilation.

Unlike Mbiti, Mugambi also stresses that death is not the end of the existence of people. The deceased will become ancestors that will continue to influence living relatives' lives (Mugambi, 1989:102). Therefore, there is a constant and unbreakable link between the deceased and the living. The deceased is believed to reside in the ontology of the invisible beings in the changing state of existence in the animated universe for the typical African people (Baloyi, 2008: 232). Ancestors protect and provide guidance to the material realm and therefore are highly respected, and venerated as very important to the community of the living. The ancestors in the African context are active forces that play an important role in the communal life. They

are not cut off from the living as is the dominant position in the west. Ancestors in the African understanding are active forces that reveal themselves in dreams or appear to their living relatives to guide or correct them with reference to establishing a balanced cosmos (Opuku, 1978:137).

Mbiti supports the claim that being human is being to the society as a whole and to do so means engaging in the community's advantages, ceremonies, rituals and festivals, mostly involving the living, God and ancestors (Mbiti, 1980:24). This structure effectively translates into a community life that starts with the family where there is strong attachment and contact between extended family members. This applies to the village, the tier of the family, and the great society.

On community life, as mentioned in the above discussion, Mugambi reiterates that an individual's death is therefore not only a rite of passage but also a cause of concern for the family in which the deceased has ever lived. As a result, an individual's sendoff includes grieving the family as a whole (Mugambi, 1989: 99-100). The saying that 'I am because we are' applied not only when people engage in the beauty and rewards of life, but when people face challenges in their lives, including death, it remained true. However, it is worth noting that some Africans may not embrace community life as expected. They may not show concern, support nor participate in community matters. There are some Africans who stay outside Africa and so are influenced by foreign cultures. This explains why some of them detach from community life and live individualistic lives like those who were converted to Christianity.

When Christian missionaries came to Africa, they denounced African belief systems as outright evil. The African culture was not only uncivilized but also harmful to the development of the African. Everything the Africans believed in had to make room for

the new Christian way of thinking (Bahemuka, 1982:30). Bahemka avoids discussing aspects in the African culture that were good. It may not be right to dismiss all the African culture to be evil. African traditional religion was described by missionaries as pagan, savage, primitive, animist, heathen among other derogative terminologies. But let it be noticed that irrespective of that view, African traditional religion is still alive and doing well, as it continues to supply a world view to a big number of Africans (Nyaundi, 2003:118).

Death is a painful experience but it seems to be necessary in a world that is a continuous state of becoming a creative evolution for birth. To abolish death would thus mean abolishing birth, (Mugambi, 1990:271).Gehman supports the view of Mugambi on the necessity of death but only disagrees by looking at death as a door through which the living pass, in order to take up the inevitable role on the living dead status, while Mugambi is looking at death as a condition of evolution of life. Van Genep in his book, the rite of passage summed up what most Africans think about death and life as a whole. He says that the implication of death is thus to act and cease, to wait and rest and then to begin again, in a different way.” (Van, 1977:189).

From the above chapter rituals in Africa it is clear that they are generally performed at every stage of life and that the rites of passage can be subdivided into rites of separation, rites of change and rites of integration. Nevertheless, it is difficult to neatly distinguish the different types of rites from each other. Sometimes they occur simultaneously in the stage of life such as death of one man (Mhaka, 2014:374).

In Yoruba for example, immediately a person dies the first ritual is to slain a fowl (Adelewo, 1985:167). The ritual is referred to as fare fowl since it is meant to make easy the ride for the deceased. In Yoruba traditional system, when a corpse is laid in state, a yam meal is equally prepared and a portion is placed near the corpse. The king,

leper, one with hunchback, pregnant mother, one who hanged himself are all given special rites among the Yoruba people.

There are also Yoruba funeral rituals when the body is lowered to the grave when it is approached by the relatives, each depending on the family status and each holding an animal victim, usually a goat. Through the official minister, they give their gifts asking the deceased to accept it and they also request the deceased not to go to sleep beyond the universe, but to open his eyes wide and always look after his / her children (Adelewo, 1985: 167). The argument here has to do with the Yoruba's conviction that death is not life's end. It is only a medium through which the present earthly life is transformed into another.

Yoruba have another ritual called bringing the deceased into the house by which they believed that the surviving children and relatives will be able to have close connections with the deceased. The ritual usually took place in the night when all lights had been put off. In this connection, a shrine is made in one corner or at the bottom of the central wall of the house. This is a specific meeting place between the deceased and the living relations.

### **2.3.1. Mourning rituals**

It is customary among the Manyika people that if the deceased was a male who was head of the family, the ceremonial beating of the drums told relatives and friends of the death. A horn has been sounded in some places or the message has been transmitted through word of mouth. The first shrill of weeping women often sends a signal that the village has been stalked by death. The Shona thought it was a sacred duty to go and share loving empathy and condolences with the deceased's living relatives and friends upon hearing of the tragedy. Failure to show sorrow and empathy created one belief that the deceased was a witch who was cursed (Mbiti, 1969).

### **2.3.2 Washing the body Ritual**

Muchamwa writes that no one would want to attend a social gathering or accept visitors in an ordinary life unless one looks clean and intelligent. Likewise, the Shona claims that the dead would not want to be surrounded by people or appear in public unless they are smart and dressed in a decent manner. It is again the assumption among the Shona that if he / she is not washed and dressed properly, the deceased would not be recognized by ancestors (Muchamwa, 2002:32-33) Additionally, as observed by H. Aschwanden among the Karanga people, this is washing of the body ritual whereby the Shona would want to wash off symbolically anything unpleasant of this world still clinging to the deceased. A new life without sins has to begin for the deceased as if he is born (Aschwanden, 1987:229-230).

### **2.3.3. Burial**

After some speeches at the grave site, arrangements are made among the Shona people of Southern Africa to lower the corpse into the final home; the cemetery. Reeds are then laid as beddings for the corpse on the grave ground. The body is lowered to the cemetery. Close relatives throw in the grave a pinch of dirt as a way to cast away bad and misery and say goodbye. Able body people fill the grave with soil and when that is over the grave is carefully swept with a branch of special tree so that the footprints suggesting breach of the grave by witches at night will be clearly visible on the next morning's inspection. All those who took part in the funeral ritually cleanse themselves with medicated water. Such ritual action emanates from the Shona perception that death defiles, and therefore for this everything that came in contact with the corpse should be cleansed. The homestead is also cleansed. Victims of murder or suicide were not mourned but were buried silently by elders at night in the absence of their family members and relatives. The corpse of a suicide victim who hanged himself or herself was not only subjected to contempt or ridicule, but was not named after at all hence

almost denied immortality. Such a corpse was caned by passersby before being untied from the tree where the body hanged. The tree upon which the victim had hanged himself and the rope that was used by the deceased were buried at night without any elaborate ceremony. After burial the diviner (also read as a special person in African cosmic view) cleansed the homestead.

#### **2.3.4. Rite of purification**

This is done two weeks after burial. Main purpose of this ritual is to cool the spirit since it may be harboring evil intentions. In the words of Aschwanden, “Normal Human emotions like love, hatred and envy complicate matters because the dead man retains them. To begin with the deceased has been cast out by death which makes him homeless and causes him suffering. This may cause a feeling of revenge in his heart” (Aschwanden 1987:272). This ritual is also intended to purify the participants from the defilement caused by the deceased corpse hence equally preserving the participants’ well-being.

#### **2.3.5. Rite of a person who dies away from home**

If a person dies and is not buried at home for one purpose or another, the Shona sent two elderly people to go and take the deceased's spirit. This is achieved because the corpse was assumed to be close to his house where the umbilical was buried. We present them when touching the grave as we enter where the relative was buried and remind the deceased spirit that they had come to take him / her back. A small amount of soil is removed from the tomb and taken home. Relatives are gathered, the soil is being placed on the ground with people crying as if it were a funeral. Afterwards the soil is taken for burial (Mbiti 1969: 152-155).

It is relevant at this juncture on rituals in general and death rituals among African communities, that these rituals are determined by gender as well, with little elaboration

on the consequences of this on the women as a person, and yet with the death of their husbands, widows are subjected to many rituals of which some are dehumanizing as we shall see later in this study..

#### **2.4 Death and Dying among the Abaluhya of Western Kenya**

The Abaluhya community comprises seventeen sub –ethnic groups in western Kenya that include the Ababukusu, Abatiriki, Abarakoli, Abatachoni, Abanyala, Abanyole, Abakhayo, Abamaraki, Abasamia, Ababesukha, Ababetakho, Abakisa, Abachocho, Abakabalasi, Abawanga, Abamarama and Abarechea (Makila, 1978) The Ababukusu are the largest ethnic unit of the Abaluhya community comprising 17% of the Abaluhya population (Simiyu, 1997).

Even though most of the modern day Abaluhya are Christians, the traditional name for God was Nyasaye or Nyasae. The word Nyasae when translated into English roughly corresponds with *Nya* (of) and *Asae/ Asaye/ Sae/ Saye* (God). Some Abaluhya groups like the Ababukusu traditionally worshiped an ancient god of the same name or *Were Khakaba*. When Christianity was introduced among the Abaluhya in the early 1900s by Christian missionaries from Europe and America, the Abaluhya easily equated the name of their traditional Nyasae with God, and appropriated that name to the God of Christianity. The first Abaluhya converts to Christianity approximated words, names, and perceptions of what Christian missionaries told them about the Christian God, to other aspects of their indigenous religious traditions. They then applied these to their interpretations of Christ and God hence confirming the assertion that Christianization of the Abaluhya started with the ‘Abaluhyanization’ of Christianity.

Mbiti writing about death among these people has pointed out the paradox that death brings among the Abaluhya; the dying person is being cut off from human being and yet there must be continuity ties between the living and the departed. As we have

already observed, relatives and neighbors come to bid farewell to the dying man and to mourn his departure, however there is continuity through children and through the rituals which unite the two worlds. The Abaluhya also generally subscribe to the position that death causes ritual impurity just as it disrupts normal life, but this is temporary since the impurity can be cleansed and normal life resumed thereafter. The grave is always a symbol of separation between the living and the dead, but turning it into a shrine for the living dead, makes it a meeting point between the two worlds. In the death rituals among the Abaluhya we see how the co-operate groups are involved in the death of the individual, and the whole community including cattle join in sending off the member who leaves for the next world (Mbiti; 1969, 152-155).

Apart from witchcraft and curses already mentioned, the Luhya also believed that human death is caused by natural disasters, accidents, diseases, war and mystical forces like evil magic. As a tragedy, death interrupted the physical, spiritual, social and economic equilibrium (the cosmic equilibrium) of the community and individuals in many aspects. The death of an individual therefore brought almost everything to a halt especially within the extended family of the deceased. The community too became more concerned and responsible for fulfilling traditional ritual customs associated with death.

Among the Abaluhya, victims of murder were not mourned but were buried silently by elders at night in the absence of their family members and relatives. Individuals who committed suicide were neither mourned nor sympathized with. The corpse of the suicide victim who hanged himself or herself was not only subjected to contempt or ridicule, but was not named after at all. It was carried by passersby before being untied from the tree. The tree upon which the victim had hanged himself and the rope

that was used by the deceased were buried at night without any elaborate ceremony. After burial the diviner equally cleansed the homestead.

It is important to mention the fact that there are other causes of death that are claiming thousands of people in Africa and the world as a whole such as poor sanitary conditions and poor diet. Yet these are problematically captured as explanations of causes of death in the African context in such a way that they must ultimately fit into the African scheme of cosmic balance.

### **2.5. The Ababukusu People of Western Kenya**

The Ababukusu are found in Bungoma County of Western Kenya. The County borders Uganda to the North West, Trans Nzoia County to the North, Kakamega County to the East and South East, and Busia County to the West and south West. Bungoma county is divided into nine sub Counties namely Mt. Elgon, Bungoma West, Kabuchai Bumula, Webuye East, Webuye West, Kimilili Tongaren and Kanduyi. Nationally, Bungoma county is the third largest in Kenya after Kakamega and Nairobi counties with a population of 1,630,934 (Kenya population and Housing Report, 2009). The Ababukusu form the bulk of the population of Bungoma County.

Bungoma County covers 2,907 square kilometres of which 1,938 square kilometres is considered arable land. It is generally wooded grassland, well drained by rivers and streams such as Nzoia, Misikhu, Miendo, Kituni, Chwele, Kuywa, Sosio, Kimilili, Malakisi, Sio, Kibisi, Toloso, Khalaba, Mabanga, Kamukuywa, Kasosi, Sichei, Muyayi and Sirare. All of them except Muyayi, Mabanga, Kasosi, Sio, Khalaba, Kituni and Sirare have their sources in Mt. Elgon in the western border between Kenya and Uganda. The area forms a vast plain that gradually slopes away towards the West

and slightly towards the north until it rises again to the foot of Mt. Elgon. (Simiyu,1997).More resistant incelbergs and ranges stand above the general level forming the Chebukaka, Kibabii, Luucho, Sang’alo, Mwibale, Kabuchai and several other small hills. The soil in this region consists of dark red clays with a deep humic top soil derived from volcanic and basement complex rocks. The rest of Bungoma County has dark brown sandy soils, where virtually any crop can be grown (Simiyu, 1997).

Traditionally, the Ababukusu believe they came from Egypt and their counterpart Adam and Eve was Mwambu and Sela. The Ababukusu have a stubborn nature that has been manifested in their political and religious affiliations. The Ababukusu people believe that the first man *Mwambu* (The discoverer) was made from mud by *Wele Khakaba*(God) at a place called *Mumbo* (which translates to ‘West’).

They resisted colonial rule ruthlessly as can be seen in the case Ababukusu resistance at Chetambe hills near Webuye against the colonies intruding their land. They are strong believers in the spiritual self as could be seen in the emergence of the ‘Dini ya Musambwa’ The Ababukusu are believers in cultural traditions. They religiously followed the advice of their elders strongly influenced by the Diviner Priests who formed an integral part of their mentoring system. The Ababukusu hold fast on cultural practice. Among the most recognized among them are warriors and diviners.

In the book, *An outline of Ababukusu of western Kenya*, by F. E. Makila published in 1978 by Kenya Literature Bureau in Nairobi written in English, Fred Makila tells the story of the Ababukusu people. Makila is an authoritative voice from Bungoma on matters of oral history and oral literature. He explains how Ababukusu in their culture play a traditional seven-stringed lyre called *litungu* and a single stringed lyre called

*silili*. Elijah Masinde who formalized the traditional faith in the 'Dini ya Msambwa' was an Ababukusu Elder and stands out as a firm supporter of the culture and faith of the Ababukusu and hence Abaluhya and African peoples. In 'Dini Ya Msambwa,' - a movement that emphasized mainly the African mystical powers, Elijah Masinde did not just resist colonialism but also the attempt to exterminate the Abaluhya people's way of life.

In Ababukusu marriage, boys got married at about the age of 18-20, while girls got married at about the age of 16. These practices took place after male circumcision was done which was the act of proving men's maturity thus putting them in the capacity to marry and own property. There were two types of first-time marriages; arranged marriages and enforced eloping. If a young man came from a well-to-do family, he asked his sisters or parents to find a girl for him to marry. The ability of a potential wife to cook well bear children and work in the fields were the main attractions in a girl and part of the major societal considerations. Of course the Ababukusu were a patriarchal society. An emissary was sent to her parents once a girl was found to ask for her side. In the whole matter, the girl had no choice at all; bride price would be negotiated and then she would be sent off to live with her new husband once it was paid. This form of marriage is still common today in traditional Ababukusu households.

## **2.6. The Ababukusu Funeral in General**

Among the Ababukusu death is believed to bring about mystical danger to the consanguine of the deceased and rituals related to death to encounter the danger. All relatives are usually informed by word of mouth or by some ritual act when death message is put across. Often it is believed that relatives of the deceased, who do not

receive the bad news of death, always encounter omens which will show that something is wrong in the family (Mhaka, 2014:377).

The Ababukusu people have taboos related to death and which are observed keenly. Such include prohibitions to sit while holding one's cheek as this symbolized mourning and is likely to cause his death. It is forbidden to carry two stones or logs to be used for burial as well as this are believed to cause more deaths in the family. To the Ababukusu people, death exists and is feared. The body of the deceased is usually carried out of the hut surrounded in rituals aimed at preventing death from striking again.

It is not acceptable among the Ababukusu to let a person die with eyes and mouth open like an animal as the deceased spirit may become angry and restless and return to trouble his living relationships. Spitting even if the deceased's body stinks and gives a bad smell is also a taboo. Spitting is seen as a form of disdain because of the dead bad smell, disgust for the deceased, and this behavior is assumed to invoke the wrath of the deceased spirit. It is similarly illegal to refuse to eat the food prepared at the funeral, regardless of how badly cooked it is assumed that this will make the deceased's spirit dissatisfied and restless. The Ababukusu think the deceased's spirit is typically restless, furious, and dangerous. They try to cool the dead spirit as much as possible by means of rituals.

This is similar to Bourdillon's (1976) observation that, at death, a new spirit with suitable superior forces joins the mental realm of the family and that no one knows how the spirit might respond to the new environment or what secret the deceased might have harbored before his death, which explains the need to keep the spirit tamed and prevent him from returning to disturb the living. The Ababukusu people thus assume

that through ceremonies, an angry spirit could be calmed to prevent the dead from attacking and hurting the living.

Ababukusu people believe in life after death. The taboos and ritual performed show that they believe that the soul of the deceased embarks on a journey soon after death. Preparation of the body before and the items put on the grave confirm their belief in life after death (Banana, 1991:27). The belief in life after death is also seen in terms used when a person dies in this community. They include he's left us, he's gone, he's gone before us, he's resting, and so many more. People believe that the development of the spirit depends on the maturity and social status of the living people. This may explain why the Ababukusu don't perform rituals for kids and unmarried people as these people's spirit can never be fully mature. On the other hand, he is thought to grow closer to the spirits among the Ababukusu as a person grows older. Therefore, it is claimed that old people are very powerful with spiritual powers and are viewed with great fear.

According to Khaemba (2009), as soon as a man dies among the Ababukusu, the wife bursts out with wailing and is joined by the sons, daughters and other men and women. The wailing in this community is gendered with men crying, “*ye, ye, ye, ye*” and women “*woi, woi, woi.*” Women also cry with hands on the back of the head, while men beat grasses and bushes with sticks and clubs. This wailing and screaming expresses sorrow and are used to alert others that one has died. The body of the dead is laid outside the house on an animal skin and covered with it or with banana leaves for two days before burial. Often, the body is washed with water and treated with herbal medicine to preserve and make the body clean; hence being acceptable into the Spirit world (Mbiti, 1969). Ababukusu elder is buried in an animal skin. Throughout the funeral period, mourners eat and drink local beer. They sing musical instruments, funeral dirges and

dance. Animals are killed to provide food for the visitors, as well helping to avoid further misfortune as blood is believed to have this effect.

Night vigil is kept over the dead, particularly in order to look out for the witch or sorcerer with ulterior motives against the deceased spirit. Among the Ababukusu the family of the deceased did not allow anybody outside the family to buy new clothes for the deceased explaining that doing so could prompt the deceased spirit to haunt the living family claiming he was buried naked (Khaemba, 2009).

Mourners are eating and drinking local beer throughout the funeral time. Many playing musical instruments, many singing funeral dirges and dancing. This is done to appease the dead person's spirit in part and to console the bereaved family in part. The slaughtered beast's hide is often used to protect the body or as a pillow for the dead on top of the coffin. If the dead man was polygamous, the first wife wears ceremonial attire previously used by the husband and dances ceremoniously around her dead husband. This shows that she was faithful to her husband. Of course has various interpretations including the fact that women in this society are held with a degree of sexual suspicion unlike their male counterparts.

A widow usually goes to her maternal home before the day of the funeral to tell about the death of the father. She comes back with her mother, if still alive, or any of her family's other elderly members. On the night before the burial, clan elders decide where the tomb is to be dug and young and strong clans dig the tomb in front of the house of the dead man, the house of the first daughter. No woman or male who is uncircumcised may dig the grave. A dad is also unable to dig a grave for his wife's child or son. The man is circumcised before being buried in this final night, if he has never been circumcised. Burial take place in a specific place in the ancestral land, so that the spirit of the dead continuous being close to the family. Khaemba (2009) notes

that this resulted to the creation of a family or clan burial shrine, which was well manned. But, if a person died of unnatural causes such as lightning or suicide, people are afraid to dig the grave for him as this would infect them with impurities and a goat that they kill must be paid to the grave diggers and the impurities and bad omen must be washed with their blood. The burial site also depended on one's status. For example, a woman, unmarried son or daughter or a married man without children or with only up to two children the grave is dug on the left hand side behind the house. For a rainmaker it's in the center of the house, one who dies out of an epidemic, the grave is dug at the riverside or in the bush so that the body does not 'defile' the homestead. If one dies from suicide, he is buried in the back of the compound and the grave properly leveled. A deformed person and a witch are buried without ceremony (Mbiti, 1969).

In the Ababukusu culture, burial for a distinguished man or elder takes place towards sunset and is buried facing the west, but in the early afternoon for a woman or ordinary man (Khaemba, 2009). Bodies are buried facing the west, because it's believed that we are all heading to the west, and just as the sun rises and sets in the west, so our destiny is in the west, locally called "*mumbo*". There are, however, two particular clans among the Ababukusu, *Balunda* and *Batura Bakhibi*, who use special persons with the ability to speak with the spirits to persuade the dead to raise his or her head and assume a sitting position. The body is then placed in a modified coffin in the same position, facing the homestead for his or her spirit to continue protecting those in the homestead against any form of danger.

Khaemba (2009) states that one day after the funeral, a "cattle drive" ceremony is conducted in which cattle are collected and covered with grass, people paint their faces with white clay and wear cow skin or leopard skin war dresses and carry axes, clubs, shields and sticks. This ceremony also affords the cattle a chance to mourn their dead

owner and to celebrate his memory as a cattle owner. Three days after burial, a hair shaving ritual known as '*lufu*' is conducted during which the deceased's family members are shaved clean, especially those who were in close contact at the deceased's death bed or during burial. This is to rid them of the ritual contamination caused by the blood and the breath of the deceased. Hair shaving often symbolized death, and the continuity of life was again suggested by its development. Shaving starts with the mother, accompanied by sons and daughters and others. Then a fowl or goat is killed and those involved in the ceremony participate in eating the meat and then people will leave their homes (Barasa, 2011).

If the deceased was an elder, "*lufu*" is preceded by another ritual known as "*khuswala kumuse*," with the intention of preserving the deceased's memory as an ancestor and ensuring the community's social cohesion, survival and continuity. *Kumuse* is only for people who took part in the procreation process and left behind children to continue the life of the family and group as warriors, members or wives in various capacities. Excluded from this ritual are bachelors, children and childless women as well as wayward individuals such as those known for witchcraft and sorcery, thieves, murderers or those murdered, struck by lightning or commit suicide (Barasa:2011).

On this final day, the family and close relatives share the clothes of the deceased man and this symbolizes that he is not completely gone, but still with us, due to presence of his items with the family members. Forty days after death, a traditional memorial service (*sisinini*) is held aimed at letting the soul go away in order to keep it from returning and bothering the living.

On this occasion also the widow was inherited by an elder brother to the deceased so as to bring up children for his late brother. This practice was meant ensure continuity, care for the children and widow and protection of ancestral land and family property.

The practice also ensures the permanence of marriage in the traditional Ababukusu community to the extent that even death cannot do apart marriage. According to Barasa (2011) the Ababukusu commemorate the dead or the “departed ones” through such ceremonies as “*khumala Bilindwa*” and “*khukhala kimikoye*”. All these are held to honor the dead. They are meant to help the living reorganize links with the dead. The ceremonies often involve cutting the thin skins given to the widow (s) and the deceased’s daughters during the burial ceremony and worn around their necks, heads and stomach. Long hair kept by the widow after the burial of the husband is also shaved. The ceremony is accompanied by beer taking, grazing animals (to trace the late’s roots), singing and praising the deceased. The deceased’s land is apportioned amongst the sons, and his house is demolished. It is to be noted that this apportioning of land not only effectively fixes widows as landless members of the society, but also silences their claims to entitlement to the same.

## **2.7 Church History in Africa**

Christianity is a dynamic, spiritual and social movement that has diverse different types of Christology’s that are predominant to specific persons, periods and communities confirming its relativism. In Africa, the history the Christian phenomenon has often been presented in isolation from the history of the colonization of Africa by Europe although; the two processes have been inextricably woven together. Furthermore, church history in Africa has tended to be presented from the perspective of those who invaded Africa (Whatever the motives may have been), rather than from that of the Africans who responded negatively through rejection, positively through conversion or differently through adaptation to the new religion and culture.

Christianity in Africa was introduced on denominational lines. Missionaries did not distinguish in their work of evangelization between the essence of the gospel and

cultural adaptations which had produced various western denominations from which the missionaries were sent. Therefore, what the missionaries presented as new Christian life were western, denominational interpretation and expressions of the gospel as if it were the whole truth about Christianity. Therefore, African converts were expected to adopt the new 'Christian way' of life without necessarily being taught that the new 'way' was a product of a particular denominational interpretation and expression developed in the context of a particular western cultural backgrounds. This practice meant that the introduction of Christianity to East Africa as a new way of life produced confrontations between it and African cultural and religious heritage. African converts faced with this situation accepted Christianity but made their own synthesis between the newly introduced way of life and the tradition African one (Mugambi, 1990: 42).

The church came with new customs which included sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion with all their symbolism, were a new cultural and religious experience to East Africa. Those new customs were adopted by African converts without question but at the same time, they did not abolish entirely the corresponding customs in the traditional communities. In the church, the official policy was that, traditional rituals should be abolished. African converts were not expected to participate in such rituals as sacrificing for rain, worshipping God traditionally honoring ancestors venerating and planting to evade such catastrophes like epidemic, death, earthquakes and floods (Mugambi, 1990:43).

Christian converts could not publicly participate in communal rituals for fear of being excommunicated. They did not detach themselves from some of the traditional values. Therefore the establishment of the church as a new household of faith (Galatians, 6:10) or household of God ( Ephesians 2:9, 1Timothy 3:15, 1Peter 4:7), Did not abolish

traditional household and ethnic community through the social change that resulted from the coming of Christianity and other factors that weakened these traditional social institutions. Thus many traditional African ideas continued to be held by African Christians, superimposed over which was the newly introduced teaching (Mugambi, 1990: 43). This was especially so with regard to religious beliefs. Although African converts apparently abandoned traditional public rituals, they continued to hold some of the traditional beliefs underlying those rituals while at the same time absorbing new beliefs from the Christian faith.

According to cultural interpretation and desires regardless of the official doctrine of the church in which they had been converted, African converts mixed their traditional beliefs with the new ones in their own way. Therefore two processes went on simultaneously, the process of acculturation and the process of conversion. The degree, to which the African absorbed western culture and the various brands of denominational Christianity, depended on the impact which the civilizers had upon various African ethnic communities. Thus in some areas, Christianity and western culture were to a large extent rejected, while in others many people accepted Christianity and became relatively acculturated into the western way of life (Mugambi, 1990:44).

Nehemiah M. Nyaundi (2003) has described the relationship between the Luhya traditional religion and Christianity as being ambivalent. They are openly hostile to each other, yet not openly warm to each other. When missionaries came to Africa, they saw the place as dark and allegedly lacked Christian light. That is why the Presbyterian missionaries described themselves as the church of the torch". Meaning the church which pushed the torch to light up the darkness which Africa was perceived to be lacking (Nyaundi, 2003:304)

Missionaries wanted African communities to undergo assimilation not only spiritually, but also socially, politically and economically. They supported the establishment of colonial rule, educational, medical and economic institutions to serve as agents of change. Missionaries extended material and non-material rewards to the Africans who conformed to their demands for example career positions in the civilization service and military was given to educated persons.

Mbiti (1986) states that, African Christians live on borrowed theology or an inherited Christianity. Africa should evolve a form of Christianity which has roots in her own soil. However, he does not maintain the method that Africans Christians should use to evolve their own theology (Mbiti, 1986:115).

The missionary views that African culture is evil, Africa is a dark continent and that Africans are both an inferior race and a Whiteman's burden tended to be unscriptural, unspiritual and degrading because they had no evidence at all. This was against the scriptural teaching that God made humans in his own image and that after creating man, God looked at everything he made and finally declared that it was very good (Gen 25-31).

Some Christians look down upon the Luhya indigenous and religious practices. Ironically, they secretly revert to their practices when they encounter bewildering situations. It is therefore not easy for one to be true Christian without using his/her indigenous culture. Christianity and Luhya culture should supplement each other in offering solutions to the problems of believers.

This study chooses as its preference the presentation of this history from the perspective of Africans who were on the receiving end, without necessarily denying the significance of the missionary enterprise since, it was indeed through the same

enterprise that Christianity reached East Africa. However, it is important to appreciate that those who appropriated the gospel to their own historical situation deserve much more attention, for it is through them that the present generation celebrate Christianity. As we begin the story of this history we must concede that it is ironical that for over a thousand years, the contact between the European and Africans on the East African coast failed to establish any lasting Christian churches, although often the invaders from Europe claimed to be Christians. This was because they were mainly interested in trading and establishing colonial rule (Mugambi, 1990: 21-22).

Later it took the Christian missionaries to spread Christianity as they established churches under different societies. Even then, it was not anticipated that a missionary society could threaten the economic and political interests of the colonial power governing the territory in which the society operated. Conversely, it was in most missionaries' interest not to antagonize the colonial administrators by pretending to take sides with the colonial subjects who were their prospective converts. On the other side, the missionary mentality was regarded by many African converts as hypocrisy, much to the detriment of modern missionary enterprise. Even so, some Africans welcomed Christianity and some opposed it. Of those who embraced Christian faith, many unquestionably and objectively followed the missionary's teaching. It meant they dismissed, refused, and tried to give up their cultural heritage that they were told to be ashamed of. As a basis for conversion to Christianity, they followed the cultural norms of the missionary masters (Mugambi, 1990: 33).

Other African Christians challenged the insistence of the missionaries that conversion to Christianity and adoption of western culture were inseparable. Thus, they adopted the Christian faith but rejected western dominance. Those who rejected and opposed Christianity had difficult times especially if they identified themselves with the

African cultural heritage. Both missionaries and colonial administrators were against the traditionalists because, African traditionalism was considered by Europeans to be a stumbling block in many aspects to what they called 'civilization', which more often implied acceptance of their own western culture (Mugambi, 1990:34).

The major areas of convergence between African and Christian teachings and practice greatly aided conversion. It has been argued in this regard for example that the Christian idea of the church had parallels with African traditional life, kinship and extended family and that this might have played a central role in conversion. The church from this perspective is viewed as a Christian family, in which all are related to one another through faith and baptism in Jesus Christ. The church also included those who had died and those who were still live hence similar to the African view of the family as constituting of both the living and the departed. In the same way, this study holds that the patriarchal nature of Christian societies was yet another area of convergence that must have made Christianity at home in Africa.

There were also areas of conflicts between Christian life and the life of African traditionalists. Part of the reason for this conflict had to do with the large number of foreign moral requirements demanded and put upon African Christians by the missionary masters. This in many ways was more of a clash between western and European culture than specifically religious conflict. This saw some Africans break off from the mission churches and form their own independent or indigenous Churches. In these new Churches, they were able to incorporate traditional African customs more freely into their Christian life. Much of the traditional world view was retained in many of the independent churches. Of more significance was that these groups also called adaptationists were trying to make Christianity more relevant and with depth that reached the roots of African life. It has been argued that these African

Christians should be given credit for taking Christianity in Africa seriously by adding it to the religious insights inherited from forefathers and applying it to meet the contemporary needs of the society. It is noted in this respect that it was this adapted Christianity that gave the African Independence fathers the courage to fight oppression and domination by foreign colonial rulers as it endorsed for them the value of human dignity and emphasized the love which should exist among all men (Mbiti, 1987: 190-191). Above all however, it is clear at this point that Christianity in Africa in some cases can be distinctly African, driven by African cultural rather than western values as the case of adaptation in the form of independent and indigenous Churches confirm.

Barrett (1981) studied the movement across the continent and carried out an exhaustive study of the movement of indigenous churches. He established factors responsible for these churches' emergence. He highlighted the fact that American traditional culture, American faith, missionary paternalism, colonial legacy, and modern society conditions were factors that were responsible for indigenous church proliferation. He further states that although this development began around 1862 during the colonial period, even with the achievement of political independence, it did not come to an end. Barret reports that there are currently more than seven thousand indigenous churches in Africa, with a total membership of approximately 35 million adherents and still growing rapidly compared to historical and mission-based churches (Barret, 1981: 39). Currently, in Kenya, most of the native churches are found among the peoples of Jaluo and Abaluhya in western Kenya. Formerly known as Kavirondo, the territory controlled by these groups was part of the Uganda Protectorate. The area was moved to Kenya later in 1902, the same year the area was entered by the first Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, the Anglican Church in Nyanza remained part of the Kampala diocese until it was moved to the diocese of Kenya in 1921.

The missionaries that settled in the kavirondo area were the Church Missionary Society, the Catholic Missionaries, the Seventh-day Adventists, the African Inland Mission, the Friends Mission, and the Church of God Mission. A subsequent arrival in 1924 was a Canadian Pentecostal Mission set up on the Jalu and Abaluhya borders. Barret states a surprise with the growth of indigenous churches that the movements seem to have proliferated in a region where missions have been so well received and where the response to mission teaching has been so positive. By 1920 many mission churches already had a large following in the region with their increasingly felt presence in the societies of the grassroots. Within a short time, however, it became apparent that not everything was in the rank and file of mission churches with Onyango Dunde's Mumboism heralding the secession movement on political-religious grounds. In 1914, when Johana Owelo, formerly a Catholic seminarian, left the CMS mission to establish the Nomiya Luo mission, the first proper indigenous church in Kenya arose. Alfayo Odongo Mangowas to follow two years later with the Roho movement, which later became the Roho Musanda church. From the Friends Mission around Kaimosi came the Dini ya Roho, or the Church of the Holy Spirit and later on the Dini ya Musambwa from the Lugulu branch.

Miriam Ragot appears as a prophetess in the Roman Catholic Church in 1952 and denounced the Church of Rome and the white race. Of course his movement was subjected to a lot of suppression and only reappeared in 1963, through another Luo prophetess, Gaudencia Aoko, who started the Legio Maria Church. Revival within the Anglican was yet another issue in secession movement as we see in the case of the Church of Christ in Africa that broke away from a mission church. The revival movement in East Africa started in Ruanda in 1927, but did not reach Nyanza until 1938 due to ambivalent attitude towards the revival within the church. In 1952 the

group was spearheaded by two main factions; the Joremo (people of blood) and the Johera (people of love). The Anglican Church developed a tendency to favor Joremo over Johera whom they tended to regard as out of step with the Church's position. Later on as a result of reconciliation failure, the Johera faction broke away and formed a new church under the leadership of Matthew Ajuoga, who was an Anglican priest. Paul David Zakayo Kivuli also founded the Africa Israel Church Nineveh in collaboration with the Pentecostal mission in Nyang'ori, which became another prominent indigenous church in western Kenya. The Church emerged under the influence of a charismatic leader from the Pentecostal tradition. In 1932, Kivuli claimed that he had acquired the spirit through a serious illness and that moment began to preach from village to village, attracting a large number of followers. His church was called Africa Israel Church Nineveh by Kivuli, stressing its freedom from mission control. In general, the church adopted a puritan ethic that saw it prohibit African practices such as polygamy and the use of tobacco and alcohol. Spiritual healing also grew in significance and so were dreams that became important source of revelation. This church has been able to make a smooth transition that has ensured its survival even after the death of its founder. The Africa Israel Church Nineveh is today a member of the World Council of Churches, and of the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

The few sampled indigenous churches and their histories clearly show that the puritanical adoption of Christianity as was the goal of the mission churches did not always go well with African traditional culture. Furthermore, it is clear that Africans in these cases yearned for a Christianity that also drove their aspirations that included their view of the world and that probably drove their patriarchal agenda as they were used to.

## **2.8. History of Christianity among the Abaluhya of Western Kenya**

Nthamburi (1991) in an article, *The Beginning and Development of Christianity in Kenya: A Survey* is informative of some aspects of this history. Nthamburi asserts that the establishment of the British East Africa Protectorate and the building of the “Uganda Railway,” which was begun in Mombasa in 1895, reaching Nairobi in 1899 and Kisumu in 1901 are two major phenomena that provided an impetus for other missions to venture into the interior. He argues that the railway in particular provided a cheap and safe route across the savannah and a thorn-scrub country inhabited by the warlike Wakamba and Wamaasai. He substantiates further that by this time the CMS had already established themselves in Taveta which was already an important Arab Swahili trading center, as well as a supply station for caravans about to cross Masailand. (Nthamburi, 1991: 29).

Around this time the English Society of Friends began an industrial mission on the Island of Pemba, but this mission did not grow. In 1901, the American Friends led by W.R. Hotchkiss organized the Friends Africa Industrial Mission in western Kenya. He was one of the pioneers of the African Inland Mission, and was convinced that what was needed was a practical mission, rather than just preaching. Hotchkiss organized the first Friends Africa Industrial Mission with a center at Kaimosi in 1902. He resigned from that mission after six months, preferring to organize a new mission, at Lumbwa with its center at Kericho. As it has been noted elsewhere in this study about initial rapid development of mission Churches, the Friends Mission at Kaimosi developed fairly rapidly with development of schools, a teacher training college, a Bible institute, and a hospital. It eventually became the largest mission endeavor of the Friends Church in the region.

At around the same time, missionaries from the United States started the work of the Church of God in western Kenya, in 1905. Yohana Mbilaa black man from South Africa was one of their first missionaries. He is credited for introducing modern hoes for agriculture and was equally an outstanding evangelist at Kima. Their approach operated from the premise that the gospel went hand in hand with social services, such as education and medical services. At Kima too, a hospital, a Bible school and a teacher training college were built with the church endeavoring to produce local evangelists and missionaries to further the work in the interior areas. The Pentecost Assemblies of Canada also began their ministry in 1921 and the Church grew rapidly particularly in western Kenya and Nairobi, and it established a Bible College at Nyang'ori, as well as a printing press called Evangel Publishing House that published Christian literature.

Despite the rapid growth of mission Churches in the western region there seemed to be a tensional relationship between the Abaluhya indigenous beliefs and Christianity. This tension made the Christian missionaries to describe such churches as pseudo or false cults, infidels, backslidden, misguided, fallen or doomed groups. Nyaundi's (2003) description of the relationship between Christianity and African Religion as ambivalent confirms this position to a large extent. The two were openly hostile to each other and did not seem to openly warm up to each other (Nyaundi, 2003: 304).

As we have already documented, European missionaries wanted African communities to undergo acculturation not only spiritually but also socially, politically and economically. Among the Abaluhya of western Kenya, they supported the establishment of educational, medical and economic institutions to serve as agents of change. This also seems to support the allegations that missionaries did extend material and non-material rewards to the Africans who conformed to their demands in the forms of career positions in the civilian and military services. Motivated by the theory of

evolution as was the trend since the inception of the evolutionary theory by Darwin, John Walsh (1992) observes relatedly that, missionaries viewed Luhya traditional religion as being simple and inferior and Christianity as being superior, mature and sophisticated (Walsh,1992: 44).

Traditional religion among the Abaluhya controlled all aspects of the society, and destroying indigenous faith would also have resulted in the destruction of their social cultural identity and administrative institutions (Shropshire, 1938: 45). The Abaluhya in the spirit of adaptation already discussed wanted to be identified as the Abaluhya Christians and not as cultureless or anonymous believers. The above observation implies that the Abaluhya generally responded to Christianity in a partial and passive manner that enhanced retaining of some fundamental aspects of the Abaluhya culture. This probably was not taken well by the Europeans resonating well with Prichard (1965) explanation that European travelers, philosophers, psychologist, anthropologists and socialists declared Africans irrational and primitive beings whose simple minds could not perceive the divine being. Pritchard (1965) further discounts such western position on Africans as racist overtone because as humans, he believed that Africans acted rationally and purposefully as many challenging situations may have prevailed. Such may have included the environment, diseases and tricky external involvement in their traditional culture, political, economic and spiritual affairs (Prichard, 1965).

It is to be noted that as time elapsed, Christianity definitely was blended with cultures of Europe and acquired a certain identity with this culture. The missionaries who came to Africa were determined to establish churches as they had known them at home at home. They therefore had a version of Christ wrapped in European cultural and traditional dominance which then they intended to load over the Abaluhya.

## **2.9. The History of Friends church in Western Kenya.**

The Friends church was originally called the Religious Society of Friends. It began in England under the leadership of George Fox. He began a movement known in the beginning as “publishers of the truth and children of the light”. George Fox experience led to what is called the light of Christ (The Holy Spirit) that dwells in the hearts of ordinary people. He saw this as a seed that was planted by God inside a person which would only grow when it was cultivated by the Holy Spirit. He believed that to those who repented, there was no longer any need to wait for the second coming of Christ, that Christ was already here and He could be known through the inner light, (Rasmussen, 1995; 3).

The name Friends is considered to originate with Fox call for people who claimed to be Christians to obey the commandments of Jesus“, you are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14). This movement began by Fox was marked with belief that the divine light within all people brought new religion by enabling one to experience radical rebirth and cultivate a style of living that culminated in perfect obedience to God. The Friends church grew rapidly under strong persecution and was later known as Quakers; the term originally known as an insult to George Fox by adversaries because it was observed that the followers quaked in the power of the Holy Spirit, (Cooper, 1990:1).

With this elucidation on origin, historians continue to debate the historical and cultural factors that influenced the beginning of Quakerism/Friends church although it is clear that their conviction arose as an inward religious experience of the spirit of Christ in their inner lives. This experience of the light of Christ within was at the same time a call to Christians’ perfection that is to live up to the measure of the lights given to each person which resulted in practical righteousness in living out ones faith, (Rufus,

1989:8). Willis Hotchkiss became the first Friends missionary to arrive in Kenya in 1902 after a long and chequered history in which the church had undergone turbulent periods of transformation, both in England and the USA. This author provides the immediate link that brought evangelical American Friends into the mission field among the Tiriki people of Western Kenya. Once in western Kenya, the pioneer FAM missionaries established the first station in 1902 at Kaimosi, among the Tiriki one of the Abaluhya sub-ethnic groups. At the same time, the Abaluhya were also undergoing a process of change, which had been introduced with the establishment of colonial rule. Willis Hotchkiss, a Friends' minister provided the first link that brought evangelical American Friends' mission to Western Kenya. Hotchkiss had received his initial training at the Cleveland Bible Institute and while there, he received the "call" to work in Africa. He had earlier tried to work with the Africa Inland Mission Party among the Kamba of Kenya. However, they failed due to lack of financial support. The missionaries had earlier hoped simplistically for the consequent development of a self-supporting African church but contrary to their expectation, the missionaries did not find the Kamba eager to accept the Christian message. This among many other factors was because the missionaries insisted that in order for the Akamba to become Christians, they had to be converted to the belief or faith in God, repentance of what Christians perceive as sin, and confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

It was after the failure to convert the Akamba that Hotchkiss changed tactic to the industrial mission concept or the holistic development policy, which entailed both evangelical and secular propagation of Christianity as we have seen, was a feature of Christian missions in western Kenya. This feature meant teaching and developing the African by impacting them with skills. After what was supposedly a failure in Ukambani, Willis Hotchkiss returned to the USA in what has been concluded to be a

reorganization trip. While in the USA he got support from Arthur Chilson and Edgar Hole who were ready to accompany him to East Africa to engage in missionary work. In April 1902, the trio sailed to East Africa to initiate the work. The three missionaries stopped over in England and Ireland, where members of the British Yearly Meeting donated the metal Devonshire house which was shipped to Kenya in 1903. The three missionaries arrived at Mombasa on June 24, 1902. Using the newly constructed railroad, they arrived at Kisumu in July confirming the significance of Kenya – Uganda railway in the inland missionary work. When the three pioneers arrived at the then rail terminal on Lake Victoria, the railway officials and C.W. Hobley, the District Commissioner, were very helpful. Hobley, a scholar as well as a government official, had collected valuable information on the local people like the Maragoli. He passed on to the missionaries dictionary of several hundred Luloogoli (Maragoli language) words, which became the basis of the Friends Church study of that language. Hobley also assisted the missionaries with planning a tour through North Kavirondo and Nandi districts and invited them to accompany him on a visit to Mumias, his district headquarters.

Thus, the Friends Church arrived in western Kenya with a clear advantage and a considerable fund of goodwill from other missions and the colonial administration. After eight weeks of trekking during which both Hotchkiss and Hole were often disabled by malaria, a suitable site was found on the 10th of August at Kaimosi. The missionaries decided to work among the Tiriki in what had become North Kavirondo district of western Kenya because the area seemed suitable for implementing the Friends' ideas about salvation and civilization. Events leading to the selection of Kaimosi site were recorded in a letter by Chilson, He said that, Kaimosi was a place with many things favorable for a mission location. There is quite attracting of land

unoccupied by the natives, and splendid drinking water. Hundreds of natives live within reach.

Simwa further notes that the establishment of FAM stations in Kenya was a slow process. The early missionaries endured hardships such as uncertain safety as strangers in a foreign and hostile land, personal tragedies and diseases. The first two decades of FAM's work were, thus, primarily a pioneer homesteading operation. By 1918, however, the Friends had established a vibrant and growing church among the Tiriki and spread to other Luhyia, particularly among the Maragoli and the Bukusu. The missionaries had chosen western Kenya for the activities among the Abaluhya group of Bantu speaking people who occupy western Kenya. In August 1902, Christian missionaries arrived in Kaimosi in western Kenya and found the place suitable for establishment of a mission station. There were hardly any Africans living around Kaimosi. The place was a kind of no man's land between Kaimosi, Tiriki, and Nandi. In later years, the large sum of money invested in Kaimosi became an important factor in determining mission policies leading to concentration of the majority of Quakers/Friends Church institutions there as we have already observed. However, the major hidden mission of the missionaries was to serve the double purpose of cleansing the African social conditions and to earn an income from which they could support their church. They believed that in order for Africans to become true Christians, it was necessary not only to preach the gospel to them but also teach them many aspects of the western way of life. The first Africans to be converted to Christianity in the region were Akhonya, Johhanne, Amugune and Joel Litu. Jafferson Ford and Joel Litu translated the Old Testament in Lulagoli therefore making it the dominating language in Friends church in western Kenya.

The rapid expansion was soon to come face to face with the menace that was Abaluhya Traditional African culture. Among the Tiriki for example, any one attending FAM schools, who left the classroom to undergo the traditional circumcision operation, faced difficulties in continuing education afterwards. This was because parents feared that initiates might be forced by the missionaries to reveal secrets of the ceremonies. In addition, the young Tiriki 'adults' felt embarrassed and humiliated sitting in the same classroom with "uncircumcised boys, those who were circumcised at the hospital or those circumcised in other traditions". To the Tiriki, the men from other sub-ethnic groups were considered to be "children, because they did not undergo the same circumcision rigors and rites". It is also mentioned that the Tiriki, like all other Abaluhya sub-groups, disliked the FAM missionaries for their stand on Abaluhya customs. It is claimed in this respect that FAM missionaries viewed Tiriki practices such as dancing, smoking and beer drinking as sinful. The Friends church also took a very firm stand against polygamy and adopted monogamy as a prerequisite for Church membership. This requirement proved difficult for the Abaluhya to comply with, since polygamy was deemed to be a social virtue. The Tiriki thus remained unwilling to accede to missionary demands that they abandon activities and customs long deemed as socially important. Ultimately, the emotion-laden issue of male circumcision generated outright anger and hatred between the FAM missionaries and the Tiriki. The Tiriki persistence in clinging to tradition, pitted against the missionaries' overzealous criticism of these customs, eventually informed FAM's change of policy. Instead of concentrating its work at Kaimosi, FAM missionaries began to open more new stations. It was from these new stations that the FAM missionaries hoped for greater success in reaching a larger segment of the Abaluhya.

In 1913, a mission station was opened in Lugulu among the Ababukusu people. The missionaries who were living in Lugulu reported in a conference that over one hundred spoke definitely to being saved and forty-four sought the baptism by the Holy Spirit. This was interpreted as the beginning of revival, (Rasmussen, 1995:43). The number of converts continued to increase. By 1939 the number had increased to 1700. In 1940, a protestant movement; Dini ya Musambwa emerged among the Ababukusu led by Elijah Masinde, a former member of the Friends African mission who had been expelled because he practiced polygamy. This movement extended among the Tachoni people who were neighboring the Ababukusu people. In 1941, the church building at Lugulu belonging to Friends African mission had been set on fire. “Dini ya musambwa” with both the Ababukusu and Tachon followers was opposed to missionary teachings and instead preferred African traditions. They offered their sacrifices in traditional family shrines called “namwima” and “wetili”. Dini ya Msambwa would sing during their religious ceremonies just like Christians did in church. They quoted from the Bible, used the cross as a symbol and prayed in the name of God the Holy Spirit. They believed in the millennium promises when all the problems of the world would come to an end, the foreigners would have been evicted and all their wishes would be fulfilled, (Rasmussen, 1995:72). In spite of taking over a number of symbols and customs from Christian churches, Dini ya Msambwa remained basically a movement built on foundations of the ancestors. On contrary, they were strongly opposed to the existing churches in the area which had been brought into the country from outside by strangers.

With the secession history aside and of relevance to this section is burial among the Quaker Church. The commonest burial rituals among the Quakers include the reading of scriptures, poems or memories, music that may be instrumental or hymnal singing,

saying of prayers, eating and feasting, donations made in the form of either flowers or money. These rituals are observed as fulfillment of the Quaker emphasis on the need for honoring God for his grace as shown in the life lived by “our friend” as well as meeting to worship God on the occasion of the death of one of their own. The rituals are meant to comfort and touch the hearts that are too distressed, and to open hearts to the healing stream of divine love, so that they may face life anew with courage, and to adapt themselves to their new circumstances. In the light of this background this study sought to establish the Interface between Friends (Quaker) church and Ababukusu traditional widowhood rituals and rites and how they affect the widow.

#### **2.10 Christian view on death rituals**

The modern missionary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which effectively introduced Christianity to the interior of East Africa was negative to the African cultural and religious heritage. African people’s cultures and religions were regarded by early missionaries and anthropologists as ‘primitive’, ‘heathen’ and ‘pagan’. Their assumption was that Christianity and western civilization were inseparable and synonymous and therefore their African converts should abandon their African cultural and religious backgrounds and adopt western cultures as an outward indication of conversion to Christianity (Mugambi,1990:40 ).The negative approach towards the African cultural and religious heritage led to a variety of African reactions, Some to reject Christianity along with western culture which was being imposed upon them and others to adopt what they had received to their own backgrounds according to their understanding and needs, ( Mugambi, 1990: 40 ). The new customs were adopted without question but at the same time, they did not abandon entirely the corresponding customs in the traditional communities. African converts were not expected to participate in any traditional rituals. Though missionaries would not

encourage it, Ababukusu converts to Christianity like most African communities maintained their traditional links with their kith and kin Christian converts or not. Though they would not publicly participate in communal rituals for fear of excommunication, they did not detach themselves from some of the traditional values. The traditional African ideas continued to be held by African Christians, superimposed over which was the newly introduced teaching. Although African converts abandoned traditional public rituals, they continued to hold some of the traditional beliefs underlying those rituals which at the same time absorbing new beliefs from the Christian faith, (Mugambi, 1990: 43-44). When the missionaries came to Africa, they saw it as being 'dark' because allegedly, it lacked Christian 'Light'. The missionaries described themselves as 'The torch' meaning the church possessed 'the light', to light up the darkness which Africa was perceived to have, (Nyaundi, 2003:294).

The initial attitude of the European missionary Christianity towards African religious belief and cultural practices were confrontational as well as rejection. However, it has been noted that some changes have taken place in the course of time. Among some of the reasons for the Christian attitudinal change towards African beliefs include, the need for Christianity to relate with the Africans to look for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The church also came to the understanding of some of the inherent value of certain traditional beliefs and practices for religious expressions and living. There was further a realization by missionary established churches that they would lose members to the emerging worship experience and programs which connected with African religious aspirations and spiritual needs. The church in Africa therefore is even today still in need to enter with prudence and clarity into discussions and collaboration with Traditional African culture to retain relevance.

### **2.11 Christianity and African persistence in beliefs and practices**

The Christian converts were made by the missionaries to believe that their Christian salvation could only be complete if they did away with their old traditional, religious and cultural life. While the missionaries might not have introduced the negative results, their actions, nevertheless led to social disruption as tensions sometimes resulted in violence within the community. Not surprisingly, Danquah protested against this and blamed the missionaries for the rift between the Christians and non-Christians. This made the African leaders to ask the missionaries to remove Christians who were perceived as the cause of the troubles in Africa (Ekem, 2008:156).

The anti-indigenous and cultural stance by missionaries, culminated in the creation of separate quarters. The end results brought suspicion of every aspect of traditional life and worse, to develop in the convert, an attitude of shame and condemnation towards the traditional culture and this was passed on to those who continued to share it (Williamson, 1974:56). Chinua Achebe in his book, "Things fall apart," felt that there were indications of religious and cultural threats that bound the people together, yet he recognized some of the positive transformations that made Christianity acceptable in the community.

Indeed the influence of the Christian church and European culture came with its own appeal especially the provision of education and prospects of material progress. Its appeal was too compelling to the extent that some of the elders and chiefs, who initially resisted the introduction, supported the missionaries and gave lands for construction of churches and schools. Today the appeal of the western culture and material promise is still very strong if not stronger than before, especially some members of the younger generation of Africans, who unfortunately embrace everything western to the neglect of their culture (Achebe, 2009:2).

Azumah in the book, “The legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa,” is of the view that any constructive interreligious engagement has to recognize and acknowledge the resistance value of the African religious beliefs and its cultural expressions as well as its values (Azumah, 2001:7). The same view is taken up by Amoah Elizabeth in her paper, “African Indigenous religions and inter-religious relations”. In line with Azumah, Amoah contends that contrary to the general conception that African traditional religion were passive recipients of the religious beliefs of Christianity and Islam, the real issue was that differing religions in Africa do not encounter each other leading to an inevitable exchange (Amoah, 1998:4).

She continues to argue that despite the outward conversion of members of the indigenous religions to Christianity, the African religious beliefs and cultural practices still persist in the converts and continue to inform and shape their religious experiences and particularly during crisis moments like death. African traditional religion was not a house of cards that collapsed at the instance of change, but it has the potential to adopt on its own, in response to change that take place around it (Olukpona 1991:32).

Nyaundi in his book, *Introduction to The Study of Religion* remarks that there is an overriding evidence which indicate that many African Christians still have a soft spot for African traditional religious beliefs and practices “when need arises”. Christian churches participation in African traditional religious practices, is a proof that African Christians do not disengage completely from the religion which is actually their birth right (Nyaundi, 2003:118).

While observing the failures of the church, Williamson brings out focus on some positive achievements in terms of being an agent of change in provision of schools through which some of the early missionaries who developed the independence

struggle of the nations were raised. .He highlights some of the positive impact of the church teaching as well as European governance that helped to transform some of the negative religious and cultural practices. Williamson made an observation on some of the European missionary attitude towards the indigenous religion of the Akan people in Ghana and the description made at that time. The religious system of the people was not considered worthy any religious sort; a pagan system that did not have value for human consideration, a perception which Williamson felt 'was wrong'. The people to whom the European offered this faith were themselves not without religious practices and rites which came to bear a variety of descriptive names (Williamson, 1994:58). Even today, conversion to Christianity does not imply that the individual African is completely emptied of those core beliefs and values. In affirmation of this point Mulango argues that, traditional religion always persists as base foundation of any subsequent Conversion (Mulango, 1991:128). Indeed, Christianity was able to take root in the indigenous soil and grow. It was largely due to its persisting traditional base and foundation. This is not to play down in anyway the ideologies of various religious groups which have shaped and formed the belief systems and practices of these people and resulted in the growth especially of the Christian communities. One of the major factors that made Africans to persist in their beliefs was failure of Christian missionaries to seriously take into account the historical context of the African people. As Fynn observes, some of the missionaries even did not think that Africans had any important history or religion before the evangelization. In their mind, the history of the African people began when they made contact with them to "civilize them". Although some of the early missionary teachings made the people frown upon the indigenous religion and cultural element, most of the church converts could not just break away from them. Their Christian connections and expressions were still underpinned by

those indigenous values and religious thoughts that have been basis of their nurturing and socialization right from birth. The African religious world view which established suffering and other strange happenings in light to spiritual causes, still prevailed in spite of the teachings of Christianity which often denied them (Fynn, 1975:1-2).

The lack of credible Christian response to some of these life challenges compelled some of them, out of frustration and fear to resort to other traditional priest or priestess for queries. There were therefore some Christians who professed the Christian faith, alright but were still tied to those aspects of the African traditional religious life which dwelt on fear of evil forces. African Religion controlled all aspects of Abaluhya society. Destroying this indigenous faith would also result in destruction of their sound cultural identity, moral and administrative institution (Shrophire, 1938:45). They wanted to be identified as Abaluhya Christians but not as anonymous believers. The above observation implies that the Abaluhya like many African communities responded to Christianity in a passive rather than active manner, and this enhanced the retaining of some of the fundamental aspects of Traditional culture.

Prichard (1965) explains that missionaries for example brothers, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists declared Africans as traditional and primitive beings, whose simple minds could not perceive to divine beings (Prichard 1965:100-115). This seem not to be true since Africans acted rationally and purposefully on many challenging situations including their environment in their traditional, cultural, political, economic and spiritual affairs.

Christian converts began to question certain indigenous beliefs and values aided by western cultural influence. At that time this alienated some of the indigenous people from the traditional way of life as evidenced in the Christian and European names that

were given to Christian converts and other indigenous people at the church and school respectively. In spite of these influences the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices were not completely abandoned.

Mbiti has specifically stated that the African concepts about God provide one with convincing ground of communality between Christianity and African religion. The God described in the Bible is no other than God who is already known in the framework of traditional African religion (Mbiti, 2010: 2). He concludes that the rationale behind the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa is due to the belief in the one creator as found in the African religion which connected with the idea of God that the Christian missionaries presented to the Africans (Mbiti, 1990:3,4).

Sharkey and Welch (1982) asserted that the Roman Christians retained many aspects of their culture without alterations. They used Latin, Greek names and retained both languages in Christian fellowship and worship. They adopted European traditional music and translated scriptures from Hebrew to Latin and Greek, built churches, European architectural styles, equipped them with European furniture assimilated the Roman dietary pattern and dressing culture. Rome became a center of civilization and Christianity became a dominant Religion of the civilized world. The church was overwhelmed by such mass conversions and it could not affectively control the new beliefs and practices that were being integrated with Christianity (Welch, 1982:3).

## **2.12 African Community and Religion**

In many African communities religion more than anything else is a day to day living experience in the sense that it shapes their world view and plays a role in people's participation in social life (Mbiti, 1969:256). It does not exist separately from the general rhythm of life. What happens in the everyday life is governed by religious rites, ethics and rules. Religion is intertwined in the individual, social, political and

economic life of the community. Religion regulates rites of passage such as those of birth, initiation, marriage and death (Nyaundi, 2003:118). The African traditional religious belief is that human beings do not live in the world alone. There is a sense of human beings close relationship with nature. Humanity animals and plants have their own existence and place in the universe as independent parts of a whole. There are also spiritual beings that are more powerful than humankind and this opens up the African to the divine and to seeking affinity with the spiritual process. Religious beliefs are therefore diffused in all spheres of life filling them with meaning.

Gyekye captures religion's deep presence in African life in these words. "To be born into African society is to be born into culture that is intensely and pervasively religious and that means and requires participation in the religious beliefs and rituals of the community (Gyekye, 1996:4). For most Africans and for ethnic groups in particular, the life of the individual is understood as the participation in the sacred life; that is, the individual taking part in all aspects of life in the community. It is that vital show or bond of life with their interconnectedness that ensure solidarity among members of the same family or clan and influencing how one conducts himself or herself in the community (Mulango, 1991:121). This explains the fact that communal natures of most African societies which have strong network of relationships play an influential role in the individual's life. She /he is very much shaped and formed by the religious and social cultural context of that community, yet that individual identity is not lost, the individual is real and his/her identity cannot be set aside by being a member of community (Gyeke, 1996:47 ).

It is observed that the followers of African religion are more pre-occupied with its practice than with its theory. Its influence covers all aspects of life, from before birth of a person to long after she/he has died. It is a way of life and how to protect it. Hence

the remark such as for the African religion is literally life and life is religion. Mbiti and Baloyi refuted missionary claims about the inferiority of African religion and actually maintain that traditional religions are the foundation upon which Christianity gained roots on the African soil. In the ages of these theologians, Africans knew God well before the missionaries came. Refusing to swallow arrogance of the west, Mbiti says “the missionaries who introduced the gospel to Africa in the past 200 years did not bring God to our continent, instead, God brought them. They proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ, but they used the name of God who was and is already known by the African people such as Mulungu, Katonda, Ngai, Oldumare, Asis, Ruwa, Were Khakava and others. These were names of one and the same God, the creator of the World, and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He goes on wanting Christianity and Islam to be regarded as indigenous religions of African because of their deep historical roots in the continent. (Mbiti 1990:223). His idea has not been supported by other scholars like Bolaji, Idowu, Chrispie, Ejizu and Opoku and Asare who want to retain and use the word traditionalist for the original experience within the different ecological and social historical background.

There were long age customs and practices which could no longer be followed (Bartels, 1965:26). In the Asante kingdom, native converts cut themselves so completely a drift from the rest of the community that the chiefs were afraid to encourage movement that experience told them would in the course of time undermine their power. In order to prevent the indigenous converts to the Christian faith from being contaminated by the pagan ways of their family members and relatives, the Presbyterian Church initially created separate communities referred to as “salam” within various towns and villages in Ghana. This negative attitude and confrontational stance of the European Christian missionaries towards African religious and cultural

values was one of the factors that created the tensions in some of the traditional societies.

The nature of the traditional religion, as expressed in many areas in Africa is very communal and utilitarian or pragmatic. That is, people born into that traditional community were also born into the religion in which they naturally participated as they grew up through traditional socialization process. The universe was perceived as a wider community, consisting of a composite of a divine spirit, human, animated and inanimate elements in the hierarchical order, but directly related and always interacting with each other. The main focus of traditional religion was on this worldly life and its site purpose was the enhancement of the community life which of course included that of the individual.

### **2.13. Interface between Christianity and the Ababukusu death rituals**

We have already noted elsewhere in this study that the provision of schools by missionaries and introduction of Christian workshops at schools together with Bible knowledge lessons became a formal process of education and evangelization for the younger generations of Africans. The mission schools besides their other worldly benefits, provided the right environment for the people to come under the influence of the Christian gospel (Essamoah, 2010:56) Catholic Church too taught on good works of Christ and the need for a sinner to repent and believe in Jesus to be saved from eternal condemnation. Converts who went through confirmation classes were baptized and confirmed as full members of the church. These religious teachings and rituals were intended to equip the converts to remain in the Christian faith and live a morally good life as Christians.

With reference to Christian funeral services from this perspective, it is noted that the choice of songs, scriptures reading and preaching too are all geared towards

reinforcing Christian beliefs concerning the life after the death and the hope of resurrection that is found in Christ Jesus. Death to them was a moment that prompted all present, for once, at least to reflect upon the transcendental nature of this life. Important Christian beliefs and values aided by western cultural influence at the initial time alienated some of the indigenous people from the traditional way of life as evidenced in the early Christian converts. In spite of this alienation, the indigenous religious beliefs and cultural practices were not completely abandoned as is already clear

In support, it is observed for example among the Ababukusu Christians that apart from funeral liturgical and committal services for the departed Christians at the church and the graveyard respectively, the Christian funeral observance is largely informed by the indigenous beliefs of the people. The elaborate funeral preparations in terms of high expenses and the practice of placing objects in the coffin of the deceased as items that will be used in the world beyond still persist in most funeral celebrations. The Christian involvement in the celebration of the traditional festival on the other hand has resulted in some modifications in the observation of certain traditional religious rituals such as animal sacrifices which have been removed from public spaces to certain secluded sacred grounds.

We can therefore argue that African funeral practices have extensively influenced Christian funeral ceremonies among the Ababukusu Christians. The Christian churches recognition of their members as having a dual identity to the traditional family and community, on one hand as well as the church on the other has resulted in some unofficial burial arrangements between the church and the families of the deceased. The common position is that often the church leaves all aspects of burial rituals in the hands of the family, while it handles the burial services and rites at the

graveyard, which is considered not only as the churches sacred responsibility but also a religious duty towards the departed members. The Christian churches however do not officially subscribe to the beliefs or the practice of placing objects in the coffin as observed by most Christians before covering the mortal remains for the final Christian liturgical funeral service.

Sanneh (2003) justifies the dual arrangement to the fact that Christianity as a religion transcends ethnic hatred and cultural barriers (Sanneh, 2003:7) in recognition of those shared traditional beliefs, practices and values among others as is confirmed by a letter written by Africans to the catholic secretariat stressing the need for dialogue rather than confrontation in respect of the church relationship with non-Christian religions. It stated in this respect that African religion is the religion and cultural context from which most Christians in Africa came and in which many of them may still live to a great extent (Fitzgerald, 1986: 132). The pejorative view of the African religion and the cultural expression however still persists among the radical Christian members. This position portends problems in terms of a healthy dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding which is necessary for harmonious relations. The understanding of African religion by others, particularly of this later hard stand, many a times failed to take into account some of those belief systems and values that are central to people's knowledge of life realities and which enabled some of the African converts to connect with certain aspect of the Christian teachings.

In affirmation with this analysis, there is evidence that Africans responded for instance, much more positively to Christianity in places where African religion was strongly practiced pointing to a degree of African compatibility with the gospel (Sanneth 1983:18). Dankwa (1990) argues that Christianity should be flexible as is evidenced in what it had done before when it came into contact with some of the pagan customs

in Europe and absorbed them. Dankwa therefore laments lack of openness on the part of Christianity as is evident in its opposition to the incorporation of certain essential elements of indigenous religion and cultural beliefs in Africa (Dankwa, 1990:17).

Dankwa's argument above justifies the need to understand why in moments of crisis like sudden death, accidents and mysterious diseases some Ababukusu believers including their leaders resort to their olden Ababukusu customs while being faithful to Christianity, attend church frequently and describe themselves as part time traditionalists or full time Christians. This may also mean that there is something that Christianity does not touch in the inner being of these Christians and hence has failed to meet their needs.

Christian initiative in dialogue with Africans and their beliefs derive from understanding that it is essential dimension of God's reconciling mission in the world through the church (Kinnamon, 1997:1). This study submits that African beliefs and practices were very instrumental to the inception and growth of Christianity in Africa and still inform the beliefs and practices of African Christians. It is for this reason that Africans must be engaged as equal partners in meaningful dialogue activities that reflect the realities of the cosmic view of the sub-Sahara African context.

#### **2.14 In Lieu of the Interface: Traditional African and Christian Culture**

All in all, Mbiti and Baloyi's refutation of missionary claims about the inferiority of African religion and their rejoinder that in the actual sense traditional religions are the foundation upon which Christianity gained roots on the African soil cannot be ignored. This study is also in agreement when Mbiti refuses to swallow the western arrogance by observing that "the missionaries who introduced the gospel to Africa in the past 200 years did not bring God to the African continent, instead, God brought them." It is clear from the foregoing discourse that Traditional African culture to a large extent

forms the subconscious mind of the African way of the ultimate knowing. It is this roots that Africans resort to in crisis moments such as death. Christianity at best clearly plays the second fiddle role at such crisis moment. This is attributed to among other things; the not very tidy Christian history in Africa when in most cases the Church had failed to understand African ways. Christianity too is vulnerable as unlike African religion, its members could secede or move to other Church establishments.

It is also apparent in this Interface that the Church finding itself in this uncomfortable position for lack of options easily accepted positions of cultural consonance without question as could be seen in the retention of vernacular names of God. This study submits that this may have been the case with male dominance as a Christian and Traditional African cultural feature of consonance as well.

### **2.15 Gender Dimension to funerals**

This section in its endeavor to explore the general area of gender and conflict first examines the contemporary understanding of gender, and then examines the connecting strand between social construction, gender and conflict with the aim of shedding more light on the theoretical basis of this study.

#### **2.15.1 Patriarchy: The Male Dominance over Women**

Whether socially constructed or biologically determined, patriarchy generally delivers a social structure in which men are accorded a monopoly on power and decision making and women expected to submit. Patriarchy is a dominant feature of many world societies and its origins is closely related to the concept of gender roles; a set of social and behavioral norms considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a given sex. In general, gender roles often devote women to the domestic sphere while men are expected to seek professional satisfaction outside of the home. This arrangement is sometimes expressed as division of labor that translates into a social hierarchy in which

males presumed as superior and dominant take control over women. Unfortunately, most scholarly works rather than work to destabilize the historical notion of patriarchy, merely assess the origins of patriarchy, or a social system in which the male gender role acts as the primary authority figure central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege and entails female subordination.

### **2.15.2 Gender and Conflict in the International politics**

In 1947 the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was established. Its mandate was to make recommendations and reports for the UN Economic and Social Council on promoting Women's rights in political, social, economic, civil and educational fields. The theme of the commission was not new, but the establishment of the commission was. This can be seen as an important first step in a series of efforts aimed at creating greater awareness about gender issues and women's issues in particular which is also the main concern of this study. The four world Conferences on Women that followed demonstrated an increasing awareness about the impact of gender differences on peace and conflict. The conference held in Nairobi in 1985 marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women and was the first where issues of peace and conflict featured on the agenda. It outlined what are known as the Forward Looking Strategies that made the themes of peace, equality and development the three main areas of concern. Feminist reflections, concerns, and vocabulary concerning peace were made explicit in a major UN document for the first time. Not only is the notion of women shifting over the course of the world conferences to gender but also the notion of conflict.

It was however not until the sexual atrocities were committed during the conflict in former Yugoslavia began to appear throughout the UN about the problem of sexual violence during armed conflict. The Security Council referred in December 1992 for the first time to the ‘massive, organized and systematic detention and rape of women, in particular Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has since seen emergence of a strong mobilized feminist movement that is exerting pressure and demanding redress for atrocities specifically directed at women and girls. The United Nations has mainstreamed the gender dimension over the last fifty years and a concept of peace as the absence of war has shifted to peace as a more holistic concept.

Increased studies on gender issues on the international stage as narrated in the foregoing section brings to the limelight the general plight of women in a way that may not exclude the plight of widowhood. The discussion in the section on the nexus between social construction, gender and conflict informs this study that a generalized story of gender in the cultural context of women may not capture the true story of widowhood practices such as among the Ababukusu Christians unless it appreciates in specific terms the gender dimension to the story which is the main aim of this study.

### **2.15.3 Women, Christianity and gender: a general survey**

Cunningham (2000) *In Why Not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture On Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* has observed in a related manner that multiple millions of women all over the world are looking over the Church's shoulder, longing to see the freedom Jesus purchased for them at Calvary. At the same time millions more among the women have found freedom in Jesus but are still bound by human ideas that pressure women to let culture and not God, determine their place in the society. All these confirm that it is not well for women in society as justice is not forthcoming. Cunningham (2000, 43) further points out in this book that God's

absolute principle that should guide all our thinking concerning men and women is, equality modeled along the Godhead between God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. There is no hierarchy in the trinity, only absolute equality. This author emphasizes that what was laid down in the Garden of Eden when God created man and woman in His image was equality. Even though there are unique personalities and different gifts, callings and functions apportioned.

Advancing an alternative argument about God setting up human judicial system in exodus chapter eighteen out of necessity, this author maintains that God gave certain people control over others based on the need for order in a sinful, imperfect world. He set up authorities on earth, whether parents to lead families or leaders for the Church or leaders for government, because we have practical need for them to function. However these functions should never be confused with value (Cunningham 2000, 43). She also adds that, every person irrespective of sex is equally valuable before God. People therefore should walk in this way, consciously copying the loving, humble pattern given us by the trinity and backed up by the word of God. This is what Jesus taught through washing one another's feet and to serving one another. This is the principle that should rule the body of Christ and ultimately in every society: the absolute equality of males and females.

Cunningham (2000) emphasizes that in Christianity men and women were created in the image of God and that Jesus paid the supreme price for both with his death on the cross. The Bible further observes that for God so loved the world and not just male that he gave his only begotten son. There is therefore no justification to hold the man as spiritually more superior than the female.

Of more relevance to this study is Cunningham's advice that culture should never be used as a standard by which to measure scripture. Instead, the Bible should be the standard by which to measure culture. Cunningham supports this position when she sheds light that, Jesus mission was not gender biased but rather gender inclusive as he (Jesus) never excluded women either by word or action. He often deliberately chose words that emphasized his common standing with women and men, especially with the words he used to describe himself. The most common term he used for himself was, "son of man." The word "man" used inclusively for both male and female.

We also see another incident where Jesus again frees another woman from exclusion by the society. The woman had been suffering from incessant vaginal hemorrhaging for twelve years. According to the laws of the day, she was unclean plus everything else she touched. Instead of Jesus rebuking her when she secretly touched him yet she was "unclean" Jesus commended her. No longer would the flow of menstrual blood exclude women from full participation among the people of God. To confirm this it is noted that Jesus ministered side by side with women as is seen when Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. The twelve disciples were with him, and so were some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases; Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joana the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Sussana; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Cunningham (2000, 235) in her final word says that, we need to see women in the Church set free to obey God in their gifts and calling. She also quotes Fredrick Franson who wrote almost a hundred years ago: it is amazing how one can get such false idea that not all God's children should use all their powers in all ways to save the lost word.

Cunningham's work is related to this study in the sense that she is looking at women's treatment in religious circles and especially in Christianity. She also generally looks at what the Bible postulates about the treatment of women. She however does not narrow down to the widowhood rites and rituals and this study shall specifically deal with this. This study will take this up in the context of the Ababukusu people and the Friends Church.

Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 appears to have taken an exact opposite view from Cunningham's when he advised that women should remain silent in the churches. They were not allowed to speak, but be in submission, as the law says if they wanted to inquire about something, they had to ask their own husbands at home, for it was disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church". Similarly, in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 he states that he does not allow women to teach or to have authority over their husbands. He even justifies his opinion by referring to the fact that Adam was not the one to take the forbidden fruit as it was Eve who was deceived. Peter continues in 1 Peter 3:1-7 to explain how women are weaker vessels and how they should be submissive to their husbands avoid outward adornment and live silently. (FIDA 2007, 10). All in all, these positions suggest a hard stance on women and equality in the Church in the early or initial years.

Starting from the beginning therefore we must try to understand what the situation was like with the first man and woman in paradise? From Genesis 1:27 we are informed that God created man in his own image, creating them male and female. Turning this around, we can as well ask if God is more like man or woman. Traditionally though, there has been a strong thinking that God is more masculine as in many places in Bible God is described as our father. There also appears to be something in woman, which rebels some characteristics of God, which forms the basis of gender thinking even

though there is a strong emphasis on men and women working together too as is evident in complementing role for each other in the Garden of Eden when God gave them responsibility to take care of the creation for both sexes. There was mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. Apostle Paul explains the issue in the same letter he wrote about the silence of women relating that as woman came from man, and man too is born of woman and everything comes from God, in the beginning the value of, men and women in front of God was the same. (FIDA 2007, 11) (1 Corinthians 11:12)

Clearly, the issue of gender in relation to the Biblical teachings is problematic as is evident in the foregoing discourse. Hobbs and Blank (1998, 102) confirm the situation of women to be potentially worse. These authors observe that when people are born, they immediately reside in social location and that the group that shares the location with us has already established definitions of situations and role expectations. Without any serious questioning therefore we tend to accept the cultural fabric of our immediate surroundings and the norms of our significant others. All this occurs through the process of socialization. People in a society consequently have internalized most social norms of the group before they are aware that there might be other behavior and beliefs. Personalities and concepts are developed by the internalization of social norms that include such matters as the gods we worship and what we expect of others to become of us the proper and perhaps the only way of doing things. This process of indoctrination begins immediately and is a constant process throughout the lives of most individuals. Indoctrination is one reason why most of the people conform to most of the norms most of the time. The relevance of this to this study is that the traditional cultural influence might often be ahead of Christian teachings and culture.

Wasike (2013) plies this path when she urges African Christian women to question whether their consciousness has been so diminished by the dominant male

consciousness that they are robbed of the courage and ability to think their own thoughts as women. She affirms that there are women in Africa who are daring to speak out and demand their rightful place in church and society. Wasike argues that some women have been inspired by the Bible and it continues to give them courage to speak out and resist exploitation, injustice, stereotyping and degradation. Women are energized by the prophetic biblical vision of freedom and wholeness. This is the enabling and empowering source for women. Wasike argues strongly that African women just like their fellow sisters around the globe, are being biblically energized to continue the struggle despite the seeming unclear hope for success (Wasike 2013, 9)

Manala (2015) in an article, “African traditional widowhood rites and their benefits and/or detrimental effects on widows in a context of African Christianity,” thinks that the Church has particularly failed to energize the African women against dehumanizing traditional cultures. Manala has advanced an argument that traditional Africa teaches *ubuntu* principles of communality, mutual respect, caring and so forth, but does not walk the talk with regard to the treatment of widows. With reference to the Bible, this author points out the irony that even though in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, Christian communities preach unconditional love, especially for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable, implementation however, grossly lacks in respect to the treatment of widows. The findings of Manala in the study points to an apparent deliberate uncaring, disrespectful, discriminatory, impolite and unjust treatment of widows in African communities in spite of the *ubuntu* values and Christian teaching that emphasize love and caring, especially towards the grieving and thus vulnerable widows. Widows in many cases seem to be neglected and even oppressed in our time. The aim of the research was to examine African traditional widowhood rites and practices with special reference to the comfort or pain to which they subject African

widows. The data analyzed overwhelmingly indicated that the humiliation and pain caused to African widows by these rites far outweighed the benefits. This research established that African Christians had been influenced by the traditional African widowhood rites that discriminated against and violated widows' human rights. It was the same thesis that the current study sought to establish in the context of the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church cultures with reference to widowhood rites and rituals.

## **2.16 Ababukusu Widowhood Rites and Rituals**

So far we have noted that funeral rituals are different in all parts of the world, though they all show one common theme, reverence for the deceased. Every culture and civilization has attended to the proper care of their dead and so are the Ababukusu who have created and practiced their own form of remembrance of the dead. We have noted that Whenever a wealthy, influential and elderly person died among the Ababukusu, the commonest rituals performed included wailing, singing, eating, drinking and dancing, the widow goes back to her maternal home to inform about the husband's death, citing and digging of the grave, preparation of the body for burial, the burial ceremony, the cattle drive, hair having, removing of sickness (Lufu), stepping onto the arena (*khuswala kumuse*), sharing of the deceased's belongings, widow inheritance and commemoration ceremonies (*khumala silindwa* and *khukhala kimikoye*) or literally "smearing the grave" and "cutting ropes".

### **2.16.1 Wailing and Crying.**

Among the Ababukusu, death of a wealthy and influential elder was more significant than that of a poor, a young individual or a woman. This is because the Ababukusu society is patriarchal and a man is considered the pillar that holds his family together, not the wife. Among the Ababukusu, a man was supposed to die at night or at dawn.

If by bad luck one died during the day, people were barred from wailing or singing dirges and were warned from disclosing the death in any way. Death was made public at dawn because the Abaluhya believe that an elder who dies during the day turns into a bad spirit (Sisieno, Sinaninga, Sinanyenje, sinamutinga) which returns to haunt or kill clansmen. However, Wasike posts that announcing the death during the day would have disrupted daily routine and activities (Wasike 2013).

When death occurred, women and men wailed loudly. The wife bursts out with wailing and is joined by the sons, daughters and other men and women. For men, the crying is “ye ye ye”, and for women it is “woi, woi, woi”. Women cry with their hands on the back of their head, while men hit grasses, bushes and buildings with their walking sticks in anger. As they wailed, a mourner would lament in song about the unknown fate of the orphans the deceased left behind and wondered why the spirit of death did not visit him or her and leave the deceased alone to take care of his children (Barasa, 2016).

Before running around their neighborhood informing people about the death of their husband, the widows wore leg jingles (*bichenje*) as communication tools alerting people of the occurrence of death but not cowbells, because under no circumstances could anyone wear artifacts meant for livestock (Wasike, 2013). As widows moved, they proceeded to a nearby stream when they immersed themselves in water before smearing their bodies with clay and a special ash called “*bukhuchakali*” (Wasike, 2013). The clay and ash not only identified them as bereaved widows, but also served as a dancing costumes as well as an expression of their sorrow and grieve over the loss of their loved one (Khaemba 2009). As they sang and danced, the widows praised their husband, narrated his battle with illness as well as his caring attitude towards his family. Upon their arrival home from the stream, widows were received by their

sisters-in-law who prompted them into a wailing, singing and vigorous dance session.

Death of a wife however did not attract such an elaborate ritual procedure.

### **2.16.2. The Burial Ceremony**

Men were often buried inside their houses because they were the head of the homestead, and in order to prevent wild animals from exhuming the body and devouring it. Women on the other hand, were buried outside their houses in a grave (*Silindwa*). Often the deceased allocates the task of dressing his body, when he dies, to a specific son or brother.

### **2.16.3. Cattle Drive Ritual**

If the deceased is a respected elder, a cattle drive is staged around the grave immediately after burial. The purpose is to afford the cattle a chance to mourn their shepherd (owner) and to celebrate his memory as a cattle owner. The cattle drive is accompanied by singing and dancing, which is meant to drive away the spirit of the dead man so that he does not linger around the homestead and create misfortune. This is also the “dance of death” in which the widow dances on the grave, if she was faithful to the late husband throughout their marriage (Makila, 1978). This is also a pointer to the fact that the Ababukusu community to some extent holds women in marriage with a level of suspicion either as unfaithful or even involved in the death of the husband.

After burying their husband, widows sat with their legs stretched under the right hand side eaves (*kamatoche*) of the death house. Their widowed sisters-in law brought them very little eleusine ugali and vegetables prepared and served on potsherds (*bikolonjo*). The widows were expected to eat reluctantly for four days the small amounts of food offered to them as a way of showing grief following the demise of their husband.

#### **2.16.4. Widow Cleansing Ritual**

A day after burial, the widow(s) and other close relatives are led to the river to bath and wash the clothes and beddings in which the deceased died. The widows' old clothes are stripped off as they washed off the clay and ash on their bodies which they smeared upon themselves on the day their husband died. It was believed that by bathing in the stream, the widows cleansed themselves of everything connected with their dead husbands. That is why they submerged their bodies completely in deep sections of a stream (Wagner, 1949). From the river, widows returned home amidst song and dance, led by the eldest widow as the soloist, until they got to the grave. A "faithfully" wife climbed and danced on the grave as she sang dirges in his praise. However, a widow who had "eaten rats" (*Khulia Chimbeba*) i.e. had been adulterous, secretly underwent cleansing with special herbs before she could freely engage in the grave dances.

#### **2.16.5. Removal of Sickness(*Lufu*) Ritual**

On the third day after burial a ceremony called "*khurusialufu*" (literally removing the sickness") was held. During this ceremony, hair of persons closely related to the deceased was shaved beginning with the widow, then sons and daughters and other people, including all those who came into contact with the deceased man either in his death bed or during burial. It was believed that since they were in close contact with the dead person, the *lufu* (sickness) which killed him may have stuck in their hair and was likely to spread in the community. Shaving the hair also symbolized death and its growing again indicated continuity of life. It was believed that those who refused to shave would suffer from persistent headaches. A fowl or goat was then slaughtered and those who took part in the ceremony shared in eating the meat, (Khaemba, 2009).

On this occasion of “removing of sickness”, widows were assigned a “new husband” who was either a real brother or close relative to the deceased. The “new husband” was meant to be a caretaker of the deceased’s family and did not necessarily have conjugal access to the widow. A widow remarried if she so wished, at the end of the mourning period, which came a year or two after the husband’s death. People who owed the deceased pledged to pay back the debts, while close relatives to the dead pledged to his debtors on how they would be paid.

On the same third day, family and close relatives share the clothes of the deceased man to symbolize that he is not completely gone, but still with them. Mourners then return to their homes, but the widow is left with some other rituals to perform on her own. For example, widows were expected to avoid any form of sexual contacts since they were in a state of ritual impurity. This was despite the fact that they were allocated new “husbands” during the “removing of sickness” ceremony. Before the widow continues with her sexual life after the death of the husband, she will be required to travel to a far place and find a male stranger to make love to her in a nearby bush without revealing to him that she is a widow. She will be required to accept the normal foreplay but when it comes to the act, she will scream in the pretext that someone is coming then they will all run away. This is called “*Khukhala kumulindi*” and it symbolically frees the woman from being a wife back to the free market to find a sexual mate. By this, the widow will have cleansed herself and therefore she will now be free for a new sexual life. It’s believed that if one does not adhere to it, then her sexual life will not be successful, as she might give birth to unique creatures. The woman after the sexual act, will go straight to her house and be served with roasted bananas or bananas cooked with pills, signifying a new beginning, as bananas are seen to portray a new life as well as continuation of life. If a man realizes that he has been

used by a widow to cleanse herself, he will need to cleanse himself as well, or else he will have brought death to his family. He will be required to take a roaster and go to the exact scene, strangle, roast and leave the fowl at the scene. He can also slaughter sheep there for the purpose of cleansing himself (Barasa: 2011).

Throughout the entire mourning period of one or two years, the widows wore goat skin inside out and tied ropes (*Kimikoye*) of beads or plants around her head, neck, arms, and ankles. These were cut during “*khukhalakimikoye*” (Cutting of ropes). While in these attires, the widows wailed, danced, and sang dirges especially in the evenings, at the grave of their husband. However, any time someone reminded the widows of their new status, i.e. “*Namulekhwa*” (literally the one left behind), they would emotionally sit at the graveside to mourn their deceased husband in song and dance.

#### **2.16.6. Khumala silindwa Ritual**

Later, there is another ritual, “*khumala silindwa*” (mudding the grave) with clay soil from the river after all grass has been removed. This rite signifies welcoming the deceased fully into the ancestral World, and is done by an elderly woman. On this occasion also, the widow is inherited by an elder brother to the deceased so as to bring up children for his late brother. This practice is meant to ensure continuity, care for the children and widow, as well as protection of ancestral land and family property. The practice also ensures the permanence of marriage in the traditional Ababukusu Community (Barasa, 2011)

#### **2.17. Summary**

It is clear from the foregoing section that the woman is at the center of the entire funeral rituals among the Ababukusu. The role of rituals in the provision of stability following the structural destabilization caused by death as a phenomenon among the Ababukusu people is also obvious. However, some of the rituals definitely present difficult ordeals

for the widow. For example, despite the loss of a loved one; a difficult ordeal in itself, the widow must still ritually prove faithfulness to the deceased prior to his death as well as ritually exonerate self from suspicions of complicity in the death of the husband that often revolve around the widow rather than the widower. In the final analysis, the words of John Monaghan and Just Peter ring with clarity that religion must help people to deal with the problems of human life that are significant, persistent and intolerable by providing a set of ideas about the 'how' and the 'why' about their world, and allowing people to accommodate anxieties and deal with misfortunes.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0. Introduction**

This chapter discusses research design, methods of data collections, validity and reliability of research instruments, data collection procedure and finally data analysis.

#### **3.1. Research design**

This is blueprint that guides and informs how the study was conducted (Babbie and Mouton, 2008: 23). This also explains the procedure by which we approached problems and arrived at answers. In this study, the research used a mixed research design that included both quantitative and qualitative approaches that employed descriptive and explorative methods to describe the experiences of the widow after the death of husband among Ababukusu of Western Kenya. Quantitative method was used to establish the general positions about the experience of the widows in regard to funeral rituals following death of a husband. The results from the quantitative enquiry were then interrogated qualitatively. According to Creswell (1994) qualitative research is an inquiry that explores human problems in such a way that the researcher analyses words, reports detailed news of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994: 3-20). The themes of the qualitative research, study the real life situation as they unfold naturally.

#### **3.2 Study Population and Sampling Technique**

The target population of this study was the Lugulu yearly meeting with its 526 villages that constituted of 162 monthly meetings. From these, stratified random sampling was employed to obtain a sample of 162 women leaders and 162 pastors 12 of whom were women. Deliberate sampling was used to select 12 Ababukusu elders that included 6 males, 6 females 3 of whom were widows. These elders constituted the key informants for this study. Focus group discussion was finally employed to ventilate on the

emerging issues for clarity. The focus group discussion constituted of 5 monthly meeting pastors, 5 women leaders from the monthly meeting, 6 elders 3 of whom were females and 2 yearly meetings pastors making a total of 18 discussants selected through stratified random sampling from various groups constituted in this study as already mentioned above.

Generally, these respondents had ages above the age of 18 years; an age demarcation hinged on the Kenyan Constitution which considers 18<sup>th</sup> year as the majority boundary when one has acquired more of the societal responsibility. Sampling was basically probabilistic due to presence of official membership records providing mainly quantitative data as was the treatment of the data from 324 respondents made up of both pastors and women leaders. Qualitative treatment of data was also employed with regard to deliberate or judgmental sampling that saw sources chosen purposively as was the case of 12 key informants. In this the judgment of the researcher played an important role in the sampling design. Kothari (2008, 73) sees no problem with this approach in a research as was the case in this particular situation with a relative advantage in terms of time and money. The samples so obtained from these methods provided data used mainly for both qualitative and quantitative inferences employed in this study. The table below illustrates the age and educational demographic data of the 336 respondents.

**Table 4. 1: Demographic data of the respondents on the distribution of age and educational levels.**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>PAST OR</b>	<b>WOMEN LEADERS</b>	<b>ELDERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
18-30 YRS	15	17	15	15	00	032
31-50 YRS	91	106	95	95	00	197
51 YRS and Above	50	57	52	52	12	107
Total	156	180	162	162	12	336
Percentage( %)	46%	54%	48.2 %	48.2%	3.6%	100%

*Source: Field data*

### **3.3. Methods of Data Collection**

The researcher used the following instruments to collect data: Questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules, and content analysis.

#### **3.3.1. Questionnaires**

This method of data collection promised a wider coverage since the respondents could be approached easily than other approaches (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:71). The questionnaires contained both open and closed ended items. The use of questionnaire allowed for great uniformity in the way the question were answered thus ensured great compatibility (Kombo and Tromp, 2006:89).

#### **3.3.2. Interview Schedules**

Interview method was also used for data collection in this study. This entailed the oral administration of questions (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:83). Terre Blanche et al (2006) point out the fact that interviewing is probably the most commonly used form of data collection in qualitative research (p.272). The study used semi-structured

interviews for data collection. The interview questions were used as a guide to have an in depth understanding of the experience of the people after the death of a husband. Interview schedules helped the researcher to seek out clarifications, corrections, and explanations of different aspects of the study. In this case the interviews were conducted with the respondents who had experience with Friends Church history as well as those with experience in the traditional Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals.

The use of interview method was justified on the ground that oral traditions play an important role in knowledge production, preservation and dissemination and are not less important than the written texts (Oluwole, 1997:2). Story telling as a cultural representation in research contexts is usually referred to as inquiry (Stake, 2002: 435-454). Story telling is embodied within the real traditions which reflects the meaning of indigenous people and encompasses their cultural values.

### **3.3.3. Observation**

This method was appropriate in this study since it enabled the researcher to witness situations personally without relying on other people.

### **3.3.4. Content Analysis**

The research used secondary data. To this end the researcher visited university libraries such as the Margaret Thatcher Library at Moi University and university library of Masinde Muliro of Science and Technology. This effort entailed literature review of content on traditional African cultures and the general history of the Church in Africa.

## **3.4. Validity and Reliability of Research instruments**

It is a measure of the degree to yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:95). The validity and reliability of the research instruments were determined in two ways:

- a) The researcher discussed the items of the instruments with the supervisors as experts in the field of study to establish the validity of the instruments.
- b) A pilot study was carried out and selected respondents used in the pilot study were not part of the representative sample used in the final primary data collection. Results of the pilot study were compared and their variance examined to establish any weaknesses in the data collection tools. Some alterations in the data collection tools were consequently made before the actual primary data collection hence ensuring the reliability of the tools.

### **3.5. Data collection procedure**

The researcher sought permission from the relevant authorities beginning with the school of graduate studies at Masinde Muliro University of science and technology. A permit was also sort from the ministry of education to enable the research to be carried out. The researcher equally also obtained permission from the respondents in this study (The copies of the same are attached in the appendix of this thesis). Usually the letter of appointment was dispatched two weeks before the actual visit by the researcher.

### **3.6. Data analysis**

The data was analyzed manually employing general descriptive statistics that involved use of percentages. The results are presented in the graphical representation form of tables. After collection of data the researcher edited the raw data with the aim of detecting errors, omissions and correct where possible. The data was then coded, classified and tabulated. The raw data then was categorized into themes, patterns, and relationships that are subjected to discussion and eventual interpretation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter mainly analyses the primary data in this study and discusses the same in the light of the secondary data already discussed in this study. Among the data analyzed include that on the history of integration of the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals; herein referred to as the Interface. The chapter also examines the Ababukusu society from a gender perspective. The chapter then ventures into the consequences of the Interface for the widow with reference to the widowhood rites and rituals. The vulnerability of the widow to consequences of widowhood rites and rituals among the Ababukusu is finally examined as it leads to the conclusion of the chapter.

#### **4.1 The Lugulu Quaker Church Headquarters and Organization Today**

Bungoma County that hosts the Lugulu Quaker (Friends) church headquarters as well as being the traditional home of the Ababukusu people has a total population of 526 village meetings of friends' church, 162 monthly meetings, 56 quarterly meetings and 7 yearly meetings. The village meeting is the basic unit of friends' church organization at the local level. Friends worship every Sunday within their local village meetings and participate in the worship and governance processes of the monthly meetings of which a monthly meeting is a part. The village meetings of Lugulu meet every Sunday for meetings of worship, have pastors who plan organize and conduct meetings for worship, receive new members, guide and counsel them for membership at all levels, keep records which are normally made known to the monthly meetings and finally the yearly meetings, recommend to the monthly meetings names of membership to be

disciplined for expressions or conduct inconsistent with Christian discipleship or with the faith and practice. Upon consideration of such recommendations, the monthly meeting may, work to offer a process for confession, repentance and reconciliations, impose responsibilities for a suitable period of restoration, remove the members name from the membership lists, reach out to those who are outside the meeting and involve other members in outreach. Monthly meeting is also supposed to provide care for widows and orphans.

The Monthly Meeting refers to the congregation as well as to the actual gatherings for the tradition of church business, which usually occur monthly. As the governing body, the monthly meeting, holds the membership of friends and receives new members, discipline members for good cause, terminates memberships of those who persist in unrepentant disunity with the church, records births and deaths, conducts marriages and burials, oversees the finances of the monthly meetings, and appoints representatives to the quarterly and yearly meetings. A monthly meeting is headed by a presiding clerk, a treasurer and other appointed committee members as need may arise. The pastor on the other hand is employed by and accountable to the monthly meetings and is responsible generally for the planning, leading and co-coordinating the public worship of the church. On the financial affairs, the village and monthly meetings maintains a bank account in the name of a monthly meeting and appoints signing officers, presiding clerk, recording clerk and the treasurer who are authorized to make enquiries and withdrawals with the rest of the members tithing 10% of their income. This is cascaded upwards from village meetings to yearly meeting.

Quarterly meetings are held four times a year when several village and monthly meetings come together to form one large quarterly meeting. This forum provides more frequent or convenient occasions for mutual support, inspiration and introduction

of local friends. It is also a forum for the orderly consideration of the concerns arising from local meetings destined for the yearly meetings and agenda. Yearly meetings gather annually to adopt doctrinal and organizational descriptions as well develop new programs while paying careful attention to the needs of members and attendances in crisis.

#### **4.2 Nature of the Integration of Ababukusu Traditional and Friends Church Funeral rituals**

In a primary research item, the respondents were required to agree or disagree whether Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals had integrated smoothly. The **Table 4.2** below illustrates the response in this regard.

**Table 4. 2: Smooth integration of the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church Funeral Rituals**

<b>AGE BRACKET</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>18-30</b>	29	03	32
<b>31-50</b>	24	165	189
<b>51 and above</b>	42	61	103
<b>Total</b>	107	229	324
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	29%	71%	100%

*Source: Field data*

The respondents were further asked to give reasons for their responses in **Table 4.2** above. From the tabulated results above it was clear that many of the respondents felt that Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals are not

integrated smoothly. This was also the dominant position of many of the key informants. Many reasons were given in support of this position that included inferior view of Ababukusu culture by the Church. Many respondents also cited missionary attempts to deculturise the Ababukusu converts from the traditional Ababukusu culture on the part of initial converts. This concern of the respondents and key informants to a large extent resonated well with the history the Friends Church among the Ababukusu.

The case of Elijah Masinde and the founding of Dini Ya Msambwa (DYM) historically confirmed this position. Kuloba (2011) has captured this history in a much related way in an article, “Religion of the Ancestor(s) (Dini Ya Musambwa) in East Africa: Historical and Theological Analysis since independence.” Elijah Masinde according to this author was a Bukusu, born around 1910 at Kimilili in Western Kenya. His early education and Christian instructions were with the Friends African Mission. Little however is known about his western education level. Kuloba argues that having been a Friends African Missionary (Quaker) convert he must have attained basic education especially functional literacy skills to read the Bible. We already saw in the foregoing literature review that by 1902, the Quakers had established a mission in Western Kenya at a place called Kaimosi and later at Lugulu with a number of mission schools with the principle focus on “learning to read the Bible”.

Masinde is said to have picked a quarrel with Rev. J.W Ford of the Friend African Mission by insisting that African converts should not adopt foreign names and unAfrican ways of life like monogamous marriage. Almost alluding to the incorporation of European culture into Christianity, Masinde argued that by so persuading Africans to adopt the said European names, Africans were forsaking their

own ancestral norms. Masinde further reasoned that the only names that were permissible were those found in biblical scriptures, that is the names of Biblical heroes like Moses, Elijah, and David among others. Rev. J.W Ford was on the other hand displeased by Masinde's ideas and suspended him for 12 months from the Church. Upon marrying a second wife, Masinde was finally ripe for dismissal from the Friends African Mission. It was at this point that Masinde formed Dini Ya Musambwa (DYM). To Masinde, the missionaries were not God. The authority in the Bible texts was the only God, and not the white missionary. What the Bible sanctioned according to Masinde was what God allowed among his people.

It is then clear that DYM as the religion resulting from this episode came to be known thus was born as a consequence of cultural, intellectual and theological disputation between Masinde and the Friends African Mission. The dispute, though nationalistic in outlook, was centered on the word of God - the Bible - whose authority was more valuable to Masinde than the words and admonitions of the European Missionary. To Masinde, the universality of the biblical God meant that this God of the Bible appreciated his culture and he would prefer this universal God to address him with his personal name as "Masinde!" In essence Masinde certainly realized the cultural similarities between the Biblical environment and African traditional life, and reasoned that God was sympathetic to African ways of life, and that it was the missionary agency of the word of God that was the enemy against African ways of life. Masinde was duty bound to preach to his people what he thought was the appropriate message from God for the African.

In DYM the Christian message of the messiah and deliverance was reworked and Africanized by Masinde, to be relevant from the perspective of African traditions.

Masinde became an itinerant prophet and preacher of his faith and the unity of black people and claimed to be the biblical Elijah, who confronts foreign (read Canaanite), religious ideologies that had infiltrated his land (read Israel) (Kuloba, 2011). Masinde confirms our findings in **Table 4.2** when he preached about a number of issues such as the missionary antipathy towards African cultural values that included religious beliefs, polygamy, initiation rites, and the coming of the African messiah. Despite several persecutions and detentions by both colonial and post-colonial governments Masinde's movement was established, and by the time of his death in 1987 DYM was a well-founded religious movement in Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda (Kuloba, 2011).

Their position is however problematic particularly when treated from the perspective of the often dualistic nature of Christian conversion in Africa that incorporates many indigenous aspects. It is however noted that **Table 4.2** also indicates that a considerable minority of the respondents maintained that the integration of Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals was smooth. Cited in this respect was the continued growth of the followers of the Friends Church adherents among the Ababukusu.

### **4.3 Consonances between Ababukusu Traditional and Friends Church Funeral Practices**

In another research item the respondents were asked to respond by reacting to an item on whether there were areas of consonances between Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church funeral practices. The responses from this item are illustrated in **Table 4.3** below.

**Table 4. 3: Consonance between Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church funeral practices**

<b>AGE BRACKET</b>	<b>NO CONSONANCE</b>	<b>CONSONANCE</b>	<b>ANY OTHER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>18-30 YRS</b>	032	00	00	032
<b>31-50 YRS</b>	152	19	18	189
<b>51 YRS and above</b>	103	00	00	103
<b>Total</b>	287	19	18	324
<b>Percentage(%)</b>	88%	6%	6%	100%

*Source: Field data*

The results in **Table 4.3** indicate that an overwhelming majority of the respondents in this study maintained that there was no consonance in the two respective funeral rites as the two systems were totally different. One key informant in this category particularly maintained that Friends Church funeral practices primarily aim to help a soul to transcend and be with the God. This position identified with the general Christian claim towards reinforcing Christian beliefs concerning the life after death and the hope of resurrection that is found in Christ Jesus. Death rituals in Friends Church in particular and Christianity in general according to this informant, are therefore moments that prompt all present, for once, at least to reflect upon the transcendental nature of human life.

This study however could not rule out the influence of the pejorative view of the traditional African religion and culture by radical Christians on the overwhelming response. This position as observed in the literature review in chapter two, portended dialogical problems hence adversely affected harmonious relations. Sanneth (1983) underscores the fact that it was the same hard stand that many times failed to take into account some of those belief systems and values that are central to people's knowledge of life realities. It was in fact this central belief and value system that enabled the African converts to connect with aspect of the Christian teachings as is affirmed by the evidence that Africans responded much more positively to Christianity in places where African religion was strongly practiced pointing to a degree of African cultural compatibility with the gospel.

This argument resonated with a 6% of the respondents on the other hand who thought that there was consonance between the Ababukusu traditional and Friend Church funeral rights. In support of this position, a key respondent observed that among the Ababukusu Christians, funeral liturgy and commitment rituals for a dead Christians were performed at the church and the graveyard as well. This respondent further said that apart from this the rest of the funeral rites were mainly done according to the Ababukusu indigenous beliefs system. Further, crisis moments such as accidents and mysterious diseases it would appear often saw many Ababukusu Christians resort to traditional ways while still being faithful to Christianity. Visits to several Friends Church adherents during this study confirmed that indeed Friends Church was particularly active during burial moments. This also supported the submission that African religion forms the religious and cultural context from which most African Christians came and in which many of them may still live and find their mode of life to a great extent as Fitzgerald (1986) observes.

#### 4.4 Specific Areas of Consonance

In another research instrument on specific areas of consonance with reference funeral rites between traditional Ababukusu and Friend's Church cultures, the respondents were asked to agree, disagree or express uncertainty on possible given areas of consonance that included transcendental reference, and male dominance as expressed in funeral rites and rituals. The following **Table 4.4** summarizes these responses.

*Table 4. 4: Specific Areas of Consonance*

<b>AGE BRACKET</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>18-30</b>	14	18	32
<b>31-50</b>	31	158	189
<b>51 and above</b>	44	59	103
<b>Total</b>	89	235	324
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	27.5%	72.5%	100%

*Source: Field data*

It was not surprising that the majority respondents did not see any consonance (72.5%). This could be explained partly from the position that traditional aspects of African culture are often shunned from the Christian point of view as informed by the hangover of the initial historical contact of the two cultures.

#### **4.5 Ababukusu Traditional Widowhood Rites and Rituals**

The information gathered through oral interview from key respondents constituting of the elderly people corroborated generally that when a man died among the Ababukusu people, the widow, children and family members wailed. This was an expression of sorrow for losing the loved one and a way of alerting the community that a member had died. After the death of the husband the widow wore jingles around her waist and went to inform her parents about the husband's death. She came back with flour and chicken and went directly to the house where the body of the husband was lying mourning him. At this moment the widow was not allowed to change the clothes she was wearing at the time the husband died. It was further observed that under many circumstances, widows would be left without anything, without utensils, bed, beddings and mattress taken away.

Before the husband was buried, the family looked for another widow who would cook, care and advise her. The widow was not allowed to eat food prepared by any other person apart from that prepared by this identified widow. The utensils she used could not be used by any other person. The clothes that the widow was wearing at the time of the death of the husband and the utensils that she was using before burying the husband, were all taken away by her caretaker as she was not allowed to use them again. The front cooking stone was removed by the care taker of the widow and the widow at night and secretly hidden where it could not be found. This was done after burial symbolizing that the owner of the home was dead. Likewise, the ash was also removed and thrown far away. The beddings and the clothes of the deceased too were taken away by his brothers. The clothes the deceased was wearing, the bed, blankets, mattress he lay on at death were taken away by the person who washed his body. It was observed that under many circumstances, widows would be left without anything.

It was also apparent from these key respondents that the widow was always suspected for having played a role in the death of her husband and was taken through trial by ordeal and expected to die if she was guilty. A suspected widow could not be allowed to put on the attire of the late husband, to sit near the husband's body, to witness the husband being lowered into the grave and neither could she touch the soil of the grave. Such a widow could not eat the meat of the animal slaughtered in the home for funeral as this could cause her death. In some situations, the suspected widows could be sent away by the in-laws. A faithful widow however was expected to mourn with the late husband's spear and walking stick, hat and coat and could sit at the side of the head of the husband's body. If the deceased while sick could not respond to the call of nature at the required place and relieved himself on his beddings and clothing, a ritual was performed to cleanse the widow and the children after death. A sheep was slaughtered and the widow, children and family members were to step in the entrails of the slaughtered sheep.

Three days after burial there was another ritual called "LUFU" where members come together to discuss the property of the deceased, the debts he had and what people owed him among many other issues. After some days the widow was taken to one of the brothers to the late husband for a ritual called "khusinga likokhe" (washing the ashes) where there was eating and drinking. From there the widow was taken back to her home with the remaining food packed and given to her to carry to her home. While she was on the way she was not allowed to greet, talk to anyone nor look behind for this would cause other misfortunes. The widow and the family members that accompanied her went directly to the grave where there was singing and mourning. A widow too was not allowed to enter into a house where a husband was still alive during the mourning period which lasted for several months. One key respondent who was a

widow shared her experience in this research narrating that a month after the death of her husband, she left home to go and look for food from a neighbor. On the way the people she met ran away from her and nobody greeted her. The neighbor did not welcome her neither did she talk to her but instead sent her away by use of gestures. The widow shed tears and remarked, “Vunamulekhwa Vuvi” (Widowhood is bad). This kind of treatment was because the family and community felt that the widow was still unclean and free interaction with other people would cause misfortunes in the family. If she was to enter another house, it was supposed to be a house of another widow. All these confirmed the fact that the Ababukusu widowhood ritual caused a lot of suffering to the widows and more worse were the widows who had no source of income because nobody was willing to support them.

Three years later the Ababukusu have another ritual called “khukwisia Likuvili” (Destroying the house of the deceased). One widow expressed the pain she went through to accomplish this ritual. The house was destroyed and she had nowhere to go with her children who were still young. Her parents built a small grass thatched house for her within four days. The fifth day she settled in the house while it was still wet and very cold and that caused the death of her son who was four years old.

It was almost unanimous among these key respondents that despite the comfort the widows sometimes found in the Church they also faced some challenges. Sometimes their free interaction with members especially men raised suspicion among some women in church who accused them of snatching their husbands.

In regard to Ababukusu traditional widowhood rites and rituals, several research items were also employed to the 324 respondents for corroboration. In one incident the respondents had to react to a research item asking them to enumerate the common

traditional widowhood rituals and rites among the Ababukusu people. In another they had to respond to an item on whether the said widowhood rituals and rites were still practiced among the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians or not, and yet in another research item, the respondents had to give reasons for their responses on why traditional widowhood rituals and rites were still practiced by the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians if any.

Most of the respondents were alive to the traditional Ababukusu widowhood rituals and rites that included, wailing around informing neighborhood about the death of their husband. The “dance of death” during the cattle drive was yet another ritual in the category of trial by ordeal in which the widow danced on the grave to prove innocence and faithfulness to the late husband throughout their marriage. Sitting with legs stretched under the right hand side eaves (*kamatoche*) of the death house was yet another ritual that singled the widow apart from the rest. A widow was also expected to eat reluctantly for four days and eat small amounts of food offered to them as a way of showing grief following the demise of their husband. Other rituals included smearing clay upon themselves on the day of their husband’s death, shaving their hair, being assigned a “new husband” who was either a real brother or close relative to the deceased, and to avoid any form of sexual acts since they were in a state of ritual impurity. She was to find a male stranger to make love to her in a nearby bush without revealing to him that she was a widow (*Khukhala kumulindi*). These resonated with the views of the key informants and the already reviewed literature such as by (Okoronkwo 2015) who observed that the widow, who may have enjoyed every amount of freedom and goodwill while her husband lived, suddenly turned incommunicado as the death of her “husband heralds a period of imprisonment and hostility” for her. Her movement becomes restricted throughout the mourning period,

“and culture forbids her to eat except with tattered and old eating bowls made from gourds” (10 p.72). She is not expected to be happy or laugh, chat or play with people at this period as she is supposed to be unclean and abominable and to be treated indifferently by others too; and she is mandated to continually cry and wail for her deceased husband. She is subjected to wearing mourning cloths throughout her mourning period thus making her readily identifiable as a widow. She also faces further humiliation of her hairs on the head being shaven off. Okoye (1995), observes relatedly in regard to Africa that widowhood rituals therefore mark the widow out as an outcast in the normal society of men as a creature at war with the world beyond until she frees herself by fulfilling all widowhood rites (10 p.75).

Therefore, the ablution rituals by which the widow is believed to be cleansed and reintegrated into the society from which she had been virtually ostracized since her husband’s death is a widowhood rite that depersonalizes, dehumanizes, and utterly violates the right to dignity of the woman. In some places in most practicing regions, the ablution ritual is associated with sexual intercourse as the widow is introduced to a ‘ritual cleanser’ who will have sexual intercourse with her in order to lift, as is believed, the taboo placed over her (Okoye 1995). At this juncture it was therefore clear that the Ababukusu traditional widowhood rituals did fit in well in the general African scheme of traditional widowhood rituals as is confirmed by Okoye.

Most of the respondents constituting 98% (302 of the 324 respondents) further agreed that traditional widowhood rituals and rites were still practiced among the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians. This position seemed to resonate well with the assertion already made elsewhere in this study that traditional African culture to a large extent formed the subconscious mind of the African way of the ultimate

knowing particularly in crisis moments such as death, and that Christianity merely plays the second fiddle roles at such crisis moments. But, why?

The following **Table 4.5** illustrates the categorization of reasons advanced for the research item on the continuation of traditional widowhood rituals and rites among the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians.

**Table 4. 5: Categories of reasons for continuation of traditional widowhood rituals and rites among contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians**

<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Compulsion by relatives</b>	<b>Lack of consensus on part of christians</b>	<b>Women solidarity with culture</b>	<b>The only way</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>18-30 YRS</b>	04	04	03	14	07	32
<b>31-50 YRS</b>	64	31	48	14	32	189
<b>51 YRS and Above</b>	12	13	11	43	24	103
<b>Total</b>	80	48	62	71	63	324
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	25%	15%	19%	27%	22%	100%

*Source: Field data*

It was of interest to this study as it is evident from **table 5** that among the prominent reasons alluded to the continuation of Ababukusu traditional widowhood rituals were; compulsion by relatives both male and female in a society where traditional kinship ties formed the basis of the family and not marriage. Ironically, it was also a contributing issue that many women in the Friends Church continued to see their social role through traditional spectacles by resorting to norms designed to serve and up hold the kinship solidarity and authority already mentioned. According to others, widowhood rites constituted the only way out for the widow hence its continuation

equally mentioned were issues attributed to lack of Friends Church consensus on attitudes towards traditional customs that include widowhood practices thus encouraging traditional sentiments. This to a significant extent agrees with the inference driving this study that there is complicity between the Church and traditional culture herein referred to as the Interphase that generally subjugates the women in society.

#### **4.6 The Interface and Widowhood Rituals among Ababukusu Friends Church Members**

Three items in the research tools particularly addressed the issue above. In the first item, the respondents were asked if there was a compromise on part of the traditional culture and the Church on the one hand and the continuing widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu Friends Church members. The respondents were accorded two categories to choose from. The responses were as illustrated in **Table 4.6**.

**Table 4. 6: Relationship Between the Interface and Continuation of Widowhood Rituals among Ababukusu Friends Church Members**

<b>AGE BRACKET</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>18-30</b>	13	19	032
<b>31-50</b>	142	47	189
<b>51 and above</b>	42	61	103
<b>Total</b>	197	127	324
<b>Percentage(%)</b>	61%	39%	100%

*Source: Field data*

On further interrogation in the Focus Group Discussion (FDG) it was apparent that when 61% of the respondents observed that the continuation of the widowhood rituals was not a function of a conspiracy between the Church and traditional culture, the later had to take full responsibility for the continuation. Where there seemed to be relationships was the response of the remaining 39% of the respondents, it largely implied that continuation of traditional widowhood rituals was tacitly acceptable to the Church. In another research item the of respondents had to give reason for the “yes” response above that constituted 39% of the respondents.

This 39% of the respondents advanced several reasons to support their positions. A sample of these responses included:

- *Mainly the church does not have forum for widows...*
- *People in Church don't want to talk about widowhood...*

- *People believe the rituals are not bad...*
- *Church does not see anything bad with the rituals...*
- *Widowhood is not an issue of church but society...*
- *Church respects African cultural practices...*
- *Because they do not affect the church...*

It was apparent from responses at this point that despite the trauma suffered by widows and the fact that widowhood status was becoming more common, it still remained an issue that the Church and people were hesitant to speak about. Death and the dead was expressed as a topic to be avoided explaining people's hesitancy to address and confront traditional cultural practices. This hesitancy apparently was said to be present within institutions of theological learning. Consequently, ministers are not trained on how to support women who have lost their partners, nor are they shown how to confront cultural practices that discriminate against widows. It was also apparent in this study that most of the monthly meetings of the Friends Church under study did not have a forum for the widows. This position seemed to confirm the allegations that, ministers often did not even see what was wrong with such cultural practices. The "all of these" was that widows were not supported in their time of need and the Friends church played no role in helping widowed women to heal by omission rather than commission.

#### **4.7 Consequences of Widowhood Rituals among the Ababukusu Women in the Friends Church**

In another research instrument the respondents were asked to tick on a list of possible consequences of widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu women the Friends Church. On the list of the possible consequences were; stigmatization, psychological torture, Harassment by husband's kinsmen, discrimination, Loss of property, health problems, Guilty conscience, relocation from one's home. Further, the respondents were allowed

to add others not on the list. Out of the 324 respondents, 224 that constituted 69% ticked all the categories on the list. Of the remaining respondents, 42 that constituted 13% did not tick discrimination, 23 respondents constituting 7% did not tick the relocation from home category. This was also the case with the statistics of those not ticking Guilt conscience as a category. The remaining 12 respondents constituting 4% did not tick loss of property. On the responses on any other category, cited were responses such as property destroyed and stolen, children affected by effect on the mother. These consequences were grouped and discussed under the following broad categories that include disempowering the widow, widowhood cleansing, financial implications, isolation from the world, repositioning within society and impact on children.

#### **4.7.1 Disempowering the Widow**

To begin with the study acknowledges that there are many customs and practices that people follow when death occurs in a family. Cultural practices as a result of modification therefore differ from one community to another and between different families and clans. However, what is common, just as we saw in the case of traditional widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu is that these cultural practices place heavier and more burdens on widows in comparison to widowers with many of the practices being decidedly emotionally, physically and financially harmful to the widow. It is clear from this study that when a husband dies the woman is perceived to be unable to make any concrete decisions and this explains the often harassments by the husband's kin. In this way decisions are imposed on her, mostly by her family-in-laws. These decisions often are rarely to her benefit and neither do they take her wishes into account. At this point cultural demands are judged as being more important than the needs of the widow who often has no option but to trudge along. What aggravates the situation more is that the loss of power is not limited to the period immediately following the death but

continues, often for the rest of her life since death among Africans is a process rather than an episode as it is in the west.

#### **4.7.2 Widowhood cleansing**

This is closely related to the resultant issues of stigmatization, health problems and psychological torture. In the foregoing literature review on the gender dimension to widowhood rituals and as is corroborated by the respondents in this study, the practice of ritual cleansing was present in many traditional African societies hinging on the position that the widow was unclean as a result of the death of the husband. The bottom line in this regard was that evil spirits and agents of death, are present with the widow and she has to be purified before she can re-enter society. This explains the cleansing rituals performed after the death to cleanse or purify the widow. Many of these rituals are dangerous, especially because of the threat of HIV&AIDS, yet many communities continue to practice them as is the case of sexual intercourse by the ritual cleanser as a widowhood ritual among the Ababukusu. Mourning process is perceived to be incomplete if the widow does not undergo the process of widowhood cleansing.

We have already seen how this practice among the Ababukusu involves a stranger who is duped into the sexual act. This is believed to cleanse the widow from the evil spirits that caused the death in the family. This practice however, shows no respect for the widow; instead, to the contrary, she loses her dignity and integrity because the situation forces her to have sex with a man she does not know. She also runs a great risk of contracting, or spreading, HIV&AIDS and/or other STIs.

Among the Ababukusu as this study found out the process of widowhood cleansing is often arranged by the widow's in-laws and she is not consulted, or her consent asked for, at any stage. On the contrary, the community in general appears to show support for the practice. Even if this practice clashes with Christian doctrine, widows are

advised to uphold their cultural identity as one widow in the key informant group in this study justified the practice thus, “...*It is the way things are done...*”

#### **4.7.3 Financial Implications**

Because of the loss of power associated with widowhood rituals even if a husband provided for his wife in the event of his death, widows often cannot always be sure that they will have access to that provision. In extreme situations a widow cannot even be sure that she will be allowed to keep the money and property that she herself has worked for. The widow's family-in-law often lays claim to any inheritance available; often done in two ways. The widow herself can be inherited by a male member of her dead husband's family as a widowhood ritual. Thus through forcing her to marry him, the family-in-law gains control of the property and children. Alternatively, the family-in-laws may simply take everything, leaving the widow behind to fend for herself as was also captured in this study.

#### **4.7.4 Isolation from the World**

The mode of dress, limitations on associating with the rest of the people, where to sit among others, are all part of the widowhood rituals still actively observed by the Ababukusu Christians of the Friends Church leaning. The result is that the Ababukusu widow just like the rest of her African counterparts is physically isolated, with people avoiding her after the burial. The widow is often expected to be silent and should not be seen talking to anyone: a popular perception as one of the virtues of a good grieving widow. The widowhood rituals restrict her socially as she is not allowed to visit other homes or even shake hands with people. Thus the widow is forced to be alone and lonely in a time that she is arguably in most need of support and companionship. This is so traumatic that it can lead to depression (also read as psychological torture) and affect her physical health.

#### **4.7.5 Repositioning within Society**

While a married woman is a person with respect and standing within a community, the moment her husband dies she becomes asexualized being, a threat to the church and society. As a single woman the widow (again) experiences what single women go through. As is already observed she undergoes restrictions as part of the widowhood rituals. She must not speak to men otherwise she will be perceived as enticing and seducing them. Whenever she has to talk to a man, she has to ensure that she has someone present. Her interaction with her social networks is curtailed as she is under constant observation by the community. If the widow has a job these restrictions cause even more problems, as one cannot work with women only. Widowhood thus many a times translate to the woman having to adjust and reposition herself within society. In this process, both cultural practices relating to widowhood herein referred to as widowhood rituals and the cultural views on widowhood serve to create an entirely new identity, role and position for the widow within her community and broader society; a position that is also ripe with psychological torture.

#### **4.7.6 Impact on Children**

A woman who has children not only has to deal with her own trauma at the death of husband, but also that of her children. She has to support them both psychologically and physically. Helping her children to cope, adjust and go on with life without their father is the biggest challenge facing widows. This adjustment involves helping them deal with the psychological pain, understand why the father is no longer there and assist them in dealing with the pain of separation. Difficult questions are asked by widowhood and the widow is the one who has to answer, even though sometimes she is equally menaced by the same questions herself. In situations where the widow is stripped of her property and forced to relocate as is a practice among the Ababukusu people, she has to also help her children adjust to the new circumstances and

environment. There might be a drastic fall in their financial situation, and they have to adjust to new friends and (even) family. To put it bluntly, the sufferings of the children as a result of the death of the father is perhaps the greatest torture of widowhood. On the other hand, children are affected by seeing how their mother is treated as a widow in the name of widowhood rituals. It affects a child to see family and community members mistreat and disrespect the mother in the name of widowhood rituals. Consequently, some children become depressed and unable to perform at school. Others become rebellious and angry, sometimes even venting that anger on their mothers. Other children see the way their mothers are treated and internalize it, accepting it as the way women should be treated, thus affecting the way they structure and run their own families in future.

#### **4.8 Gender Dimension to Ababukusu Widowhood Rites and Rituals**

In a research item for this section, the respondents were asked to give their views on whether men and women in the Ababukusu community bore the consequences of spousal demise and associated rituals in equal ways among the Ababukusu Friends Church members. **Table 4.7** represents the responses by the respondents for this item.

**Table 4. 7: Male and Female Bearing the Consequences of Spousal Demise and Associated Rituals**

<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Not suffering equally</b>	<b>Suffering equally</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>18-30</b>	24	08	032
<b>31-50</b>	169	20	189
<b>51 and above</b>	78	25	103
<b>Total</b>	271	53	324
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	84%	16%	100%

*Source: Field data*

Among the most common reason advanced for equal suffering fell in the personal category citing loneliness associated with the demise of a marriage partner. The 271 respondents constituting 84% that maintained that men and women did not bear equally the consequences of spousal death and associated rituals were almost unanimous that women suffered more. The reasons advanced for the responses however tended to justify the fact that the said consequences were also not exactly the same for both sexes and that the worst forms of sufferings for women tended to be social connected to society rather than individual. This generally supported the position of this study that the consequences of spousal demise and associated rituals that included the attendant sufferings were gendered.

This resonated with the UN platform for Action (1995) that generally described how girls and women were especially affected more with conflicts in society; a situation

attributed to their unequal status in society and their sex. It was a concern of this study in view of the foregoing discussion to establish why widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu Friends Church members were gendered with apparent blessing of the confluence between traditional Ababukusu culture and the Friends Church. To this end a research item required those respondents who felt that women suffered more to give reasons why the widow appeared more vulnerable in this respect. More respondents than had previously responded that women suffered than men responded to this research item. A total of 178 respondents constituting 55% gave reasons to explain women vulnerability. These reasons were categorized and are represented in **Table 4. 8** that follows.

**Table 4. 8: Reasons behind the vulnerability of the Widow to consequences of Widowhood Rituals**

<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Domestic chores</b>	<b>Physical weakness</b>	<b>Cultural roles</b>	<b>Any other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>18-30</b>	05	03	05	05	18
<b>31-50</b>	46	23	-	34	103
<b>51 and above</b>	15	09	17	16	57
<b>Total</b>	66	35	22	55	178
<b>Percentage(%)</b>	37%	20%	12%	31%	100%

*Source: Field data*

A total of 31% of the respondents that constituted the ‘any other category’ included responses that included aspects such as illiteracy and language barrier as possible

reasons for the vulnerability of the Ababukusu women to consequences of widowhood rituals.

Meanwhile, a total of 37% of the respondents mainly mentioned reasons related to the assigned cultural duty of women in the domestic sphere where they fended for husband and family. Another 20% mentioned reasons that took issue with the fact that women were physically weaker than men and hence vulnerable to consequences of violence. Another 12% of the responses seemed to take issue with culture and how it made some roles female and others as males and where the roles for women as females tied them down making them vulnerable to consequences of rituals following the demise of the spouse. A combination of the three categories of domestic chores, cultural roles and physical weakness accounted for 69% of the 178 respondents that had responded to this item. This found reflection in the fact that in societies that are patriarchal as it seemed to be the case with the Ababukusu ethnic community and Christian societies in general, women were particularly vulnerable to poverty and deprivations and widowhood rites and ritual with their gender bias nature simply aggravate the situation.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In concluding this chapter, it is beckoning that we revisit the central Biblical story that God created human beings in his own image. This also implies that Women just like men as long as they are human beings are created in the image of God too. Yet this is hard to believe when one sees the way they are treated in most societies, even by their family members in the name of patriarchy. Abusive relationships abound against women as the case of widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu including Christians confirm in this chapter. Widowhood as a passage of life and its associated rites and rituals is particularly fraught with danger for women when the trauma of losing one's

partner is compounded by the societal and cultural expectations of widows in the face of a Church that is non-committal. The widowhood rites and rituals among the Ababukusu people, as this study confirms, reposition widows in society as objects of men's sexual desire and beings to be economically deprived. Consequently, Widows are a disadvantaged group and prone to poverty and marginalization. As the Friends Church watches and even support tacitly, as is the case in some instances, these rites and rituals subject widows to patriarchal customs, discrimination on inheritance rights and isolation, psychological torture, and cause them to suffer abuse in the context of ritual cleansing and suspicion of infidelity and complicity in the demise of the spouse. All these appear to take place in the context of a pact between traditional culture and the Church: the interface.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This is the last chapter of this study and deals mainly with the summary of chapters as well as contributions, recommendations and the suggested areas for further research as they relate to the main problem of the study.

#### 5.1 Summary of Chapters

This study had at its inception noted that the physical world as a whole continued to strike us in our reflective moments, as a question to which an answer was required and yet the answer was sadly elusive. As a perspective to understanding religion the ‘elusive answer’ approach is one often echoed by the social scientists when they view religion as the attempt to answer the more crucial existential questions, such as; ‘is there life after death, how does the universe work and what’s our role in it?’ This approach to religion highlights its functional role as serving specific social ends.

For a long time, Religions have addressed the question of how one should live with the awareness of inevitable death. Often the answer of religions has been based upon the vision of a life beyond death. This explained why different cultures perform death rituals often depending on the meaning they attach to death.

The study had also noted that death was characterized by a series of cultural rituals and rites of passage which at times continued as the living dead were remembered and continued to influence the actions of the living as is seen in the death of the husband in most African communities; a phenomenon that impacts negatively on widows. Though death is a mystery to all, widows in particular become extremely vulnerable upon their husband’s death with the lives of many being turned into a living hell not just by in laws, but also by the society in general. The study postulated that this was

not only due to traditional African culture but also due to an interface (a working together) between Christianity and the later despite Christianity's supposedly message of love and the traditional African teaching of *ubuntu* principles of communality, mutual respect, caring and so forth. There thus seemed to be a dishonest pact in the form of an apparent deliberate uncaring, disrespectful, discriminatory, impolite and unjust treatment of widows in African communities in spite of the confluence between *ubuntu* values and Christian teaching that emphasise love and caring, especially towards the grieving and thus vulnerable widows.

In a nut shell, the introductory background of this study that constituted chapter one submitted that widows seemed to be neglected and oppressed in our time. It was in this regard that the main problem of this study was to critically examine the interface between the Ababukusu traditional and the Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals with special reference to the suffering to which they subject African widows. To do so, the study adopted specific objectives that included an examination of death phenomenon from a gendered perspective with special reference to the Friends Church and Ababukusu cultural point of views, an assessment of the interface (the working together) between the Ababukusu widowhood rituals with the Friends' church rites and rituals, and an investigation of the extent to which the interface between Friends church and Ababukusu traditional widowhood rites and rituals had caused sufferings to the affected widows.

This study was based on a critical review of the structural functionalism (a combination of contributions of Emile Durkheim 1858 – 1917 and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) as it functioned anomalously from a feminist perspective that explains the resultant subjugation of women in society. Structural functionalism theory as it functions anomalously was relevant to this study because death rituals as culturally

assigned social roles among the Ababukusu are supposed to contribute to stable social relations, yet anomalous functioning of the theory sees the death rituals contribute instead to the neglect and suppression of women within the family as is the argument from the feminist perspective. The gendering of death rituals as a result of social construction from the Interphase between Ababukusu traditional and Friends church cultural positions was subjected to scrutiny from feminist perspective to establish its relationship with gender inequality among the Ababukusu people.

In chapter two, written materials related to African and Christian widowhood rites and rituals were reviewed from a general to particular perspective. The chapter also highlighted the areas of convergence and the Interphase between the two that is African and Christian widowhood rites and rituals and the motivations behind them. Finally, widowhood rites and rituals were critically analyzed from a gender perspective in the context of the Interphase between African culture in general and the Ababukusu traditional culture in particular on the one hand, and the Friends Church death rites and rituals on the other.

Of critical significance to this study from the foregoing review was the relationship between the gradual process of dying, and the hierarchical ordering of African societies based on gender. The study at that juncture considered it in order to argue that the hierarchical gender based ordering was present in the relations during the gradual process of dying in the African context between the surviving relations that include widows and the deceased. From the foregoing, it became clear why the African worldview asserted that life was a communal affair which involved a relationship between living men, God and ancestors. Mbiti supports this view by stating that to be human was to be a being to the whole community and to do so, involved participating in the benefits, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community, often involving the

living, God and the ancestors (Mbiti, 1980:24). This arrangement basically translated to a communal life that starts from the family where attachment and interaction among extended family members was strong and extended to the village, the clan and to the larger society.

It was also clear from the literature review that Africans in general yearned for a Christianity that also drove their aspirations that included their view of the world that probably included a world driven by their patriarchal agenda as they were used to. Despite the rapid growth of mission Churches in the western region there seemed to have been tensional relationship between the Abaluhya (the main subculture to which the Ababukusu people form part) indigenous beliefs and Christianity. As we have already documented, European missionaries wanted African communities to undergo acculturation not only spiritually but also socially, politically and economically as they viewed Luhya traditional religion as being simple and inferior and Christianity as being superior, mature and sophisticated. Yet, the Abaluhya in the spirit of adaptation wanted to be identified as the Abaluhya Christians and not as cultureless or anonymous believers. The above observation implied that the Abaluhya generally responded to Christianity in a partial and passive manner that enhanced retaining of some fundamental aspects of the Abaluhya culture. A significant submission at this point was that though the initial attitude of the European missionary Christianity towards African religious belief and cultural practices were confrontational as well as rejectionist initially, it was noted that some changes had taken place in the course of time. Among some of the reasons for the Christian attitudinal change towards African beliefs include, the need for Christianity to relate with the Africans to look for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence as well as the church coming to the understanding of some of the inherent values of certain traditional beliefs and practices

for religious expressions and living; together constituting the core of the interface. The church in Africa therefore, even today is still in need to enter with prudence and clarity into discussions and collaboration with Traditional African culture to retain relevance.

This position of working together could be observed for example, among the Ababukusu Friends Christians when apart from funeral liturgical and committal services for the departed Christians at the church and the graveyard respectively, the Christian funeral observance was largely informed by the Ababukusu indigenous beliefs of the people. We can therefore argue that African funeral practices have extensively influenced Christian funeral ceremonies among the Ababukusu Christians. The Christian churches recognition of their members as having a dual identity to the traditional family and community, on one hand as well as the church on the other has resulted in some unofficial burial arrangements between the church and the families of the deceased. This is despite the church not officially subscribing to the indigenous beliefs and the practices. It clear from the foregoing discourse from the reviewed literature that Traditional African culture to a large extent formed the subconscious mind of the African way of the ultimate knowing hence constituted the roots that Africans resort to in crisis moments such as death. It was thus apparent in this Interphase that the Church finding itself in this uncomfortable position for lack of options easily accepted positions of cultural consonance without question as could be seen in the case with male dominance (patriarchy) as a Christian and Traditional African cultural feature of consonance as well.

Patriarchy under African cultural ramification and the Church's omissions has transitioned to imply an institution of male rule and privilege entailing female subordination. In this institution, it would seem accurate to conclude that the husband constitutes honor and dignity to womanhood, and the very moment a woman loses her

husband; the woman automatically loses her prized dignity. Yet, from the Christian point of view, culture should never be used as a standard by which to measure scripture, instead, the Bible should be. It was in view of this literature reviewed that this study maintained that African Christians had been influenced by the traditional African widowhood rites that discriminated against and violated widows' human rights. It was the same thesis that the current study sought to establish in the context of the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church cultures with reference to widowhood rites and rituals. The woman was clearly at the center of the entire funeral rituals among the Ababukusu. The role of rituals in the provision of stability following the structural destabilization caused by death as a phenomenon among the Ababukusu people was also obvious. However, some of the rituals definitely presented difficult ordeals for the widow.

The analysis of primary data became the main focus of chapter four. This chapter analyzed these data and discussed the same in the light of the secondary data already discussed in this study. Among the data analyzed included that on the history of integration of the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals; herein referred to as the Interphase. The chapter also examined the Ababukusu society from a gender perspective. The chapter then ventured into the consequences of the Interphase for the widow with reference to the widowhood rites and rituals. The vulnerability of the widow to consequences of widowhood rites and rituals among the Ababukusu was finally examined as it led to the conclusion of the chapter.

It is clear that abusive relationships abounded against women as the case of widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu including Christians confirmed in this chapter. Widowhood as a passage of life and its associated rites and rituals was found to be particularly fraught with danger for women when the trauma of losing one's

partner was compounded by the societal and cultural expectations of widows in the face of a Church that was non-committal. The widowhood rites and rituals among the Ababukusu people, as this study confirmed, repositioned widows in society as objects of men's sexual desire and beings to be economically deprived. Consequently, Widows through widowhood rites and rituals were a disadvantaged group and prone to poverty and marginalization. As the Friends Church watched and even supported tacitly, as was the case in some instances, these rites and rituals subjected widows to patriarchal customs, discrimination on inheritance rights and isolation, psychological torture, and caused them to suffer abuse in the context of ritual cleansing and suspicion of infidelity and complicity in the demise of the spouse. All these took place in the context of a pact between traditional culture and the Church referred to in this study as the interface.

## **5.2 Contributions**

At the onset, the main problem of this study was to critically examine the interface between the Ababukusu traditional and the Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals with special reference to the suffering to which they subject African widows. In response, the study revisits the point already mentioned in the foregoing summary that traditional African culture to a large extent formed the subconscious mind of the African way of the ultimate knowing hence constitutes the roots that Africans resort to in crisis moments such as death. To this end of ultimate knowing, Ababukusu traditional widowhood rites and rituals are supposed to have a positive effect of healing: Since death has a negative impact on the remaining person's lives. Rituals are considered to have therapeutic value that assists the bereaved in moving on with her life. In this way, widowhood rites and rituals are supposedly patterned ways invented in traditional communities for the successful healing of the psychological wounds and

pain of bereaved persons. Widowhood rites among the Ababukusu in particular and traditional Africa in general, it would appear, were not primarily designed to de-womanize African womanhood, or impoverish and oppress women.

However, as already noted in regard to the interface between the Ababukusu traditions and Friends church, the Church finding itself in an uncomfortable position for lack of options easily accepted positions of cultural consonance uncritically as could be seen in the case with male dominance (patriarchy) as a Christian and Traditional African cultural feature of consonance. Yet, Patriarchy under African cultural ramification and the Church's omissions has transitioned to imply an institution of male rule and privilege entailing female subordination and loss of dignity to womanhood. The primary data in this study show that among the Ababukusu Christians with leanings towards the Friends Church, widowhood is a process characterized by rituals, forced remarriages, harassment, rejection, loneliness, poverty, loss of status, fear of the future and depression and definitely with little or no therapy.

To revert to the main concern of this study, the main question of the study was; to what extent had the combined Interphase of both the Ababukusu cultural and Friends church widowhood rites and rituals subjugated the Ababukusu widow in Western Kenya? To this end, the study submits that even though Biblical teachings encourage the Christian church to be compassionate towards widows and under African practice of *Ubuntu* that strives for the considerations of life giving values, the Ababukusu Friends Christian widow continues to be subjugated under widowhood rites and rituals. This research establishes in this regard that Ababukusu Friends Christians have been influenced by the traditional widowhood rites and rituals that discriminate against and violate widows' human rights to the extent that they also shun these care-seeking vulnerable women and discriminate against them.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The African value of *Ubuntu* assumes a lot of significance here as it describes the capacity for reciprocity and dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interest of building and maintaining African communities with justice and mutual caring as argues Bekker (2010). The Bible on the other hand records the high value of widows to God the Father and God the Son in both the Old and New Testaments. The care of widows therefore is in part the true measure of justice amongst God's people and by extension God's compassion for the widows was to assume his covenant people's accepted responsibility as both testaments warn that any discriminatory and oppressive action against widows and orphans contravenes God's law relating to love.

Ironically, it is the application of the true spirit of combined force of *Ubuntu* values and the Christian church's compassion towards widows (which appear to be nonfunctional) that provides the best opportunity for embracing Ababukusu Christian widows in particular and African Christian widows in general out of their subjugation. This however, may not entail blanket abandonment of these rites and rituals as may be the temptation, rather, the rites and rituals should be infused deliberately with more humane values as befits Ubuntu and Biblical teachings with regard to widowhood. This recommendation is informed by the fact that death in Africa is never conceived as an episode but a process constituting of crisis moments in need of stabilization, yet, traditional African culture and not Christianity that to a large extent still forms the subconscious mind of the African way of the ultimate knowing hence constituting the roots that Africans resort to in crisis moments such as death

### **5.4 Suggested Area for Further Research**

In the course of this study the issue of God's creation of man in His own image was problematic particularly in its interpretation with reference to the woman in the African

Christian culture. Is it the culture that should determine the true interpretation or the Bible itself? This was an issue of interest that could not be dealt with immediately in this study as it fell outside the immediate scope of this study. This issue is therefore floated for a follow-up research for anybody with interest.

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## **APPENDIX I: A Letter of Introduction**

Dear Sir/Madam

We are carrying out a social study on the circumstances of the Ababukusu widow as occasioned by consequences of widowhood rites and rituals among the Ababukusu Friends Church followers in western Kenya. We kindly ask you to answer the questions below. All responses will be handled confidentially and purely for the purpose of this study.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely,

Dinah Wekesa

Religion Division,

Social Science Education Department,

MMUST.

**Appendix II: QUESTIONNAIRE TO PASTORS AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP**

1. Would you describe the integration Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals as smooth?

i) Agree.....

ii) Disagree.....

iii) Any other, please state

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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. Do you think that there are areas of consonances between Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church funeral practices?

i) There are areas of consonance.....

ii) There are NO areas of consonance.....

3. Please give reasons for your response in (2) above

.....  
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.....  
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.....  
.....

4. Would you consider transcendental reference, and male dominance as expressed in funeral rites and rituals as part of the consonance?

Agree.....

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
Disagree.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. Would you agree or disagree that the Ababukusu traditional widowhood rituals are still practiced by the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians?

Agree.....  
.....  
.....  
Disagree.....  
.....  
.....

6. If in Agreement in (5) above, what reasons can you advance to explain the continuation of traditional widowhood rituals and rites among the contemporary Ababukusu Friends Christians.....

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.....  
.....

7. Do you think there is a compromise on part of the traditional culture and the Church on the one hand and the continuing widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu Friends Church members?

Yes.....  
No.....

Give reason for your answer

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. Please kindly tick on the following list of possible consequences of widowhood rituals among the Ababukusu widows in the Friends Church:

Stigmatization.....

.

Psychological

torture.....

Harassment by husband's kinsmen.....

Discrimination.....

..

Loss of property.....

Health

problems.....

Guilty

conscience.....

Relocation from one's home.....

Anyother .....

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.....

Do you think men and women in the Ababukusu Friends Church community bear the consequences of spousal demise and associated rituals in equal ways?

Equal Suffering.....

Not Equal Suffering.....

What reason do you give for your answer above?

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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. If you feel that widows suffer more from the consequences of these rituals than widowers then how would you explain their vulnerability?

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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE TO KEY INFORMANTS FROM THE  
ABABUKUSU FRIENDS CHURCH ELDERS**

1. What is your position on the integration of the traditional Ababukusu and Friends Church widowhood rites and rituals?

.....  
.....  
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2. In your view,do you think there are areas of consonance between the Ababukusu traditional and Friends Church cultures

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3. What would you say are the specific areas in this consonance if indeed any?.....

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4. What is the position of traditional Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals in their envisaged scheme of life?.....

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5. Do men and women suffer same consequences as a result of the traditional Ababukusu widowhood rites and rituals?

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6. Please can you describe as the plight of Ababukusu widow as a result of traditional widowhood rites and

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7. What is the way forward for the widow out of all these in your view and how is the Friends Church part of it?

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## Appendix IV: RESEARCH PERMIT

**THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:**  
**MS. DINAH NAKHUNGU WEKESA**  
**of MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF**  
**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 0-50205**  
**Webuye, has been permitted to conduct**  
**research in Bungoma , Kakamega**  
**Counties**

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/18/50182/21811  
Date Of issue : 16th March,2018  
Fee Recieved :Ksh 1000

**on the topic: AN EXAMINATION OF THE**  
**INFLUENCE OF THE FRIENDS CHURCH**  
**ON THE BUKUSU DEATH RITUALS.**

**for the period ending:**  
**15th March,2019**



.....  
**Applicant's**  
**Signature**

  
.....  
**Director General**  
**National Commission for Science,**  
**Technology & Innovation**

### 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 **17946**

**CONDITIONS: see back page**



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,  
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

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Off Waiyaki Way  
P.O. Box 30623-00100  
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/18/50182/21811**

Date: **16<sup>th</sup> March, 2018**

Dinah Nakhungu Wekesa  
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 "*An examination of the influence of the Friends Church on the Bukusu Death Rituals*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Bungoma & Kakamega Counties** for the period ending **15<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, selected Counties** 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.

**DR. STEPHEN K. KIBIRU, PhD.  
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioners  
Selected Counties.

The County Directors of Education  
Selected Counties.