

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THEOLOGY

*Factors Contributing To "Conversions" From "Christianity"  
To Islam Among The Turkana: An Implication for  
Christian Witness*

BY  
OLIVER ERUPE LOWOTON

*A Thesis Submitted To The Graduate School in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Missions*

JULY, 2008

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**July, 2008**

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO "CONVERSIONS" FROM "CHRISTIANITY" TO "ISLAM" AMONG THE TURKANA: IMPLICATION FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted  
to any other College or University for academic credit

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical  
Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed) -----  
Lowoton Erupe Oliver

July, 2008.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to describe conversion from Christianity to Islam among the Turkana people of Northern Kenya. Twenty Muslim Turkana converts have been interviewed in order to get first hand knowledge about this process.

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. Chapter one is Introduction of the research giving its background, purpose, goal, research problem, the questions to be examined, the research significance and limitations among others.

Chapter two is literature review which seeks to give the historical background of the Turkana people and describe some aspects of the study of conversion and its reasons for conversion. The Biblical understanding of conversion both Old and New Testaments is the basis of the study.

Chapter four presents an *emic* view of conversion, and it analyzes the information in a stage model developed by Rambo. This is to get an *etic* view of the process of conversion among the Turkana. The stories from the interviewees are also recorded the way they were told. The aim of this research is to get a wider and deeper understanding of all the processes involved in conversion. This can give a basis for ministry among the Turkana.

In the final Chapter, the information from the introduction and chapter four are used in order to describe some implications for witness. This study concludes that the church is obligated to equip the youth on Christian principles so that as they grow they do not deviate from it. The Church needs to contextualize her message to reach the Turkana.

## TO

My late parents:

Mr. *Lowoton Eipa Lodapalmoe*, the one whom from childhood inspired me to be fearless and courageous in whatever circumstances.

Mrs. *Hellen Lokwawi Lowoton*, who took me to school and encouraged me to learn,

And

Mrs. *Sarah Erupe*, my dear wife who from her encouragement, support and fellowship enabled me to finish my studies and make this thesis possible.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

God desires and wills that we know and believe in Him. Peter writes that, “the Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting any one to perish, but every one to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, NIV). In society, there are people like Cornelius in Acts 10; who devoutly seek God. The church is not willing to obey the command of Christ in John 13: 34, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you.” The church is ignorant of what they need to do to respond to the Islamic resurgence in Turkana, the challenge is Peter’s warning, (1 Peter 3:15, NIV) “...Always be prepared to give an answer to every one who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”.

The church in Turkana is not involved in Muslim outreach. A little involvement has been very reactionary as they respond to Islamic debates and polemics with very little and unconvincing defense. Worse still, my attempts to reach Muslims have all been previously opposed, laughed at and suspiciously viewed by majority of the pastors and Christians. It seems to them, it is quiet unthinkable that one could waste his precious theological and biblical training with people destined to *gehena* (hell). There is some concern for the Muslims now in the churches due to their members who are claimed to have “converted” to Islam but lacking the knowledge as to why they decided to “convert” to Islam. Establishing factors contributing to such people “conversion” to Islam will be a challenge and a burden the church leadership needs to consider in teaching in-depth the church and in reaching Muslims in

Turkana to fulfill the Great Commission Mandate in ( Mathew 28:18-20) and the coming of the end of age mandate in ( Mathew 24:14).

### Background

The researcher aims at establishing factors contributing to “conversion” from “Christianity” to Islam among the Turkana people. Islam existed in Turkana before the inception of the missionary movement in early 1950s. Majority of the Muslims were Suni Somali Cushites who never bothered to Islamize the Turkana. They are backbones of Turkana economy and trade as they are traders and pastoralists. Since 1997 to date, as a result of the influx of the Somali refugees to Kakuma Camp, a resurgence of Islam has lead to an increase in “conversion” by many Turkana “Christians” to Islam. Mid 2007, a cousin of mine and his friend; both World Food Program staff married Muslim ladies as second wives. They may be included in the number of very recent “converts”. This thesis looks at the factors bringing this category of people to the Islamic faith and its implications for teaching the church and reaching Muslims.

Among the factors contributing to Turkana “Christians’ conversions” to Islamic faith include: first, the *religious factors*. The Turkana people in their religion belief in one *Akuj* ‘God’ who is considered *epolot* ‘supreme’ with out any associates; so the Islamic singleness of Allah far much attracts them than the Christian Trinity ( Deut 6;4-9; Q. 112:1-4). Another *factor is economic*. In Turkana, the leading and controlling economies’ are the Somalis who also double as Muslims. They technically contribute to the livelihood of the Turkana people through their commodities and services. The Turkana are attracted to them for their generosity. *Social factors* are another. While the Christian missionaries and the pastors are unable to host many surviving hungry Turkana who identify with them; the Muslims and their leaders on



the other hand express their commitment to social welfare. Their assistance is coupled with cohesiveness (brotherhood) that is considered lacking in the Christian community. The Turkana culture upholds such community and generous rapport; that is part of their cultural ethos. In fact the Turkana people despise a miser or a selfish one. There are *psychological factors* as well. A Roman catholic priest at Kakuma who prostrated in the dressing room yet he doesn't in the church service disgraced the altar boy who moved to Islam. He felt deprived of a true way to worship. There are *political factors* too. Muslims claim the continent of Africa to be Islamic. That the West have misled and misguided "their" people, "converting" them to Christianity which they claim is a Western and pluralistic religion. In obedience to the commands of Allah as written in the noble Qur'an, to Islamize the whole world; they are persuading the Turkana people to *revert* to Islam for according to them that's where they originally belonged. The Turkana people just like most Muslims consider Christianity a disappointment and a weak religion. This is possibly a justification for their reasons of embracing Islam which they view as powerful due to her militaristic nature. The Turkana are militaristic too.

The background of my study developed from my burden to reach Muslims which started way back eleven years ago while a freshman at East Africa School of Theology. The school had arranged a Muslims spiritual emphasis week where two Islamicists Assemblies of God missionaries ministered to us. From what they shared about the Islam, my burden to reach the Muslims enabled me take an active role to praying and fasting for the Muslims world wide on *Ijumaa* (Friday) during normal public prayers.

Secondly, it developed from several years of ministry at Kakuma refugee camp, partly 1997 to 2002 and especially 2003 to 2006 while working as HIV/AIDS

counselor with International Organization for Migrations (IOM) with Somali Bantu resettlement project. Lastly, it developed from losing many friends, schoolmates, classmates, church mates and my cousin and his friend, a former classmate moved to Islamic faith.

This study is going to give a true description of the factors contributing to “conversion” to Islam by the Turkana “Christians”. This material applied to Muslim witness, will hopefully be useful information for pastors, evangelists, missionaries and all those who are involved directly or indirectly in sharing the gospel to the Muslim people in Turkana either as churches or Para-church organizations.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine factors contributing to “conversions” among the Turkana who have “converted” from “Christianity” to Islam, and to examine these factors in order to see their implication for witness.

#### Goal

The goal is to present to the Turkana Pastors Fellowship and other Para-church organizations in Turkana a better understanding of the factors contributing to “conversions” to Islam among the Turkana “Christians” in order for them to strategize how to equip the church on Muslim evangelizations and to effectively contextualize their communication of the gospel to Muslims in Turkana.

#### Research Problem

The problem to be addressed in this thesis is to establish the factors contributing to “conversions” among the Turkana “Christians” to Islam and its implication for witness.

## The Grand Tour Question

What factors have contributed to the Turkana “Christian’s conversions” to Islam in Kakuma and Lokichoggio Divisions, of Turkana North District?

### Sub Questions

1. What is the common understanding of “conversion” among the Turkana “Christians”?
2. How does “conversion” from “Christianity” to Islam affect the identity of the Turkana People?
3. What are the factors for the Turkana “Christian’s conversion” to Islam?
4. How does the process of “conversion” from “Christianity” to Islam among the Turkana relate to the stage model of conversion as developed by Rambo (1993)?

### Significance

The results of this Study will help the researcher to understand the Muslims that he has been and will be serving in Turkana. It will also help the researcher to challenge the Turkana Pastors Fellowship, the Para-Church organizations and the researcher himself to diligently contextualize and present the gospel to Muslims in Turkana.

The results of this Study will help the researcher to mobilize the Pastors Fellowship and the Para-church organizations in Turkana to team up in initiating strategies for reaching Muslims in Turkana. This paper will also contribute to the wider study of conversion. Although many contributions have been given on the subject and this study will be adding insights from a new group of people. It will especially contribute towards a greater understanding of factors contributing to “conversions” to Islam among the Turkana “Christians”.

### Delimitations

I will delimit my research to the Turkana “Christians” who “converted” to Islam among other groups. I will not be dealing with theological issues in this discourse of “ Christian Conversion to Islam.”

### Limitations

Since this research is limited to factors contributing to “conversions” of the Turkana “Christians” to Islam, the results may be affected by the low literacy level of most “converts” especially the females. The distance from Nairobi to Turkana; between Lokichoggio and Kakuma are 1000 and 100 kilometers’ apart respectively. There were the transportation problems and security risks among others. There was the political situation at that period as that was general election year.

The researcher hoped to handle this by using the questionnaire, interviews, observations and focus group discussions where appropriate as a means of data collections. The Questionnaire was appropriate to those very literate enough to communicate in English, Kiswahili or Kiturkana. The interviews suited those who were comfortable talking or conversing. One focus group was appropriate for those Turkana “Christians” who “converted” to Islam. Observations were useful in this group as the researcher noted those non-verbal visual expressions, attitudes, reactions, perceptions as may be expressed by members of this group. I limited my travel to Lokichoggio and Kakuma divisions of Turkana North district; this was for ease of travel, accessibility, communications and contact persons with these converttees. Although security wise these areas were not safe, yet they are both home towns where the researcher is well known and conversant.

## Assumptions

The researcher assumes that:

1. The converts will be honest enough to release information without suspicion, coercions, prejudice or defensiveness.
2. The Pastors fellowship would be willing to chart the road map as to the strategies needed to teach the church and reach the Muslims in Lokichoggio and Kakuma.

## Definition of Terms

1. Conversion: In this context it means culturally leaving the identity as a Christian member in the Christian community and identifying with another community and in this context Islam.
2. Convert: In this context is that individual who has culturally left the Christian membership and joined an Islamic community.
3. Christianity: In this context this is considered a religious belief system centered on Jesus Christ.
4. Christian: In this context is that individual who culturally identifies with the membership of those following Jesus Christ. Attends their worship services as well as participating in the sacraments'. They have Christian names and may have been baptized and confirmed. They may have undergone class catechism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Turkana

Although Anthropologists and colonial administrators have written “pieces of material with varying degrees of usefulness in respect of Turkana Religion, Society and Culture” (Barrett 1998, 13), none is in our school library. The literature I came across: (Barrett, 1998) who calls the Turkana “*The Ngitunga group*” and refers to (Lamphear, 1976) who linguistically calls them “*Central Paraniotes*” or variously, the “*Karimojong cluster, the Teso – speaking group*”( Barrett 1998, 42) says “they belong to an Eastern Nilotic group which is only one of ten groups making up the Eastern Sudanic Language family”. They have close cultural and linguistic ties with Karamojong, Jie, Teso, Eyan, Dodoth, Toposa, Jiye and Dongiro. They all speak a mutually intelligible language with tonal differentiation.

Among the most recent include Odoi 1993 and Ndambuki 2001 thesis. Barrett reports a descriptions of their habitat and society as detailed by observant colonial administrators from early 20<sup>th</sup> Cen. and by professional anthropologists, missionaries, historians and linguists in the last four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Cen.; Barrett mentions them as well.

The Turkana came to their present homeland in Northwestern Kenya just south of Sudan and East of Uganda about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> cen. The missionary movement seems to have gotten later in 1950s (Anderson 1967, 10; Ndambuki 2001, 28).

The researcher would want to briefly summarize a history and pre – Christian religion of the Turkana as described by Barrett 1998. Then he will examine the Christianization process as described by Dick Anderson 1967 and Ndambuki and Odoi Thesis of 2001 and 1993 respectively, and how Christianity is an integral part of the Turkana world view today. This background is of great importance; In order to throw light on the Turkana understanding of conversion and factors contributing to “conversions” from “Christianity” to Islam today.

### Historical Background

The Turkana are classified among the nomads of East Africa. They are distinguished by being clustered as the pastoral tribes of the North – East (Odoi 1993, 19). They, “are generally considered to be the wilder tribes ... to the North of Mount Elgon” (Ibid). They also belong to a group classified as “Nilo Hamites” who live in Karamoja and Turkana Districts. Turkana Districts are occupied almost exclusively by the Turkana (Odoi 1993, 19). The History of mission work was realized through the efforts of Dr. Dick Anderson of AIM and Peter Mualuko of AICMB. Ndambuki in his 2001 thesis on the *life, work and Relevance of Peter Mualuko* describes that, “The Turkana people live in the remote dry areas of North Eastern Kenya near Lake Rudolf which is now Lake Turkana ... The Turkanas were warlike people as the Maasai and Ngoni of South Africa” (Ndambuki 2001, 30).

The Turkana are over 500,000 in population occupying an area mass of 77,000 square Kms. Administratively they are divided into three districts Turkana North, Central and South. They are predominantly pastoralists with a smaller percentage doing fishing in Lake Turkana, Handicraft in Lodwar and farming in Southern Delta and a myriad others spread along the Trans Africa Highway connecting Kenya to Sudan in town centers doing open air businesses or marketing livestock. As Barrett

describes, “It is a huge panorama of sand, dry riverbeds and acacia trees and shrubs punctuated by hills and clusters of ‘homesteads’ (*Ngadakarín*); It is a semi-desert, with meager rainfall and searing temperatures” (Barrett 1998, 44-45).

### Spiritual Forces in Turkana Traditional World View

The Turkana traditionally worship one God – *Akuj*. *Akuj* is believed as the creator and sustainer of the world. One would hear those making statements such as *Kerai nyemite Akuj* ‘were it not by the help of God’. Such expressions depict the supreme place God; as a deity occupy in their lives. Because the Turkana and the Karamojong have a mono culture; Odoi could state that, “the Karamojong appear to believe in one God, who is said to be above the clouds but ‘at other times they refer to God as a collection of spirits’” ( Odoi 1993, 77).

The Turkana expresses God in plural – such as *Ngakujo* ‘many gods’ but Barrett explains this contradiction in that Turkana *Akuj* is denoted in a feminine and not masculine gender as noted by Joan Anderson AIM missionary in Turkana who according to Barrett seemed to impose a Westernized or foreign meaning. It should be feminine as *Akuj* singular, then *Ngakujo* plural. For Barrett, feminine nouns share *A* and *Nga* as their prefixes and we have *Akuj* and *Ngakujo* ‘God, gods’. *Akuj* is therefore a feminine noun (Barrett 1998, 83). This could be the reason why Spencer as quoted by Odoi previously refers to God as a collection of spirits.

Barrett describes that,

Whenever one expresses doubt, skepticism, suspicion or ambivalence regarding what a Turkana has said, he immediately stoops to the ground, rubs his index finger in the sand, then he puts his finger in his mouth and moistens it with saliva after which he touches his forehead and finally points his finger to the sky with the deprecation: “One god, it is absolutely true, if it is not, may God kill me” *Akuj Apei, Iteni jik, kemamu kataar Akuj a yong* (1998, 79).



Barrett is of the position that *Akuj* is one. For a Turkana *Akuj* is the one who accomplishes good and evil i.e. *Akuj* sends rain and drought, life and death, reward and punishment, luck and misfortune, health and sickness.

Barrett describes the devil or Satan as a spirit subservient to God. “*Akuj* permits the evil spirit/spirits ‘*Ekiye/Ngipian*’ to punish humans in an active manner of life for their failure to follow the correct order ‘*etal*’. *Akuj* is at the centre of all ritual activity and especially all sacrificial activity” (ibid). That is to say while God is at the centre the evil spirits occupy a middle ground from God himself and next to man is *ngimurok* ‘mediators’. The Turkana have no shrines where they would perform prayers and sacrifices. These are done when need arises and never a regular activity.

Barrett states that,

When the spirits come near, the human situation becomes dangerous, and drought, sickness and death take over. To correct the situation *Akuj* must be brought near or back so that He can speak through his mediators ‘*ngimurok*’. *Akuj* is believed to speak to these mediators in a variety of ways, especially in dreams, visions etc. In these dreams he informs the *emuron* ‘diviner’ concerning what the people must do to rectify the problem ( 1998, 79).

#### The Arrival and Spread of Christianity in Turkana

The recent sources on Turkana missionary evangelization process are the thesis of Ndambuki (2001), and Odoi (1993); in addition to Dick Anderson and Betty Mackay AIM missionaries in Turkana: *Team for Turkana* (1967). Ndambuki (2001, 28 – 40) describes the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of Peter Mualuko missionary journey enroute to Sudan. According to him, the first phase of this missionary journey started at Kalawa Mission Base in 1951 – 1961; thus the Turkana mission in 1959 – 1981 links to the Birth of AICMB. His last missionary journey ends in Sudan in 1981.

It is interesting to note that the process of Christianization among the Turkana people did not start until 1960s while AIM was about 65 years old. According to

our flocks then?” That missionary had been instructed to leave. They report that after long delays and diversions, “It was June 1959, before the government in Nairobi officially gave permission for the Africa Inland Mission to set up a mission station at Lokori” (Anderson and Betty 1967, 16).

A cardinal principle in the process of converting Traditional Turkana people to Christianity seems to be demonstrated by Tom Collins. Anderson describes Collins in his evangelistic endeavors to the Turkana pastoralists as, “He was as thin as a rake, but burning with a desire to reach the Turkana and preach God’s truth to them thoroughly. Yet how could he possibly hope to do this – one solitary man with a large parish already which needed his ministry? Prayer was his only tool” (Anderson and Betty, 1967, 9).

This principle of prayer and a burning desire to reach a people and actively do it is cardinal in missions. Bosch, in *Transforming Mission* defines this term as the concept of, “Propagation of the faith; Expansion of the reign of God; Conversion of the heathen and the founding of new churches” (Bosch 1991, 1).

If we stand by that definition then theologically Tom Collins approach to mission in Turkana may have been proper. However what may have been amiss in this foundational set up? Possibly there was a weak bicultural bridge. Hiebert defines the term Bicultural as “a new culture that arises in the interaction of people from two different cultural backgrounds” (Hiebert 1994, 147).

How does this imply to the inception of mission work in Turkana and the “conversions” from “Christianity” to Islam today? Hiebert states that,

If the success of missions depends largely upon the quality of the relationships between missionaries and the people to whom they go... the Biblical model is that of incarnation. To bridge the cultural gap between heaven and sinful earth, God became human and dwelt among us, eating our food, speaking our language and suffering our sorrows, yet without giving up his divine nature. Incarnation is identification, but it does not deny who we

originally are. It is in fact a bicultural or bi-personal setting just as God became one with us in order to save us, we must become one with the people to whom we go to in order to bring them the message of salvation (1994, 158).

Although at first there was resistance (Anderson et al 1967, 11), there were enmasse conversions (Ndambuki 2001, 32). This term conversion has been defined by ecumenical scholars; Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen as:

A personal reorientation towards God ..., thus turning to God necessarily entails a simultaneous turning towards humanity. That in turn binds one to participation in the movement towards God's ultimate goal, his kingdom and lastly, the authenticity of conversion can thus be measured by the individuals' willingness to assume political responsibility and to actively participate in society's problems as well as in the struggle for liberation (1989, 176).

It seems even in this process of conversion, the mediators (*ngimurok*) are a factor that was overlooked by the missionaries in their evangelization in Turkana. Instead, as Anderson et al describe they sought to align themselves with colonial and neo-colonial administrators such as chief Makede of Lokori; Sergeant Mattayo of Lokitaung divisional police headquarters, chief Ekapolon of Lokichar, chief Naro of Lokichoggio location and councilors such as Kwiya and Ngikoi from the present Lokichoggio division of Turkana North district (Anderson 1967, 11, 43, 62).

Although they were the first neo-colonial administrators and politicians to welcome the first Christian missionaries to our region ; today majority of their families are following the Turkana Traditional Religion, the Roman Catholic and some have "converted" to Islam ;Most of these "heroes of faith" then, unfortunately have died apart from Christ.

Anderson's writings explain the reasons for leadership migration to the Roman Catholic: While AIM missionaries were for the idea of cost sharing in the building of schools at the onset of their mission, the Roman Catholic offered everything free of charge; The teacher, the classrooms, food etc; these was of attraction to the community leaders. Second the Roman Catholic recruited the same

leadership to serve their own people as catechists along side the priests that were very proficient with the Turkana language. The AIM posted Hosea a Kikuyu teacher who only knew Kikuyu, Kiswahili and English. Instead of buying some animals for herding like the locals he was serving, he resorted to farming which is an abhorred trade to the pastoralists of the area. The third factor could be the discriminative, selective and judgmental although authentic gospel of AIM missionaries to the Turkana people.

### Reasons for Conversion to Christianity

The researcher will consider several factors necessitating conversions. Some of the factors as can be deduced from the literature of Dr. Dick Anderson and Betty Mackay may be : *Medical services* to the Turkana people enhanced an acceptance of the word of God irrespective of who brings it and for what reasons and here decisions are made enmasse as a community headed by their leaders and never as individuals. *The second factor concerns the formal school education*, for the sedentary farmers at the Southern delta, the handicraft makers at Lodwar Township, the fisheries at Lake Turkana and the livestock traders at Lodwar, Kakuma and Lokichoggio. These are the category of nomads that suited the missionary strategies of missions in Turkana. Most of the existing Churches today are as a result of this category. This smaller percentage of the population about 25% decided to settle due to relief, having lost all their herds to draught, famine or raids or have relatives now working with the government thus seeking survival from them in extended family dependence. *Climatical factors such as famine, draughts and during rainy season's*, majority of the people gather in centers for the purposes of survival. Relief is provided then by the government, or they maybe coming to sell their livestock or grains such as millet, sorghum which they may have harvested.

## Social System and Kinship

The process of Christianization among the Turkana failed to take deep roots because it condemned in total the customs and the traditions of the people. The Roman Catholic Church witnessed to the people as traditional and native in regalia as they are and accepted them as Christians. This was recently after Vatican 2 edicts of the late pope John Paul 2 who introduced the concept of Indigenization/Enculturation of Christianity. In the protestant missions, one was required to remove all their traditional attires, shape their heads differently as a sign of conversion from traditional belief to Christianity; this brought more resistance than acceptance.

The protestant mission propagated individual salvation which was perceived to separate the extended family ties against the fact that the Turkana are still dependent on their family and clan, *emacar* 'marks' for survival and identity. The larger group is important as the identity is the unifying factor. Barrett in his book *Turkana Econography* 1998 describes the following pertaining the regard Turkanas has on identity:

The Turkana people create their own identity and that of their animals by imposing marks '*ngimacarin*' on their bodies, to the sticks they carry, animals and on men. Such identity affects nearly all rites of passage, especially birth, marriage and death. They influence inheritance, bride wealth and relationships with *Akuj*, Livestock and the Living dead (1998, n.p).

Therefore, for their daily needs and for protection, the clan holds a crucial position. A factor to consider in the Turkana society is that of inheritance; whether wife or animals. They are patrilineal and such inheritances are done on behalf of the deceased. Because of these practices the Church in Turkana has had a big conflict with the tradition as they treat that as polygamy while to a Turkana it is treated as fathering children and safeguarding the deceased family till his children, especially male grow to maturity and responsibility then handed over the family of

their father. This has not been solved till today. Because the Roman Catholic Church compromises this practice many Turkana people are attracted to it. In Islam on the other hand, it seems a lot of the *Medinah* cultural practices which Muhammad was attempting to reform are still preserved and practiced by the Turkana.

### Laws

Turkana are divided into three groups: first the Traditional Turkana, these have traditional customary law governing them as administered by Kraal elders and clan elders. They are little affected by the civil law unless in criminal offences, the church has no influence on them whatsoever. This is a community of people comprising about 75% of the population leading nomadic life.

The second group is the sedentary Turkana people who are involved in livestock marketing, brewing and handicraft making and marketing, farming and fishing and the modern working educated elites. These groups are the ones attending most of the churches in modern centers and villages. The Kenyan law and their specific churches by-laws govern their way of living. The Islamic law also influences a fraction of these groups that have “converted” to the Islamic faith or have intermarried with the Muslims.

The last group is the Turkana in the Diaspora. These groups are scattered across Kenya in Kitale , Eldoret, Nakuru, Laikipia, Marsabit especially and Isiolo among others. Depending with the predominant force of influence and where they have given their allegiance majority are considered Christians thus the Kenyan law applies to them, others are still traditional Turkana where the customary law still governs them and another group is Muslims especially those in places like Isiolo, Marsabit and Turkana itself – the Islamic law may influence as it may apply. In these

groups several have married Muslims. In general due to systematic political administrative structures in Kenya secular law might be supreme in all these places in line with the rest of the country.

### Life Cycle Ceremonies

The researcher seeks to show how Christianity has influenced some of the important ceremonies concerning life, death and fellowship among the Turkana. With this, a good understanding of what is significant in their everyday life can be deduced. It would also show how much the communal life means to most Turkana people whom Christianity seeks to destroy and it seems Islam as an alternative system of faith offers some solace and refuge.

#### ***Birth***

The traditional Turkana birth rites are elaborate, expensive and involve animal sacrifice, while those in towns are simple without sacrifices. The later influence seems to be the Christian faith and the modern medical health campaigns by community based health workers.

#### ***Initiations***

From an *emic* perspective there are usually two initiation rites, the first one is the removal of two lower teeth done at the onset of puberty with that it is simply done by your mother, other kraal mothers and their daughters for usually as I was done you are wrestled down, a group of girls and women hold every part of you; your legs, your hands and others sit on you but not resting on your body and they also hold your head firmly on the ground. A small strong pointed needle like metal molded out of a copper iron, or plain nail which has been bow folded at one end is inserted into the gap between your center two lower canine teeth then removed. One bleeds profusely and

cries bitterly to the chagrin of those who did it. Some hot water is given the “client” to take so that the process of healing starts. There is a cultural myth that if one does not remove them; all the upper teeth would fall away. You now become an adult but not yet an elder.

The second initiation is called *Asapan* ‘a form of circumcision’; which elevates one from adulthood to eldership. Except the first initiation of teeth removal that promotes one from childhood to adulthood; this is done to both sexes’, girls and boys. The second initiation rite is only for males. Ladies get theirs on marriage, a ritual is performed to them by ladies from the family she has been married. Due to the church and modern influence some have adopted circumcision in place of these while others have foregone the practices mentioned altogether possibly due to modern and religious influences.

### ***Marriage***

This area is usually very elaborate. Due to religious and modern influences other forms of marriages have increased in the Turkana community among them are church weddings and Muslim weddings. The civil weddings although very minimal are also in existence. The Turkana disregards all of them as less important not properly constituted as per the order ‘*etal*’.

There are two categories of marriages in the Traditional Turkana. There is the marriage of a concubine. This category of marriage requires that the parents are not ready for their daughter to be married officially. The reasons behind may be, she is the only daughter at home and others are boys hence the need to retain her for as Odoi states the “vacuum created by the leaving of this young woman, with all the psycho – sociological consequences involved... especially ... the loss of the economic benefits



which the woman's work brought forth ...these all factors that demand that a substitution be made" ( Odoi 1993, 61 – 62).

Other factors could be the parents never had sons for inheritance; they resort to permitting their daughter(s) to give birth at home as concubines so that in case they get sons they adopt them as their sons for inheritance. After an adequate number of sons have been fathered for the grandfather, he can choose to permit his daughters to marry officially in case the husbands too are demanding the same. Children thereafter are released for the said husbands. Such categories of children are called *ngide akeor* 'children outside wedlock'. They are considered grand parents children.

The real official marriages are tremendous. Just as Odoi quotes Aporu 1992 who stated, "The main purpose of marriages is to produce children" (Odoi 1993, 61). It is the most elaborate and largest of all the celebrated ceremonies. In Turkana society, as in most traditional societies, a girl has no future in her father's house. She was born and raised yet she does not belong there. It is only by marrying that she will acquire a family.

This marriage process is described in detail by Barrett as illustrated "A brand is an exogamous group, men must marry women from outside its own brand, and women must be married by men from a brand outside their own" (Barrett 1998, 61). Barrett further illustrates that marriage negotiations are usually to be done at the full moon, for usually there are done at night, to introduce nuptial discussion, carrying gifts of tobacco, sorghum and beads. Now days the parents have become sophisticated and commercial where they have started demanding; a tent, big saucepan, heavy blanket and sugar.

As these group of "Suitors" return home to the parents of the young groom they bring good reports to gain their good will and help with bride wealth exchange. If

they are satisfied with the girl and her people, they quickly give her blessings as appropriate final relations can be helpful and profitable. Then the people of the groom transfer an agreed amount of stock to the people of the bride over a long period of time, in fact now days the period has become shorter 1 – 3 months other than several seasons in the past.

The people of the bride return animals for ritual purposes, as when the “bride” ‘*a teran*’ becomes pregnant for the first time. The ceremony performed is called *eleupotis* ‘the skin for pregnancy’. Other rites follow such as *ngasuban* and *edea* which are performed by the groom ‘*ekeutan*’ and his brothers and friends as they enter into bride wealth negotiations with the bride’s father and his relations ‘*ngiyenet*’ and friends of the bride’s people, especially her father’s eldest brother who is charged at the ceremony to roast “*ngiseption*” ‘ribs’. At this period the bride wealth has been paid. Barrett concludes that, “the exchange and its value create the relationship. This notion of exchange is fundamental, not only to sacrifice and the relation between *Akuj* and humans, but to the whole social fabric. Animals are the usual medium used in all exchanges and relationships” (Barrett 1998, 62).

The Turkana people adore their animals, animals as hard currency is the main means of exchange hence an essential means of living. This could be the reason why cattle rustling are still a factor with nomadic communities as the Turkana. Marriage and the exchange with animals is the core thing that accomplishes the important stage of life before death. Odoi confirms this mutual relationship by stating the following:

Every marriage is taken seriously and so bride wealth must be paid fully... ‘A married woman would feel insecure, unloved and disturbed to learn that she was given out ‘on credit’. The other women would ridicule her and she would not have a voice. It is the pride of a man to clear his debt so that his credibility for future marriages is not jeopardized... Gifts of animals exchanged between families in connection with marriage produce lasting bonds, obligations, expectations and relationships. With the newly acquired livestock, the young woman’s father has acquired new members for his family – with their products

they will compensate for the balance of their daughter who is kilometers away... 'the new woman is always aware of the fellowship of co-wives, which is a common expectation and a desirable status' (1993, 62 ).

In the real Traditional Turkana society, fornication, adultery and unwanted pregnancies are unheard of. A woman who goes into marriage a virgin is highly esteemed. As a result of this practice the girls go out of their way to remain chaste. Therefore chastity is a virtue in Turkana. This is usually rewarded by many cows the groom pays in form of dowry and other gifts from friends and other closer, extended family relations. The converse would be a disgrace not only to her but her family and even her clan. A situation like that, a girl can only be impregnated when she is raped.

Adultery is highly abhorred in Turkana. It happens rarely and thus is considered one of the gravest offences that a Turkana could commit. Any advances made even if it is just tempting a woman constitute a serious offence. A man caught in flagrant adultery in Turkana society is usually beaten up by his age mates and age sets for bringing such shame to their group and himself, his family and friends. His own family participates in the same beating.

Adultery is very easy to be noticed in Turkana community, its symptoms include: the husband or wife nose bleeds continuously, all the children fall instantly sick, the animals refuse to rise from the Kraals for grazing or worse one parent; either the husband himself or his wife dies without falling sick. At that, it's prudent the suspected person after consultations with the diviner is beaten up and asked to declare guilty or innocent and prove otherwise.

Odoi reports an important factor, in restraining pre-marital and extra-marital sex relation that, "The adulterer must make a payment to the offended husband on an amount of livestock corresponding to a new marriage at least sixty herds of cattle...

‘and will be avoided by all his friends, at least until he sacrifices a ram in order to have his sin taken away’ (Odoi 1993, 63).

After such a fellow has been beaten up, usually three quarter of his herds are taken by the offended husband and their family. They are usually killed and roasted freely to be celebrated by all that come to attend it so that he is left with the remaining quarter for the mercy of the remaining family. As severe as that usually it is very rare because people fear the consequences. Odoi further states that, “the woman who commits adultery can be disowned (this agrees with Biblical data of Deut. 24: 1 – 4 and Matt. 19:9), “In which case her father must return to the husband all the livestock received when she married” (Ibid).

### ***Death and Burial***

The Turkana, like the Karamojong has no elaborate plans for burials and wills as animals are reared and one dies and leaves them with those who are alive to inherit. Odoi quotes a priest as stating that, “Unlike many other peoples, the Karamojong do not have elaborate death rituals. Perhaps this is because as nomads they do not return to the graveyard. Traditionally, corpses were simply left outside of the village to be consumed by hyenas (Odoi 1993, 90).

The Turkana maintain unshakable hope to a very old age. They still believe death is before them any time of their living. As a person passes from one event to the other, thanks is given to *Akuj* for the opportunity granted and continuous prayers are uttered to God, to ancestors who died in the past, recent and present and others aging in the family. One reminds them of the sacrifices he has offered to all of them and in the *Arimatoi* ‘respect’ he has demonstrated in serving them and the family they bestowed to him. Usually there are no birthdays celebrated such is only done once at that period of birth when the children are not aware.

Even when a person dies at old age, his memories still lives on especially with his family, his friends, those who knew him personally by name and activities, for instance we still remember Kokoi and Lokorijiem our great diviners ‘*ngimurok*’ who prophesied and later fought the colonial powers in our land. The reason why Turkana people marry is that they may get children to remain behind to remember them after they have gone. The Turkana people fear illness and death. A lot of animals will be killed to save such a life and anything can be done as instructed by the diviners, medicine men in order to save such a sick person. This necessitates many rituals including ancestors worship. The *Legions of Mary* denomination has spread widely in Turkana just because they solve a problem of illness although they do not protect death. Many Turkana have “converted” to it. To them death spells the end of life and thus no hope beyond the grave rather you become “*ngikaram*” ‘a living dead/spirit’.

The Turkana have no concept of hell, no concept of heaven, no place to spend an everlasting bliss. To them life must be enjoyed while on planet earth and anything which seems to interfere with it is greatly abhorred and people will pay anything to get well. That is why a church preaching power and demonstrates the power of God to help is attractive to them any other is normal ritual.

Odoi states in connection with the above, “death is the end of earthly life, but life is seen as reincarnating in some children who may take on characteristics of a departed ancestor; this is an indication that there is some belief in life after death” (Odoi 1993, 91).

When death occurs in a Kraal, wailing of women and children is usually heard. Men stay composed but looking sad. Any adult who does not seem to sympathize with the bereaved is suspected of being a witch. The Kraal where death has occurred is usually vacated and is quiet; the animals are moved out of that kraal.

The burial may be conducted the same day or the family may right away migrate to the site he may have preferred to be buried when he dies; usually a common place he prefers living and herding. At that place burial will be conducted simply by his children 'elders' and wives. Only dignified elders and parents with responsible children or siblings get a descent burial. Unfortunately children and the childless man or woman is thrown in the bush or left in the deserted homestead. Today because of modern and church influence one is given a honorable burial although not elaborate.

Burial is separated from normal rituals. After the burial, the children and wives wait for sometime where family elders responsible for carrying out such rituals are called. They slaughter a number of animals where the children, grandchildren and wives are shaved. The wives are clean shaved the entire head while children their foreheads shaved slightly above the face before the middle of the head and sides.

#### Political Organization and Leadership

The powerful leaders in each clan weld so much authority to their specific clan. Some of these leaders may be powerful sharp shooters, diviners and even very rich powerful families in those clans. Such persons should be elderly enough to get that ascribed status. Such leadership is never inherited. These are persons who control the Kraals grazing and living in each setting; the grazing regions, the migration patterns as per seasons and the raids. In towns to the sedentary community very many leaders weld powers. The Imams to the Muslims and some powerful rich Muslim traders who afford to build schools, mosques and assist others with many dependants and big businesses. In the Churches, specific pastor's weld powers for their specific congregations and the Roman Catholic priests/the bishop of the Diocese of Lodwar.

Political leaders, in this case the councilors in their specific wards and the members of parliament in their respective constituencies. There are also provincial

administrators; Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, District Officers and District Commissioners. The later two category of leadership the political leaders and provincial administrators are highly abhorred as they are well remembered for the corrupt practices, cheatings, forced *harambees*, land grabbing and inability to safe the community from external aggressors. They are seen with the Administration Police seeking loyalty by force.

### Education

Other than informal and non-formal education majority of the Turkana people are lagging behind in education. The community got locked out during colonial era due to the fear of being seen as terrible fighters and a threat to the colonial regime at the time. The same myth got inherited by the two previous regimes: Kenyatta and Moi neglected the Turkana community on education. Faith based organizations especially the Roman Catholic Church that runs 90% of all the 200 plus schools and the remaining shared by AIC, Salvation Army, Reformed Church, Maranatha, KAG, PAG, Holiness and Anglican. There are fourteen secondary schools; six of them rose up the last five years while the other eight existed much earlier; six for the Roman Catholic and two belonged to AIC and Salvation Army. A polytechnic exists and a medical college as well.

An adult education exists and a non-formal conducted by Nawoitorong Women Group for Para-legal women on paralegal affairs. There are numerous nursery schools under the faith based institutions and a few associated with the main schools. No single college or university except at Kakuma Refugee Camp – UNISA ‘University of South Africa’ have their satellite training centre solely for the refugees. There are several secondary and primary schools in the camp where a fraction of the Turkana children are permitted to study. There is polytechnic (Don-Bosco) offering

technical courses and computer application packages to both refugees and the locals at Kakuma camp.

At both Lodwar and Kakuma there are several mosques and Islamic academies from nursery to primary. The *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' are conducted therein; most of the teachers are Turkana "converts" to Islam who were taken to Nairobi, Thika and Mombasa for Islamic religious education training and now are the ones heading such a school. Kakuma Muslim Academy that started in 2005 up to standard five is now a candidate school for Kenya Certificate of Primary Education. Such schools do not use the normal school calendar as they close on Fridays but open throughout including Sundays. Christian children admitted have no place for church and girls have to dress fully in *Hijab* 'veil' like Muslim girls; they must also go together with others for prayers as regularly as required. In *Madrassa* 'Islamic school, where they learn the *Qur'an*. Therefore the future of Turkana Christians with this Islamic resurgence is of great concern. This is to say the state of education is poor and lagging behind.

### Economy

Subsequent to poor education, the economy is lagging behind. Compared to the rest of the country; it is the last according to the development Index recently released by the Ministry of Planning and National Development. The Turkana people were more or less neglected by the colonial administration. An excerpt from Barrett describes the following of the Turkana:

The geographer and recorder, Ritter Ludwig Von Hehnel, who 'discovered' what they called Lake Rudolf after the Austrian Crown Prince in 1888, spoke of Turkana as the richest mine of ivory in all of Africa. In 1897, Hugh Cholmondely, Lord Delamere, took six tons of ivory from Turkana; to the chagrin of Sir Hen Johnson. The Turkana did not appreciate the 'superior' attitude of these intruders, who failed to respect them, their culture or their property. Bottego's men opened fire on the elders, thus creating mistrust which lasted for a long time as Henry Cavendish, a British adventurer and Lord Delamere soon discovered. The Turkana were regarded by the colonial



powers as troublemakers. The north was a battleground for the British, the Ethiopians and the Turkana war leaders and diviners, Kokoi, Ebei and Nadima. The Turkana fought and accommodated themselves to ivory traders, European militarists, missionaries, a proliferation of ‘- ologists’, and modern aid agencies over the last hundred years (1998, 44, 45).

The Turkana resisted formal education and the colonial administration segregated them to remain illiterate. Development is lagging behind due to: lack of control of livestock diseases, livestock market infrastructure, drought tolerant animals, local abattoir in established centers and restocking programs. There are minimal crop productions at the Southern delta with such challenges as: collapsed irrigation schemes, low crop production, lack of skills in crop production, lack of farm inputs, lack of chemicals for disease control and weak extension services.

There is some subsistence fishing at Lake Turkana, they have a stalled factory since closed in 1990s. The markets for the fish is very far forcing many fishermen to sell their wares at throw away local prices. Handicraft business is in place with the challenges of marketing destinations. Most trades are controlled by non Turkana and the little owned by the Turkana have challenges of insecurity, lack of business skills, poor infrastructure and lack of marketing information for local products.

### Concept of Time

Turkana people divide their concept of time into seasons such as wet seasons (rainy season) between April and July for long rains ‘*Nakuporo*’ and between October and November for the short rains ‘*Nakiceres*’. The rest of the period outside that is dry season ‘*Nakamu*’. Such seasons are characterized by harvests of sorghum and millet, marriages, dances, courtships, funeral ceremonies; done during rainy seasons. These activities are dictated by the moon; the full moon or white moon is when the moon is still clear and could be seen at night. While, the dark moon is when there is complete absence of the moon at night for a period not exceeding three days before a

new full white moon is seen. Time is subdivided also into events occurring in those seasons. Such events can be a famine, a drought, census, animal vaccinations, and raids, disease/epidemic outbreaks such as cholera, earthquakes or an eclipse.

## **CONVERSION IN THE BIBLE**

### Introduction

In this section I will deal with conversion from a religious point of view. Since I am primarily dealing with Christian conversion, I will give a review of Biblical material and some brief comments on this doctrine.

Tenney, in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary discusses conversion as ‘*Kon-Ver-Zhun*, Heb.*shev*, Gr. *Epistrophe*’, occurs only once in the Bible (Acts 15:3) which states that, “Having been sent on their way to the Church, they ‘Barnabas and Paul’ therefore passed through Phoenicia and Samaria giving a full account of the Conversion of the nations and they caused great joy to the brothers”

The New Testament African Bible quoted above, editors and contributors give a footnote of the term conversion as: expresses a turning around of ones whole being on the path of life, conversion, both abrupt and continuous, requires a decision from the heart. It is motivated by the coming of God’s Kingdom. (Mt. 3:2); repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand, Involves attachment to Christ (Acts 9: 4 – 5; Phil. 1:21), and is judged by its concrete fruits.

Tenney further notes that The English equivalent to Hebrew and Greek words are, ‘turn’ ‘reform’ and ‘turn back’ ‘turn again’ the turning maybe in a literal or in a figurative, ethical or religious sense, either from God or more frequently to God. He also notes that the human participation or will is involved to a definite spiritual change; “turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways” (Ezek. 33:11); “Except ye turn” (Matt. 18: 3). This word in the New Testament is associated with repentance (Acts 3:19;

26:20) and faith (Acts 11:21). Thus conversion on its negative side is turning from sin and on its positive side is faith in Christ, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Although conversion is an act of man, scripture makes clear that it has a divine ground. The turning of sinful man is done by the power of God (Acts 3:26). In the process of salvation, conversion is the first step in the transition from sin to God. It is brought about by the Holy Spirit operating upon the human mind and will, so that the course of man’s life is changed. It may come as a sudden crisis or as a process more or less prolonged (Tenney 1967, 181).

As we cannot look at conversion without looking at repentance, Tenney states ‘*re-pe-n’tans* Heb. *Naham*, shuv, Gr. *Meta noeo*, *metamelomai*. *Metanioa*’ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 2:4) connotes a change of mind with regard to sin, a sorrow for sin which primarily is intellectual in nature; while *meta meleia* connotes a change of soul, a sorrow that leads to turning away from sin (Matt. 27:3; IICor.7: 9, 10).

The meaning of both words leads to defining repentance as that divinely wrought conviction of sin in the heart that the soul is guilty before God, and a resolute turning away from sin in which the sinner identifies himself with the gracious act of God in redeeming him. Repentance involves both a change of mind about sin and a change of heart – attitude toward sin. It is at the time a renunciation of sin and an acceptance of the Holy Spirit’s enablement to holy living.

Repentance maybe viewed from both a divine and human perspective. God is said to be the author of repentance (Acts 4:31) in that it is through the regeneration wrought by the Holy Spirit that man is led to a consciousness of his sinfulness and to a rebellion against it as a principle of life. In his sinful nature, man cannot repent, however, through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit he is led to see himself as a

sinner in rebellion against God, and as evil in nature. Hence man's repentance is always preceded by God's illuminating activity.

Repentance is always conjoined with faith, however, and man must act, once illuminated by grace. Where there is true faith there will always be true repentance and conversely, where there is not true repentance there can never be true faith.

Repentance is necessary to Salvation. Jesus asserted that it was a necessary condition (Matt.3:2, 8; 4:17), while both Paul and Peter identified it with true salvation (Acts 20:21; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9).

There are two aspects of repentance; the act of repenting, and the state of penitence. The act of repenting involves sorrow for both the fact of sin and the acts of sin in the life of the sinner. It precipitates decisive conviction of sin and resolution to change. The act of repentance however, leads to the state of penitence in which the whole nature of man is changed so that he becomes identified with the grace of God, living in abhorrence of sin, with continual renunciation of it in his life (Ibid., 711 – 712).

Manser et al define conversion as "Turning or returning to God in repentance, faith and obedience by those who do not know God or who have turned from him... conversion can be seen as a human act or decision, scripture stresses that the work of God lies behind this human decision, guiding and motivating it" (Manser 1999, 400).

My own definition of conversion is that it is that allegiance, transformation and conviction with which an individual or group experiences encounters with a higher or supreme being which must be God and should be positively confirmed by changed life, conduct, attitude, mind, words, actions and behavior of a person in regard to infinity.

Consequently repentance is a public declaration of conversions. It is an aspect of belief and decision to express a stand about this decision made despite of the consequences that might come with it; then or in the near and distant future. It may be expressed individually or corporately. It is a confirmation of conversion when genuinely expressed.

#### Nature of Conversion

Manser et al further state that “true repentance result in turning from sin and an inner renewal which can only be brought about by God, who draws people to himself and who, through Jesus Christ, gives forgiveness and new life”

Manser et al however give five natures of conversions: First, Conversion as turning to God: This may be explained by a person turning back to God as stated in Deut. 30: 2 – 3, where God is promising prosperity for those that turn to him. There is turning from Idolatry (Act. 14:15) Paul and Barnabas could tore their clothes and urge the people “...we are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God” There is turning from Sinful ways (Ezek.18: 23) confirms God’s pleasure when the wicked turn from their ways and live.

Secondly, Conversion as turning away from unbelief to faith: It is linked to repentance. Peter challenges his congregant in (Acts 3: 19) to repent and turn to God so that their sins may be forgiven by God. This is linked to coming to faith. Most of those scattered on the martyrdom of Stephen in (Act. 11:21) where the Lord stood with them and many came to faith.

Thirdly, conversion brings new life: It results in a transformed life (Ro.12:2) Paul urges the believers to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. It is symbolized in baptism (Col. 3: 1 – 3) The Bible challenges us to live as those made

alive in Christ; lastly, it demands a new life style (Hos. 12:6) urges the believers to return to their God.

Fourth, conversion brings a new relationship with God: It brings a new status. In (1Jn 3:1) we become God's children. It brings new understanding (Jer. 31:34) mentions of God forgiving our sins and forgetting them. Lastly, conversion is a work of God: God turns people to himself. In (Eph. 2:12) God has reconciled every one of us to Himself through Christ Jesus. God gives new birth where in (1st Peter 1:23) He requires that we be holy as He is holy.

### Old Testament Conversion

The history of Israelite can be termed as a history of conversion and repentance that is symbolic to all other conversion today. The Old Testament portrays God's relation to Israel. Hence, understanding the Jewish thoughts and traditions as cultural people enables us have proper knowledge of the Old Testament. The Bible declares that behind all creation is a personal and purposeful God. God is personal – that is, like a person – loves, makes promises and forgives as we do. The Bible also describes God as man. In Genesis we read of His walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day and of His calling Adam by name. Such description of God is termed in Hermeneutical terms as anthropomorphism.

The great Seventeenth Century Philosopher and Scientist Blaise Pascal said that he did not care for the God of the Philosophers but for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What he meant is that regardless of what else we may say about God, we must remember that he is indeed a very personal being who loves and cares for all the people. The very first Chapter of Genesis begins with an act of God – the Creation of particularly mankind. Once we make this recognition and realization as human beings, it will be easier to make our decision of turning to God. Soon after, God calls

Abraham away from his native home to found a new people and promises this people (the Hebrews) care and protection. Except to those who know God, that reality of fear for daily existence and future destiny is a reality. To Martin Luther, 'how can I find a merciful God?' To Muhammad the fear for the sinful world he lived in? We are seeing God delivering the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt and led them to Canaan and In return for all God did, His people owe him love and obedience.

The Ten Commandments are the essential laws that bind this relationship of love between God, who cares, and the people who want to keep their relationship with God and one another. God's people often made mistakes or sinned. They rebelled as children often rebel. They repented and were forgiven. They were punished when they deserved punishment in order that they might change their ways. Through the whole story runs the shining thread of God's love for them and their love for God.

#### New Testament Conversion

The New Testament also starts with God's creation, with his sending his only begotten son into human life, a being born as a man but as one who bears the sins of mankind and through whom man, although sinful is made one with God. The Gospels or accounts of the life of Jesus announce the "Good News" The rest of the New Testament shows how people in love and gratitude to God spread the message of Christianity.

Man by his nature is sinful 'from Adam's fall' hence he must die a physical death. God presented a way to survive the physical death by – means of Jesus' resurrection. That way was to believe that Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God spoke as God and that what he spoke was to be cherished, obeyed and revered. Jesus lived as a man although without sin. He suffered and died as a man. God then raised him up from the dead to demonstrate how all might be raised. Thus did Jesus death become

atonement for those who accept not only the death but the life of Christ as their own. This participation in Christ is the essence of the faith, peace of mind through kindness and devotion, its way of life and resurrection, its hope after death.

The foundation of the New Testament conversion is centered in Jesus' announcement at the grave of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection, and the life, he that believed in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die ..." (John 11: 25 –26).

The principle today – which is applicable in every Christian worker and convert, is that Jesus Christ was and still is the source and essence of the faith, Paul and the rest of us – today its organizers and chief spokesmen/women. All the original Christians including Apostle Paul were devout and faithful Jews. Without Paul's letters 'the Epistles', sermons, theories and pronouncements, the religion of Jesus might have eventually disappeared amid the confusion of religious sects, cults and clans of the time.

The Acts tell how Paul, who at first violently opposed the teachings of Christ, worked and suffered to become the Chief Apostle of the faith (Acts 7:58). The Bible describes him, he "made havoc of the Church, entering into every house and hauling (arresting) men and women (he then) committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

On his way to Damascus to continue his brutal activities, "suddenly there shined a light from heaven, fell to the earth and heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, Saul, why persecutest me? Who are thou Lord...? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ..." (Acts 9: 3 – 5). In Damascus he was visited by Christians, was baptized and accepts the calling of Christ. His sight returns, so does his strength. The Bible says he was, "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:31) and worthy to be a Christian apostle.



His first mission started in Antioch in Northern Syria; he preached of the risen Christ and offered money to help establish the Church: Thus Paul's practice was combining preaching with practical actions; an implication for the Church today.

The Gentile question was another challenge faced by Paul and Peter (Acts 15: 1 – 21) that of circumcision. To Paul since Jesus had been circumcised as a baby he symbolically took upon himself the circumcision ritual for all those who accepted him. Thus he was permitted by other apostles to preach and convert Gentiles. As the gospel spread into Greece (Europe), Turkey and then Jerusalem, whenever he spoke Paul and his associates were greeted warmly by the people and angrily by local religious leaders. He preached in Athens, (Acts 17: 24 – 25) challenging the worshippers of goddess Athena.

In the Greek City of Ephesus, he challenged the idol makers and threatened their businesses. He was like Peter in AD 64, put to death by Emperor Nero. After his conversion on the Damascus road, served as a missionary, persecuted to the point of death and died in the hands of the enemies. His life's work may be summed up in these, his own words,

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continued unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer and that he should be first that rise from the dead and should show light unto the people (the Jews) and to the gentiles (Acts 26: 22 – 23, NIV).

On the day of Pentecost, the 120 disciples who were praying were heard speaking Libyans, Romans, Arabians and Mesopotamians in the crowd. Three thousand souls were converted on the spot (Acts 2:41). Stephen's martyrdom also inspired many disciples and Christians to launch their preaching or witnesses. Conversions by Peter such as that of Cornelius and his family and friends (Acts 10: 34 - 35). He also raised a dead woman (Acts 9: 36 – 43)

In the Epistles, the Romans represent those early Christians who attempted to organize a Church in the imperial City of Caesars. The Corinthian was Paul's letter to the Christians of Corinth, a city near Athens in Greece. These and many other letters were meant to strengthen the Christian community that had already been established by Paul in his previous missionary journeys. These therefore are some of the chronicles of conversions and its impact in the post-Christian apostolic era.

## OTHER CONVERSIONS

### Types of Conversions

Rambo in understanding religious conversions states that: "One way to understand better the nature of conversion is to describe various types of conversion. His Typology portrays the nature of conversion in terms of how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert" (Rambo 1993, 12 – 13).

These types include: first *Apostasy* or *defection* means leaving one religion without embracing another. Second *Intensification* occurs when nominal members of a religion make their commitment a central focus in their lives. Third, *Affiliation* is the movement from nominal religious commitment to full involvement. Fourth, *Institutional transition* covers the change with a major – often called "denominational switching". Lastly, Traditional *transition* implies the move from one major religious tradition to another. This is clearly what happens when a group or an individual converts from Christianity to Islam. These conversions involve many aspects of life and will often take place as a result of cross cultural contact.

### Motif of Conversion

Rambo further highlights what John Lofland and Norman Skonord propose as conversion motif, by which they mean defining experiences that make each type of

conversion distinct. They identified the following six motifs: First, *Intellectual* conversion which is characterized by exploring alternatives and knowledge before making a decision. Second, *Mystical* conversion is often sudden, traumatic event like the one Paul experienced on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. Third, *Experimental* conversion is the recent development. A person in this conversion seeks actively different opportunities to see if there is something in it for him/her. Fourth, *affectional motif* identifies love, nurture and affirmation by members of a group as the main reasons for conversion. Fifth, *Revivalism* is described as the pressure, crowd – conformity and influence of others as the cause of change. Lastly, there is the *coercive motif*. This can popularly be described as brain washing, coercive persuasion, through reform and programming.

I have described all these categories of types and motifs of conversions in order to show how different conversions can be experienced and described. Some of them would not be valid for all religious groups, and they are not very relevant for the Turkana conversion. However, they are part of the general understanding of conversion.

### The Stage Model

Asland describes the following stage model by Rambo who has developed a stage model to organize and assess complex data of conversion. A description of this model is as follows: - *Context* ‘macro/micro’, the context shapes the individual and decides if one will get the opportunity of change. This category is the most comprehensive of the seven stages and runs through and covers all the other six stages. *Crisis*; a debility or break-down in a person’s life will often trigger a need for change. The crisis can have many natures. The common dynamics of them is that they lead a longing for something new and a realization that the present situation is not

satisfying. *Quest*; this is the process in which people seek to get more meaning and fulfillment in their lives. It can be caused by a crisis or it can dawn on a person gradually. A person who is at this stage will normally be very active and seek solutions which will in some way give new answers and meaning in his/her life. St. Augustine has expressed his quest and longing in the famous statement, "thou has made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee".

*Encounter* means contact between advocate of change and the possible convert. This meeting is often very crucial. Many people will testify that they did not feel any crisis or quest in their lives until they met someone who encountered them with a message which made them think and consider turning to something new. *Interaction* is the stage where the one who has accepted the first conditions of change gets more teaching and influence from the new group. At this stage the bonding with the new group and removal from the former starts. At this phase teaching and fellowship is crucial for the potential convert to really grasp the implications of the new set of beliefs and norms he/she is turning to and get acquainted to the new people.

*Commitment*; this can be a public statement of the changes that have happened in a person's life. Baptism is often an important event in Christian conversion. The commitment is also much more than a one time event. Time shows if the commitment is real and can stand the test of returning to a state of normal life after the first excitement. Persecution is also a severe test for a convert's commitment. Lastly, Consequences follow all choices. They vary according to the nature of conversion and the individual's perception of the changes involved. There are changes in a person's life at many levels. At an inner, personal level the most common result of conversion is peace, joy and fulfillment. This stage model is a

useful tool that I have used as my guide in my data collection and now description and analysis from the research I had carried out among the Turkana (Asland 2005, 75 – 8).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive research targeting those “converting” from “Christianity” to Islam among the Turkana and drawing implications for witness. I made use of qualitative research methodology in the context of Rambo’s Stage Model Theory of conversions.

Several literatures propose various methods for data collection in anthropological research. In my use of qualitative research approach; I have mainly utilized interviews and substituted it with focus groups and observations. On this method, Mugenda and Mugenda comment that,

An interview is an oral administration of a questionnaire or an interview schedule. Interviews are therefore face to face encounters. To obtain accurate information through interviews, a researcher needs to obtain the maximum co-operation from respondents. The researcher must therefore establish a friendly relationship with the respondent prior to conducting the interview (2003, 83).

The two research assistants are former church mates and schoolmates.

Through them I was able to access the information I have described here. I was able to interview twenty converts’ in Kakuma for this may be the appropriate way to listen to them and record their stories for me to gain an insight and understanding of their experiences. I had prepared in advance an interview schedule for them; which Mugenda and Mugenda define as,

A set of questions that the interviewer asks when interviewing...It makes it possible to obtain data required to meet specific objectives of the study...They are also used to standardize the interview situation so that interviewers can ask the same questions in the same manner (Ibid.,86).

### Rationale for Choice of a Research Approach

The Purpose of using a theoretical approach is to collect data through a test and re-test of Rambo's stage model theory of "conversions" by structured qualitative interviews. The reasons behind the choice of this approach are due to its advantages which Mugenda and Mugenda give as follows:

Interviews...provide in-depth data which is not possible to get using a questionnaire; makes it possible to obtain data required; meeting specific objectives of the study; guard against confusing the questions since the interviewer can clarify the questions thereby helping the respondent give relevant responses; are more flexible than questionnaires because the interviewer can adapt to the situation and get as much information as possible; very sensitive and personal information can be extracted from the respondent by honest and personal interaction ... Interviews yield a higher response rates mainly because it is difficult for a subject to completely refuse to answer question or ignore the interviewer ( 2003, 83-84).

The other reason is because the research is testing Rambo's stage model theory where this approach is ideal. According to (Creswell 2003, 119), "...In qualitative research, the use of theory is much more varied... In other qualitative studies, it comes at the beginning and provides a lens that shapes what is looked at and the questions asked, such as in ethnographies or in advocacy research"

Qualitative research also enhances socialization of parties involved in the research for it enables the researcher to go to the site,

Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting. The qualitative researcher often goes to the site (home, office) of the participant to conduct the research. This enables the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be highly involved in actual experiences of the participants (Ibid., 181).

Mugenda and Mugenda consequently affirm qualitative research as being open to be done by any one or every one interested in research for the construction of knowledge,

...The qualitative approach recognizes that any body is capable of constructing knowledge. This means that the disadvantaged groups, though poor and voiceless, are capable of authoring knowledge if given a chance. Using the qualitative approach, the research or evaluator can assume the role of providing a voice to disadvantaged groups, with all the implications that power entails (2003, 201).

### Entry

Although I needed to follow standard procedure in collecting data, such as getting a letter of Introduction from the Office of Academic Dean to the target leadership of the research location, so that such letters may allow the researcher to carry on the study in these named towns and further seek their assistance in identifying and directing the researcher to those individuals from their specific Churches that “converted” to Islam; I overlooked this requirement as I knew the research assistants very well and sought to rely on them for much of what I wanted to do. I am much known to both the leadership and most targeted converts. However, I made it very clear in my letter of introduction attached at the appendices of what I was seeking from those I was interviewing, that was helpful.

### Population

Kombo and Delno define population as “a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. It refers to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common; it also refers to the larger group from which the sample is ‘taken’” (2006, 76).

This study endeavors to understand factors contributing to Turkana “Christian conversions” to Islam in Lokichoggio and Kakuma, Turkana North district and its implication for witness.



## Research Design

Kombo and Delno have attempted to describe and define research design,

A research design can be thought of as the structure of research. It is the “glue” that holds all of the elements in a research project together. A design is used to structure the research, to show how all of the major parts of the research project work together to try to address the central research questions... defines it as, ‘the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems’. A research design can be regarded as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with the research purpose. It constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data ... (2006, 70).

In my contact with the interviewees; I was to modify the questions every time to as many of them as possible so that they may understand what I was trying to ask them. I sensed some misunderstanding at some point.

## Descriptive Research

Further, Kombo and Delno explain the major purpose of descriptive design as,

Description of the state of affairs as it exists. The researcher reports the findings...are not only restricted to fact findings, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. They are more than just a collection of data. They involve measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data (Ibid., 71).

The above leads the researcher to formulate or use a theory and that brings another aspect of the descriptive research. Creswell, defines a theory as, “ a set of interrelated constructs ( variables), definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena” (Creswell 2003, 120).

The researcher used in this study a descriptive research. He described the factors contributing to the Turkana “Christian conversions” to Islam and then provided an analysis and explanations of the phenomena. The researcher examined and analyzed Rambo (1993) guidelines in ensuring quality in the process of understanding conversion and the converts in an appropriate way. A descriptive

research design tells ‘what is’, describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting the existing conditions. The data collection was carried through the following:

## Interviews

### *Unstructured Interviews*

The researcher used unstructured interviews to safeguard the descriptions in those models of Rambo since there was nothing written on Turkana “conversion” from “Christianity” to Islam. It was crucial that the researcher collected most of the information from primary sources. This was conducted mainly by informal (unstructured/ semi structured) interviews. Such interviews were carried out in a conversational manner in a friendly and informal setting.

### *Structured Interviews*

In addition to the informal way above, the researcher conducted part of his research by structured / formal interviews by giving all the interviewees a questionnaire. This was same and similar questions to all interviewees. This was meant to secure information possibly left out on the stages of conversion which can sometimes be forgotten in the informal process. This was administered to the converts.

The researcher was aware that majorities’ of locals levels of literacy is minimal and even those learned may be hesitant to fill a questionnaire; was able to carry out interviews to those capable to do so. The questionnaire is attached to this proposal, together with some of the interview operational questions in connection to the research questions. It was based primarily on the stage model.

## Focus Groups

The researcher used a focus group with six specific “converts” so that he may understand their worldview and perspectives as to their “conversions”. This was

geared towards collecting as much aspect of the conversion stories described in their small social group as they reminded themselves of what really happened, as they listen and tell each other. This activity examined differences, similarities, contrasts among them.

### Observation

Spradley states that, “every ethnographer who does participant observation will record things people say” (Spradley 1980, 12). Therefore the researcher used this method as it is recommended by Spradley.

The researcher also felt touched by his cousin and a former schoolmate who married recently Muslim ladies. He also knows, interacts and is a friend to several other former schoolmates – ladies and men both from his Church and others who “converted” to Islam. Owing to this experience, the researcher utilized this avenue to take him to them so that he understood them more.

### The Study’s Time Frame

The time of this study took approximately thirty- days. It mainly took place last December-January vacation while at home which enabled him visit individually every “convert” at their own convenient site/location.

### The Number of Research Participants

The number of participants was twenty one people. That is twenty “converts” to be interviewed, and I. However, I selected from this group a maximum of six people for a focus group discussion. Gender equity was applied which necessitated two groups considering the sensitivity of mixing sexes in Islam.

### Data Collection Protocol

I made an appointment with each or a group of these twenty people. Our meeting was arranged depending with their convenient time, and we always decided where to meet, sometimes it was in a hotel or in their homes and businesses. I was able to administer the instrument to each of the twenty people through conversation and by interviewing them. I was able to note down their comments and other necessary information that they were able to give me.

### Data Analysis Strategies

Kombo and Delno define this term as,

Refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. It involves uncovering underlying structures; extracting important variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions. It involves scrutinizing the acquired information and making inferences... The methods used in data analysis are influenced by whether the research is qualitative or quantitative (2006, 117-118).

While describing and analyzing these data I was thinking I should have done it at the site so that I could have gone to re-interview some of these people.

Creswell adds more on the process of data analysis and interpretation:

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper and deeper in to understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell 2003, 190).

In addition Mugenda and Mugenda refer to it as “ non-empirical analysis” which the researcher does in unquantifiable data and thus, “ in such studies, the researcher is interested in analyzing information in a systematic way in order to come to some useful conclusions and recommendations” (2003, 117).

## Instrument Validity and Reliability

Paul Oliver in *Research* states that, “when we collected data as part of a research investigation, we would like to think that if the research was repeated at some time in the future the results would be identical” he however says, “with humans as subjects it is much more difficult to know if the qualities or attributes which we are measuring have remained constant” (Oliver 1997, 53).

This must be why we cannot rely on the trustworthiness of the data that may have been collected about the attitude of the Kenyan society to their leadership before election and think that it is still the same today. This is clearly confirmed by Oliver in stating that:

...Data collected about people’s opinions will probably show relatively low reliability, but it will be difficult to be sure whether this is a reflection of the changing of opinion, or of lack of reliability in the measurement process... Interview data also tends to have a low level of inevitable influence of the interviewer upon the interaction with the interviewee. In a very formal structured interview the interviewer effects may be reduced, but in an informal interview ...then there will tend to be much lower reliability... highly structured, closed questions may tend to have a higher reliability than open-ended questions which ask the respondent to write a paragraph in response (Ibid., 54).

On the subject of validity, Oliver notes that, “research of high validity occurs when we measure a phenomenon in a variety of ways, and obtain the same results independently of the methods. This signifies that it is likely that we have collected data on the actual issue which we wanted to investigate” (Ibid., 56).

The research minimized or eliminated bias by setting criteria, which was strictly followed. This was specifically done by the researcher maintaining the same people in the interviews and testimonies about the conversions. The researcher mostly did all these individually to limit the possible negative “influence of the other” that may incite others not to be honest in releasing information. However a trusted select group of six will be put together. These interviews were approved by my thesis supervisors.

### Pilot Testing

The researcher pilot tested the instrument with “converts” at Lokichoggio whose number was the same as that used at Kakuma. The choice of Lokichoggio was based on the increased resurgence of Islam brought about by the influx of the Somali refugees and Sudanese migrants (now Darfurians). The researcher is very conversant with “converts” from Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and mainstream churches including his own. Both Kakuma and Lokichoggio are at the apex of becoming 40/60 Islam to Christianity for the two towns boast of two main Mosques separate for Turkana and the Somalis; there are numerous in the refugee camp across. This step will ensure that the items collected are clear and understandable. The final version of the research will be made for witness.

### Administering the Instrument

The researcher after locating these individuals further scheduled a meeting with each of them as was appropriate with them for clarifications of the research activity. Having done that the researcher administered the questionnaire to those who are capable of and literate enough to answer them. Those who are unable to answer the questionnaire as structured were scheduled individually by the researcher at a location of each convenience and were informally interviewed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS: TURKANA CONVERSION DESCRIBED AND ANALYSED IN STAGE MODEL

The following are descriptions and analysis of conversions. These analysis and descriptions is by use of the stage model. At each stage, a discussion of some general issues and noting the information I had collected so that we can try to understand the dynamics and processes involved in their conversions.

#### Context

The data from my research describing the aspect of the context show how context contributed to “conversion” and how “conversion” happened in context as illustrated below. Context according to Rambo “is the total social, cultural, religious and personal environment” (Rambo 1992, 163). But he further clarifies the environment, at which conversion takes place for it may not be the same environment,

Conversion takes place within a dynamic context. This context encompasses a vast panorama of conflicting, confluent, and dialectical factors that both facilitate and repress the process of conversion. But this context is the total environment in which conversion transpires. Context continues its influence throughout the other conversion stages... Context shapes the nature, structure, and process of conversion (Rambo 1993, 20)

The impact of context on the other stages of conversion is as illustrated below:

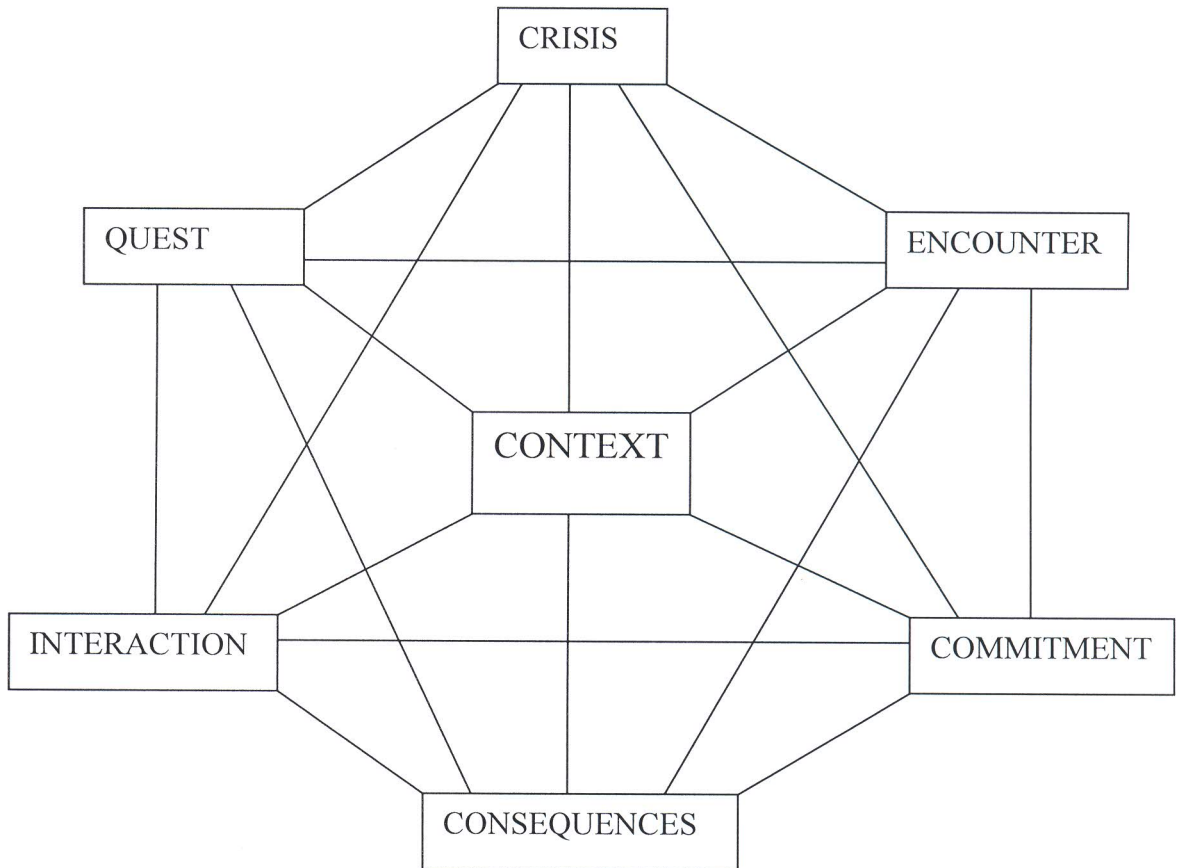


Figure 1; stage 1 context (Rambo 1993, 21)

The wonder question for most of these “converts” would be how was it possible to convert in this context? In fact, most Muslim homes and especially our Somalis neighbors are “closed places” as they consider others “*Kafir*” and “*Infidel*”. On the other hand, I find it rare for such Somali Muslims to freely “visit” or interact with those from the Christian backgrounds especially at the converts’ home contexts. However, out of their generosity as encouraged by Islam they could invite those from other religions to Muslims homes for food, while when the Christians invite them, they are prohibited lest they are served with *haram* ‘unlawful’ and not *halal* ‘lawful’



foods. They mostly interacted at trading centers; in locations of businesses and other social settings.

I would have expected that most of the converts made their decisions away from home in a context which was more open to change and less hostile to Islam. Some devout Turkana disregard Islam and appreciate Christianity and its hygiene. However, what I found was that twelve of the twenty converts in this study had their exposure to Islam at home context yet about six of the twelve got their exposure particularly at their own homes contexts. The remaining six made at the Muslims 'advocates' home. The idea behind this scenario was that a few early Turkana converts to Islam were zealously carrying out these "internal exploits" at their relatives, friends and other Turkana.

Therefore, despite a context that would have been considered hostile to Islam; these twenty people decided to be exposed to Islam. This implies that the Turkana people are very receptive to new religious teachings and to new challenges and changes necessitating them to embrace both Christianity and Islam with much ease. The study also found out that both school and mosque had an equal exposure of four people each out of twenty people. Person 7 got exposed both at the mosque as well as at her husband's home; she may be an isolated case among all others.

### ***Mosque***

Although a few people got exposed to Islam at mosque context; for the real conversion to be considered to have taken place one had to go to the mosque to recite the *shahada* 'confession of faith' before an Imam. My expectation that decisions to convert would have taken place at home where most people were exposed to Islam; surprisingly majority of them did it in the mosque. What I found from the study was that eleven out of twenty people made their decisions to convert in the mosque. This

may be understandable as Islam requires any converting or as they call it reverting individual to publicly recite the *shahada* 'confession of faith' especially in the mosque or an open forum with many witnesses, with the help of Imam. The mosque also as a social and religious venue brings most of the Muslim community '*ummah*' members there, thus one is considered a new member that requires support. The significance to be seen or identified as you seek help you are considered a fellow Muslim brother or sister in the house of Islam 'peace' and not house of war.

### ***Home***

My observation is that home has been one of the most important single factors of facilitating Turkana conversion/reversions. About seven people tell how they got attracted to Islam through home. Home had been a key place for exposing most Turkana to Islam. Although most decisions of conversions are publicly conducted in the mosque before an Imam; there are those who are very private enough to require it right away at an Imams home, with a couple of others.

### ***Other***

Only person 2 and 8 got converted at the market and the school respectively. For person 2, the exposure was initially at home context but at the moment of conversion and confession it was done at the market place. In fact, he was the one who took the first initiative to befriend a Muslim and out of curiosity read the Islamic books before he made the decision himself. Person 8 got exposed and converted at school. Having made friendship with fellow Muslim girls they took her to stay and live with them. Through that act of their influence and their attractive lifestyle she converted to Islam at school by her friend's assistance. Later, her husband a Muslim Somali impacted her even more.

### ***Religious Background***

Rambo argues that,

Conversion takes place 1) when a person or group is connected to relationships in a religious community; 2) when rituals are enacted that foster experience and action consonant with religious mandates and goals; (3) when the rhetoric or system of interpretation of life is transformed in to a religious frame of reference; and (4) when a person's role or sense of place and purpose is enacted and guided by religious sensibilities and structures (1993, 34).

On the religious background of the converts, I found much similarity although there were a few unique types. Person 17 had been in a Roman Catholic primary school up to standard seven without ever stepping in the church or any Christian fellowship. He however confirms that he enjoyed C.R.E. just like any other subject. In standard seven through some courteous friends he Islamized. Person 20 curiously read Islamic books that he was given by Muslim friends for 13 years and at the encounter with a vision confirming the "truth of Islam" as a religion he also Islamized. Almost all these persons are from rural settings and even those that had schooled got Islamized in their specific village mosques but later were sent for *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' trainings in Nairobi or Kisumu.

Because of this rural settings it can be concluded that the impact of Christianity was little in them in any case majority are Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic Church as the leading denomination in Turkana strives to practice enculturation and indigenization of the gospel outreach which makes little difference with the Turkana way of life and custom/traditions. Although some of these persons are from the mainstream churches and Pentecostals, the social economic challenges and the consequent generosity and brotherhood of the *ummah* 'community' parallel a similar one in the Turkana culture for many to join Islam. Most of the women from the research; persons 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 all got Islamized as a result of marriage.

### *Understanding Of “Conversion”*

Throughout this research, one of the underlying concerns is what is addressed in research question “what is the common understanding of conversion among the Turkana Christians?” Although it is a broad question requiring responses from different and diverse aspects; I will here give some tentative answers based on the responses from the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire administered to all “converts” to Islam, one of the questions was asked to get an impression of how they understood the term “conversion” from the Turkana point of view and thus give the meaning of the term itself. Although all these respondents are presently Muslims having been previously Christians; their responses showed that they still think and speak “Christian” although the “Islamization” may be an outside physical expression of the tradition. This was clearly demonstrated from the responses. The Turkana language has been confirmed by a linguist/anthropologist Joseph Anthony Barrett to have about 52 verbs (Barrett 1998, 13). This may explain the liberty and the variety with which the respondents answered the term “conversion” mostly from the Christian point of view. Thus most respondents had no problem answering it.

The most common answer was “*Ayiuno*” ‘to be saved’. This being the term commonly used by evangelical Christians in Kenya, most respondents had a proper orientation to it. Most of the Turkana people who have been in the churches will definitely say conversion is the same as salvation. Six out of twenty of the respondents were able to answer it as “*Ayiuno*” ‘to be saved’. Five others out of twenty gave *Akilokony* ‘to be changed’ as their answer. One person although a Turkana converted to Islam could not have a particular term to answer it or explain it. One other person termed it “*a nupit*” ‘to belief or have faith’. This may be closer to

one other who answered it as “*akilokony anupit*” ‘change of faith’. Another one termed it “*awotokin*” ‘to migrate possibly to another faith which is apostasy’.

Five peoples answers reflect the Turkana Muslim impression of conversion. They underline how most Muslims view conversion by using words such as *kusilimu* ‘to Islamize’, “*Aliwor esamalit*” ‘implying to become a Muslim’; “*Araun Muislam*” ‘becoming a Muslim’ and “*Achamun edin angisamal*” ‘accepting the Somali denomination-implying becoming a Muslim’. In Turkana, Somalis are associated with Islam because majority of Somalis in Turkana are Muslims.

The question I had asked opened an avenue for varied understanding and interpretations. It is also noteworthy to mention that so many of them used the Christian vocabulary when answering the question. They turn to Christian phraseology rather than Islamic. Some of these people have been Muslims for quite sometime but are eager to respond to this question in the Christian context rather than Islamic. May be they were conscious to the interview and the frame in which questions were being asked and the person conducting the research.

Although most respondents used the Christian phrases to answer the term “conversion”; surprisingly, its meaning is much explained more in an Islamic context than Christian. Some answers the respondents gave include; ‘being in total submission to the will of Allah; changing from Christianity to Islam; changing religions; believing and obeying the laws, commands and teachings of the Islamic faith; discovering the right way’; “*alomar aitwaan*” *Islam* ‘Joining Islam’. *Anupit aitwaan ngakitatameta edin aislam* ‘believing in the practices and teachings of Islam’.

One person responded conversion is leaving those bad practices you use to do e.g. alcohol drinking, smoking and immorality for religious observance and obedience for it is forbidden in Islam. There were few persons who maintained the Christian

phrases by explaining the meaning of that term as “*Alung ngasecesia daang a camun erot loajokon loakuj, loa yesu kristo, akunup akuj atamar erai apei*” ‘repenting all your sins and accepting the way of God of Jesus Christ, believing in God as one’. The close part is contentious as both the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Qu’ran 112:1-4) all confirm the oneness of God. The Lord is our God. The Lord is the one and only God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love Him with all your strength.

### Crisis

Rambo emphasizes the aspect that,

Most students of conversion agree that a crisis or disorientation precedes conversion. The crisis may be religious, political, psychological or cultural, or it may be a life situation that opens people to new options. During the crisis, myths, rituals, goals and standards cease to function well for the individual or culture; such a crisis creates disorientation in the individual’s life (Rambo 1992, 165).

Rambo also notes two main valid conception of the crisis process these include a subject should have contact with an advocate who sought to persuade them to see the world and themselves in a new light and most converts are active agents in their own conversion process (Rambo 1993, 44). This is to a greater extent true of most Turkana converts to Islam. I will try and describe how crisis have influenced Turkana conversion from Christianity to Islam.

### *Age of Converts*

There has been some crisis in the lives of Turkana Christians who have converted to Islam. Most of them can be described as adolescent crisis, although not all of them. Except person 1; who converted to Islam recently at age forty due to anger with his Christian wife whom he suspects was moving around-unfaithfully with

her church elders who also supported her misbehaving and disrespect to him. Most converts made their decisions at a much tender age while at school mainly primary and secondary school. Such a bold step also apart from those who converted as a result of marriages for the case of female persons was necessitated by the rebellious courage enhanced by their hormonal surges which prevail upon them at this level and stage. For those that converted while at primary schools, their conversions took place at a very tender age. In the case of person 5 the crisis came culturally and naturally and in fact positively because as a maid (house help) of a Muslim family while in standard four at age 12 in standard seven at age 15; she was given by the same family to a Muslim man for marriage. She became a Muslim woman with two children. She later divorced that husband and now lives with another Muslim at the time of interview.

### ***Major Life Crisis***

Person 2 was a curious altar boy in a Roman Catholic Church. One day he asked his priest a question about God, the priest rebuked him “you are Satan” while in standard 2. This grieved him and from then purposed to search for the true way. After sometime, he made his own research and reading on Islam. He approached a Muslim and befriended him and after four months, he made his final decision to join Islam. His Muslim friend took him to a sheikh who assisted him to confess the *shahada* ‘confession of faith’ at his home.

Another case is person 9. He was an altar boy like the previous one. One mass day, he asked the priest why he was prostrating privately in the dressing room while he was not before the congregation. The priest told him that was only for him and not every body else. That alone disappointed him and thought that the priest was depriving the Christians of the true way to worship God. In observing the Muslim

Imams, sheikhs and the *ummah*, they did in unity. That compelled him to join Islam. It seems most decisions were made out of social differences which can be treated as a characteristic of immaturity as the case with person 9 above. May be he would have gone to another denomination.

### ***Crisis of Quest***

Crisis of this kind was experienced by person 9 again. He relates that he was searching for the truth. He found it in the *Injil* teachings which he dreamt being told by Jesus “look for the truth and follow it”. He immediately went to the sheikh and explained to him that he wanted to join Islam. The sheikh questioned him why he was joining Islam. According to him, it was the true religion. He was instructed by the sheikh that this religion rejects alcohol, dead animals’ meat, immorality, lying, and gossip. He was inducted first in this. He was told any meat must have been slaughtered and blessed by a Muslim. He was told never to steal, *haram*, *matamano* (unlawful, desires), *kumwaga damu bila sababu* (shedding blood with no reason). It means one would shed blood if there was a genuine reason especially Jihad.

A similar case with a crisis as a prominent feature is person 20. He states a situation where there was a call which he termed as a vision from Allah (God). He was reading Islamic books that were provided by Muslims. The word of Allah ‘God’ came unto him and he was carried by a vision. Having visualized how Muhammad received his vision, then there would be no wonder to this experience.

### ***Women and Crisis***

Among the five women interviewed the conversion through their husbands or as a result of marriage was an automatic thing. The unique case is the wife of person 1 who is still a Christian from Africa Inland Church. Person 4 got converted due to



marriage to a Muslim although she was an Africa inland Church herself. This was when she was in secondary school form one. She decided to be a Muslim apart from marriage, so that she could comfortably stay with her husband and her children are not cursed as children outside Islam are cursed. Her having two religions in a house was not good and according to her a woman has no denomination except that of her husband. She believes *Ramadhan* 'Muslimfasting' period forbid a Muslim husband staying with a Christian lady, the necessity to harmonize that; without being a Muslim no wedding would take place and consequently no marriage certificate considering these she opted to be a Muslim to match her husband.

Person 5 was forced into marriage at standard seven to a Muslim man against her wishes by people she was working for as a house help. That validated her as a Muslim woman. Person 6 felt the Muslim community God fearing and their social life was communal and respectful. This may be a positive crisis to her. However she distrusted her previous church elders and pastors 'leaders' which made her convert to Islam.

In person 7, she was very ready to be married and because of her advancing age she was courted by a Muslim man who "loved her". Although she had doubted what Islam believed about Muhammad as being true, her husband to be explained to her that Muhammad was like Christ, just a prophet no very big problem. When she decided to accept him as a husband, she accepted everything including his Islamic faith.

Lastly person 8 made friends with Muslim children (girls) at school. They shared with them food, clothes, played, socialized thus she became a Muslim when in standard seven. She got married to a Muslim Somali man who also impacted her Islamic faith; now they have eight children together. Her disappointment was that

CCF 'Christian Children Fund'; a sponsoring body discriminated her in assistance while Muslims 'Islam' assisted. The logical thing was to embrace the faith where her help came from.

### ***Other Crisis***

Islamic literature became a great avenue and catalyst that motivated many converts to consider converting to Islamic faith. Person 20, 19, 18, 16, 13, 10 and 2 were all challenged and consequently made their decisions after reading deeply and comparatively Islamic literature. There was no fanfare but silent conviction that led them to seek friendship from those who supplied them with literature. They later became their agents to Imams who lead them in reciting the *Shahada* 'confession of faith' in the mosque.

Person 16 apart from reading carefully Islamic books and comparing it with the Bible approached a neighbor who assisted him join Islam. The Islamic message in the radio and preachers, the dressing, behavior as was assisted by his aunt and Muslim cousins made person 14 to convert. Person 11 in search for a spiritual guidance was angered by the Christian teachings on the deity of Jesus Christ and the place he landed next was Islam.

Person 12 was however seeking for a stronger faith and a true religion. But due to the Muslims brotherhood, rapport and other assistance he considered Islamizing. Person 17 decided himself without ever reading Quran or Islamic books or contacting any Muslim. Person 15 claims the priest irregular life style and the controversial Christian teachings on the trinity made him instead to befriend Muslims and their preachers. He ended up a Muslim.

Most conversions in Islam are out of socialization differences and the legalism entitled in abiding by the law. There is nothing on relationship with the deity or Supreme Being as in Christianity.

### Quest

#### ***Deprivation***

From my research among the Turkana Christians, I have come to realize that there is a general sense of deprivation in Turkana. People in general are not satisfied with the situation they are in religiously, economically and Islam has exploited them. A case in point here is person 8 who sought sponsorship from the Christian Children Fund 'CCF' but was discriminated; she moved to Islam. Person 4 when I asked her whether she is satisfied in Islam responded that "where else should I go, I left Christianity!" There is also deprivation as to that which is true. Person 2 in my discussion with him noted that, "even the Somalis are more ignorant of the truth about Islam no wonder they are not interested to Islamize those from other communities!" These and many other illustrate perfectly the dissatisfaction in both Christianity and Islam and for the case of Christianity one decides without restrictions to convert to any other religion or stay churchless but in Islam you are either a Muslim or a *kafir* 'pagan' and no one wants to be a *kafir* 'pagan' but submitted.

#### ***Truth of God's Word***

Rambo states that, "some people are spiritual questors, always growing, learning, developing maturing" (Rambo 1992, 166). This is true of most Turkana converts to Islam. An aspect of a quest of God's truth and words is expressed and wished by Persons 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9. Person 1 was discomforted with Christianity but found an answer in Islam. Person 6 was in a quest to know and found the facts about

God while person 9 quested for the truth of God's word. Muslims and Islam are emphatic that the only unquestionable and last truth (revelation) is in Islam.

### ***Baraka And Power***

In discussing several reasons for seeking conversion Rambo mentioned one catalogued by James Beckford which seems to be very relevant to our study of Turkana conversion; "Beckford catalogues different kind of power which have been recognized as playing a role in religion, like the power to heal, the power to be successful, the power to gain control over one's life, and the power over death" (Ibid., 168).

It seems in Islam the issue of *Baraka* (blessing) is a key factor in their conversion motivations. Five people were motivated to convert so as they may obtain *baraka* 'blessing' from Allah and the *ummah* 'Muslim community'. Person 12 mentions *baraka* 'blessing' and he seems to imply the job he got from the Muslims after conversions which he considers was impossible in Christianity due to his impiety in drinking and smoking. He adds assistance from his fellow Muslims. Person 18 felt that some spiritual blessing '*baraka*' was missing for him that was what made his Muslim colleagues well behaved than him and when he converted he obtained what he calls "spiritual well being plus conscience" This may imply *Baraka* 'blessing' and peace. The same thing was with person 19 and 20.

### ***Husband/ Companion***

Attraction to individuals such as friends, mates, and age sets and age groups is a kinship phenomenon in the lives of Turkana people. Two of them (person 7 and 8) felt that what their husbands told them and the way they showed them "love" was something they should seek. Person 7 says she needed a husband and the one she

accepted happened to be a Muslim. Person 8 mentions that from her observation of Christian husbands including that of her Christian sister, she concluded that there was no love and care. She rather saw Muslim women were cared very well by their husbands.

### ***Simple Responses***

A few respondents provided short unexplained answers to these questions.

Most of their responses ranged from yes, yes as for 4 people persons 4, 13, 15 and 16 while no, no for 2 people persons 5 and 17. There was a contradictory yes and no for person 10. Person 17 in fact clarified his negative response by stating that “no, many people think when you become a Muslim you can get something for support, no!”.

Whatever the motive behind his response he seems to affirmatively express a defense against malicious attacks perceived to be from Christians of to many of them that converted to Islam. And that can be understandable for the Somalis who are predominantly Muslims are the economic backbones in Turkana; while the Turkana themselves remain in abject poverty, a genuine blame as to those who may decide to convert to Islam.

The table below is a summary of the research results as related to stages 1-4. A similar table for stages 5-7 is presented on page 89

**TABLE 1**

STAGES 1-4				
Person	Context	Crisis	Quest	Encounter
1	Mosque	Major	Major	2000 , Imam
2	Home	Yes	Yes	1992, friend, conflict at home with wife
3	School	Major	Yes	1997, literature by Ahmed Deedat, Imam Malik
4	Home	Yes	Yes	1996, husband
5	Home	Yes	Yes	Family
6	Mosque	None		Friend
7	Madrassa	None	Yes	September 1997, sheikh, husband
8	School	Yes	Yes	1981, friends, husband
9	School	Major	Major	Imam, Teachers at school
10	Home	Yes	Yes	February 22 1992, friend
11	Home	Yes	Yes	1995, classmate
12	Home	Yes	Yes	2004, cousins
13	School	Major	Major	1999, friend, schoolmate
14	Home	None	Yes	Islamic preacher, cousin
15	Home	Yes	Yes	Early 1990's, friend
16	Home	Yes	Yes	1994, friend, schoolmate
17	Home	None	Yes	Early 1990's, friend
18	Home	Yes	Yes	1997 friend
19	Home	Yes	Yes	Brothers, friends
20	Mosque	Major	major	1990, sheikh

#### Encounter

Rambo argues that,

The encounter stage involves the contact between the potential convert and the advocate and takes place in a particular setting... In the encounter stage particularly, the charisma, or personal attraction of the religious leader or advocate can have a powerful effect on the convert. Charisma, --- is an interactional phenomenon in which the needs, expectations, and hope of both leader and follower are involved. Just as followers need leaders, leaders need follower, --- establishing a bond between the advocate and potential convert makes transition to deeper involvement possible (1992, 169-171).

This is true for most converts in Turkana. Most potential converts have been the Turkana people where as the advocate included many players: The Islamic

literature, friends, agents at school as most converts are adolescents who made their decisions while still learning; family members and sheikhs and Imams as further described and analyzed below.

### *Friends and Husbands*

Very few converts mentioned their husbands and their families as their source and encounter avenue. This was not the case with most men who instead married Muslim women or Christian women who also converted. Person 4 had a Muslim boyfriend. Her parents Christians from the Roman Catholic Church and herself an Africa Inland Church accepted her for marriage to her boyfriend. The boyfriend and his family persuaded her to Islamize to harmonize their marriage and to validate her children. She dropped out of secondary school in form one in 1991 due to her boyfriend. Presently, she is doing her form four and seems to have since separated with her husband, but she is still a Muslim. Person 7 has never been in any formal school. When a Muslim man courted her she accepted and consequently Islamized. She was able to attend *Madrassa* 'Islamic school'. Person 8 had Muslim friends 'girls' she was schooling with, when the Christian sponsoring body 'CCF' rejected her for sponsorship, she sought assistance from the kind and generous Muslim friends and their families. Eventually, she was given a Muslim husband 'Somali'. They live together in a monogamous marriage with 8 children born to them. Her husband made her drop out of school in standard seven while about to finish. At the time of interview, the husband was drunk meaning he may not be a committed Muslim although he strongly professed it. The largest categories of advocates to many of these converts were friends. About nine persons, 2, 4, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were all contacted and later converted by their friends. This shows that Islam values and

upholds friendship. No wonder friendship evangelism has been approved as an effective tool in Muslim evangelization.

### ***Imam/ Sheikh***

Another category of advocates that were instrumental in bringing converts to Islamic faith have been Imams and sheikhs. A lot of their contacts happen to be in an open air meeting where dialogue/debates are usually conducted. These are person 1, 7, 9, 14, and 20. Person 1 mentions that an Imam paid close attention to him since 2000; he made his decision later last year. The same Imam was the one who Islamized him as shown in the certificate of reversion to Islam attached at the appendix. He was instrumental also in sending him for a three months course in Islamic studies in Nguluni. He had attended *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' as well. By the time of the interview, he was experiencing his sorrow in his intention to divorce his Christian wife whom he accused as disrespectful.

### ***Family Members***

Family members have been very influential in both Islam and Christianity but it is much stronger in Islam than in Christianity. Four people converted to Islam by the influence of their families. Person 5, 12, 14, and 19 fall in this category. Some of the prominent family members the converts mentioned include brothers as with person 19 mentions his brother and friends while person 14 mentions of his cousins and the Islamic preacher whom he described as quoted some verses from the Bible in an open air dialogue with pastors and them. The pastors could not challenge or answer him. That must have been a disappointment that brought a crisis for the cousins to win him. Person 12 had his cousin Jafar and Jama who already were Muslims. Although his conversion started at home with them, it later climaxed in a mosque where he



recited the *Shahada* before an Imam. Person 5 also mentions the family as his avenue to Islam.

### *Agents at School*

The three influential institutions that shape and nurture the life of an individual: Mosque/ Church, Society and the School. Most of these converts as I had mentioned had their utmost contact while schooling. Being in adolescence with the possibility of peer pressure most of them converted. Five people had their advocates at these level persons 9, 11, 13, 15 and 16. Person 9 had his teachers 'Muslims' as the influencers that led him to Islam. Person 11 while in standard 8 in 1995 got Islamic literature which he read thoroughly. It took him two years to make his decision. He recalls the message he read in the Qur'an that gripped his heart that, "It was sent to all mankind and to act as guidance". He memorized the five pillars of Islam and came to learn that Islam means submission to God's will. Person 13 and 15 while in secondary school 'Lodwar High' and primary respectively through their contact friends read the Islamic literature and made their decisions out of that. Therefore, the books coupled the friends sharing and urging. For person 15, he observed his friend praying and doing other Islamic practices that alone spoke to him. His friend was progressively persuading him to be a Muslim. Person 16 was told by his friend Islam begins with Adam and goes through all the prophets mentioned in the Bible to Jesus Christ and the final messenger was Muhammad and that their message was one that, "there is none to be worshipped but God 'Allah'". That led him to study about the prophet and their messages through the Bible and the holy Qur'an. He finally converted as well.

### *Islamic Literature*

Literature whether Christian or Islamic may raise questions that have no immediate response or may provide answers to issues many human advocates within contact may not provide. Four people responded from the research that their decisions were made purely out of a conviction resulting from what they read in the Islamic literature, Persons 2, 3, 5, and 10. Person 2 in 1992 read a book a Swahili book called *Shahada* 'confession of faith'. He says that the book was explicit and that most aspects of faith were not found in the Bible. However, his friends reinforced what he had read in the books thus converting. Person 3 while an adolescent in form one in 1997 got challenged by the social, economic and political aspects of life mentioned in the Qur'an agreed with science which was challenging him as well. He felt that it was in line with his way of life which Islam revealed. Among the scholars whose works he read and influenced him include Ahmed Deedat and Imam Malik. Person 5 had no alternatives to compare with. She was a Christian with her parents while young 'a baby' and when 12 years in standard four, she joined a Muslim family as a house help. She received ordinary Islamic teachings and got exposed to Islam at that tender age. Islam became her only available religion. Person 10 remembers challenged by Islamic message on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1992. Although a friend led him to the Imam to declare the *Shahada* 'confession of faith'; the impact mainly came from Islamic literature. He mentions that his quest for information took him to reading Islamic literature and comparing it with that of Christianity. He says that no Muslim tried to lure him to Islam. However, he decided himself to get such literature. His friend also supplied him with more. It took him a year studying and consulting on which is the right religion of God. He later concluded it to be Islam. This among others illustrates

the impact and the role literature can play in advocating for converts in this period of information.

### Interaction

Rambo in discussing this subject states that,

If people continue with the group after the encounter, the interaction intensifies. In this stage the potential convert learns more about the teachings, lifestyles, and expectations of the group. The group provides various opportunities both formal and informal for the people to be fully incorporated into the group. The intensity and duration of these phases varies (1992, 171).

This is true not only for Rambo but also for the Turkana who converted to Islam. For the purpose of this section, I would like to relate the stories that were narrated by the Turkana persons who converted to Islam. These stories will capture an impact and the time span of interaction among others. Some of the converts could not give detailed information which may be attributed to their level of education and cognitions. Either way they may not have understood the questions properly or lacked the language to tell it. This narration will capture the objective questions asked in this section.

#### ***Person 1***

My interaction with Muslims at this period started when I attended *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' from 2000 to 2/3/2007 when officially I decided to be Islamized. I was given a lot of acceptance and recognition. Thereafter I was expected to stand by myself in prayers while I was provided a lot of assistance along whenever I am in need. I was later sent for further training recently for three months at Nguluni in Ukambani and thereafter I passed the examination. I was particularly welcomed officially to Islam on 2/3/07. Islamizing is like baptism-you are given a new name, you vow, you are told where ever there is a mosque you go there and worship. When

Islamizing, you are welcomed and there is a big announcement in the mosque that you are one of them; every Muslim becomes a brother to you till death. You just are dressed in the normal attire. My training was arranged from April 19<sup>th</sup> till August 5<sup>th</sup> 2007 for three months. There was a celebration at *Al-Amin* in Nairobi at the graduation. I was given a Quran, Kamsu, cape and a certificate. Among the courses I took are as shown in my certificate (See appendix attached).

### **Person 2**

My interaction with the Muslims at this period was not with a good reception. I remember one day an old man snatched a book I was reading by claiming that I was a *Kafir* 'a pagan'. This didn't deter me from my mission to achieve my objective i.e. entry to Islam. I was welcomed to the *ummah* at a later stage. What happened was I worked for a family to earn a living as I was doing the worship activities. The Somalis are not good people to my own personal view. If they were propagating the religion in true terms Islam could have accessed many places by now. Their welcome could mean giving you '*miraa*' 'khat' or drugs and helping you into the utopia world and make you divert from true religious worship. I received a couple of trainings but wasn't any special; only basics to assist you know the difference between *halal* 'lawful' and *haram* 'unlawful'.

### **Person 3**

I got invited to stay with them to experience how Muslims live. I used also to have discussions with them on matters I didn't know. I got interacted with them in the mosque during prayers. This happened since I got excommunicated and jailed from home for joining Islam; I had to get a Muslim brother who had to give me courage and taught me more of what I knew not. They definitely welcomed me into their

*ummah* since Islam teaches a Muslim is a brother to a fellow Muslim despite the color, race and origin. Then I had to be welcomed as a brother since we have been invited to Islam as a way of life. I did receive special training also they provided me with my studies which I couldn't manage. I was taught more lessons on Islam.

#### ***Person 4***

The Muslims used to teach me Arabic and translate it into Kiswahili and into my language. I was introduced to *Madrassa* 'Islamic' to learn how to pray, read the Qur'an and other things required in Islam. I was also attending women classes where we learnt how to stay with husbands, we were taught rules required for fasting when you are married. They welcomed me into the *ummah* and I was given a new name 'Islamic' and after three days the wedding took place which made me become a house wife in that Islamic surrounding and I was also introduced slowly the rules required by the religion.

#### ***Persons 5 and 6***

I was treated as a Muslim with all privileges. I received *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' training continuously to qualify me be a true Muslim where I was made to see the difference between Islam and Christianity. To Muslims I became a friend and a brother. I was impressed by the way my friend's family was living. Person 6 says they were so friendly, God fearing people and respected other people's religion, the neighborhood but preached the Muslim gospel to all to respect God. They welcomed me into the *ummah* and at many times when visiting my friend family, they would always ask for family health, how they are going on and living. They sometimes visited my home just to say a word of hallow to my family. At times of need my fellow church people could not help even after approaching the church leaders for it.

But from my Muslim friend's family even without narrating my problem they could come to help. I received some special training after converting to Islam. My friend's family enrolled me for a Muslim school in Nairobi Mahad girls Muslim Madrassa.

#### ***Person 7 and 8***

I started *Madrassa*, 'Islamic school' I was taught prayers and women were welcoming into their group and we were taught by a sheikh in Arabic. Although I never been to a formal school, I still learnt in Arabic. The only training received with teachings at *Madrassas* that was exposed by other ladies, the sheikh and my husband also taught me. Person 8 said it was through friendship and socialization that had proper interaction with the Muslims. I was welcomed into the *ummah*. I first came to contact with a Muslim at school with a friend I was in class. We befriended one another and realized she was a good girl. At meal time, we came home to dine together and thus the friendship developed. I got special training at *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' where I was taught the Qur'an, prayers, prayer orders and dressings.

#### ***Person 9 and 10***

My interaction with Muslims was ok for we had good communication. I was welcomed very much and was treated as a brother dearly and all my previous doubts were solved through brotherhood. They welcomed me into their *ummah* 'community'. I was Islamized in the mosque where the sheikh told me to observe five prayers a day. I was told to put on long dresses such as holy Kansu. I was given teachings on the Qur'an since 1983. While in standard 3 I joined *Madrassa* as 10 year old. I was trained how to conduct prayers for a period of one month just here in Kakuma.

Person 10 says: they were just friends of mine and so friendly to me. In case I needed more information. I was welcomed into the *ummah* 'community'. The day I

reverted to Islam was the most jovial day of my life. On this day, I went and met with one of my Muslim friends. I told him I want to be a Muslim today; he told me you are joking. I told him no, I am serious. He told me to bathe, shave well and let's go to the mosque. At the mosque, the imam told me to recite the *Kalima* 'confession of faith'. He taught me also the five pillars of *Iman* 'faith'.

At the afternoon prayers he introduced me to the *ummah* 'community' who were so happy and gave me a lot of gifts and welcome like a lost member of the community once found. After three months, I attended a basic Islamic training in Mombasa. Later, I joined Islamic teachers training college and later I got a scholarship to join International Islamic University of Africa in Khartoum Sudan. So I believe Islam has made me better religiously and intellectually than before.

### ***Person 11***

I interacted using Kiswahili and a bit of Arabic language as I was taking studies. They taught me ways of praying and direction facing, kneeling and way of facing down. They welcomed me into the *ummah* 'community'. During my vacation studies in Don Bosco (at kakuma camp), I used to meet friends Muslims in Mosque, they used to conduct their prayers in an open air, and finally I decided to conclude they worship the true God. I was taken to *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' and visited Islamic library as well.

### ***Person 12***

My interaction with Muslims at this period was on the origin of Islamic faith and pillars of Islam and the language used was just English, Kiswahili and mother tongue which made the dialogue clear and easily understood. Most of the dialogue was mostly done in the mosque through the history '*hadith*' of the prophet. I was

taught the origin of Islamic religion, the pillars of Islam, faith in Islam, and the four holy books namely; Deuteronomy (Torah of Moses), Gospel (Injil of Jesus), Psalms (Zabur of David) and Quran. The Muslims welcomed me as they are hospitable; I felt like a brother to the rest of the Muslims because to any assistance I needed, the Muslims were ready to offer. I was trained and later offered a job to sustain my life.

### ***Person 13***

My interaction with them was minimal at that stage since I was studying hard for my KCSE and I also read few books at this stage. I accompanied them after games time to keep me updated on some issues concerning my faith. They definitely welcomed me. It was on a Friday as I came with my friend to the Mosque. I was amazed with the spiritualistic atmosphere in the mosque. The people were seated on the *Mkeka* 'mats' and in rows. They were busy reading the Qur'an and some were praying. The prayer formula was unmatched. I was introduced to Imam and I announced my reversion to Islam. All the people were happy and they hugged me. I felt very happy. I went to a three months beginner's course in Islamic studies in Kisumu. I then proceeded to Thika College of Sharia and Islamic studies where I graduated with a B.A in Sharia law.

### ***Person 14 and 15***

I had interaction at home, school and market. They welcomed me into their *ummah* 'community'. It was on Friday when I decided to go to the mosque for the first time. There I met my cousin that introduced me to the imam. I was told to repeat some words that the imam said, and then I was told I have become a Muslim. That evening, my cousins and I went to *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' together. After training



myself the basic things that must be done daily in Islam; I was later moved to Garissa for Qur'an studies.

Person 15 says: we were friends in the same village. We shared most of the things in life; eating together, playing was one thing we did without bias. They gave me presents, welcomed me during their party occasions and other good things. They welcomed me into the *ummah* 'community' Respect is the best thing I saw from them. They never segregate one from other, no racism practiced, all people are equal, sitting together, playing and doing other activities together without choosing according to social class. I was taught Islamic *sheria* 'law' and was educated better in Islamic teachings.

#### ***Person 16 and 17***

Through dialogue and group discussions, they welcomed me into their *ummah* 'community'. On the day of my conversion, what I felt could be well compared to what Christian's term as being born again. I felt new with a new name and new brothers and sisters in anew faith and besides these a few gifts. My first training came from an individual who did it voluntarily. He was a religious teacher who must have done this to many converts.

Person 17 states that he interacted with Muslims when he lived together with them. They welcomed me into their *ummah*. Later after Islamization 'conversion' I was taken to Kisumu for *Madrassa* 'Islamic school' training for a period of three months.

#### ***Person 18***

I interacted with Muslims as schooling children in the same school. I had a lot of friends (young) who were together with me when I attended the function. We were

just mere friends and they never told me anything so as to convert to Islam. They welcomed me to their *ummah*. After I was moved by the very message about how they carried out their activities especially praying, I came to understand and appreciate Islam better and my reversion as a small boy during that time was a funny one because I could join the rest of the *ummah* as I was considered underage of responsible person and was believed to be free from any religious affliction. I was trained also. Some of my friends offered me some books for prayer and some offered to train me some verses of the Qur'an and other *hadiths* 'history' so that I could know the Islamic way of living.

### ***Person 19 and 20***

I interacted with them in uniting with them in doing many things together. I learnt that we are brothers and sisters in Islam. They welcomed me into their *ummah*. I was renewed again and felt like I am being reborn again as a baby born. They trained me too and provided more assistance in acquiring Islamic studies at Nairobi in 1997.

Person 20 states that I interacted with Muslims in Kiswahili and was learning Arabic also. They welcomed me into the *ummah* and were told to learn cleanliness, should circumcise as required by the religion. I was also taught to pray five times a day. I was taken to Islamic school to get Islamic education in Arabic and some translated as well.

### Commitment

Rambo discusses that,

In some religious traditions, requirements to modify ones clothing diet or other patterns of behavior can serve this same function of reinforcing the rejection of old patterns and behaviors and the incorporating of new behavior into a person's life ( 1992, 174).

This is true of the Turkana conversion to Islam. A lot of time they identify in wearing Kansu's for men and capes while carrying the rosary which they recite non-audibly as they walk or converse. They also change the name to an Islamic one and among others they are cautious of what may be *haram* 'unlawful' against *halal* 'lawful'. New behavior patterns, socializations and company are enhanced.

### ***Ritual and Decision/Surrender***

Conversion theorists do recognize that baptism and testimonies make powerful ritual activities in the commitment stage. Baptism especially is highly practiced in the Christian conversion and in fact most of those I interviewed had been baptized and had Christian names. But as they converted to Islam, they were to change those names to Islamic type. Because there is no water baptism and testimonies to be given, a dynamically equivalent significant other type was in application.

The periods in which these commitments were made varied from individual to individual. There were those whose commitment ranged from instantly to progressive as for the case of three people; persons 7, 13 and 5. Person 7 made her commitment immediately privately at Shunghur Hussein house. There, she recited the *Shahada* before the congregation in her wedding. She however denotes her being conversant with the Christian teachings. Her commitment is shown in her doing everything according to the Islamic faith. Person 13 also made his decisions immediately from the first moment he embraced Islam in public. He states that word spread that he had become a Muslim that day. People asked him about it which he affirmed. His commitment is shown through his praying five times a day, helping the needy, delivering religious sermons in the local mosque and in his responsible behavior. Person 5 commitments can be said progressive. Although she made it public in the

mosque before an Imam her having been raised up by the Muslim family she was serving as a house help cultured her into Islam. She could not even remember the *Shahada* she was made to recite.

Majority of the people interviewed could recall very well the public or private incident that climaxed their conversions of the Islamic faith. Three people made their commitments from as soon as one week old to six months, person 12, 14, and 18. Person 12 took a very short time of less than a week to make his commitment in the public. He consequently publicized his commitment in the *Salah* 'prayer' in the local mosque before other Muslims and his wearing of a Kamsu. He considers himself a very committed Muslim in his avoidance to perform evil things that he used to do before joining Islam such as smoking, drinking alcohol and going discos. Person 14 made his public commitment in three months. He further publicized it by attending the *Madrasa* classes and praying five prayers daily. He continued demonstrating this commitment by his actions patterned to the Quran and *hadith* 'history' teachings of the prophet. Person 18 likewise made his public in six months. He publicly demonstrated it in being together with other Muslim brothers in all endeavors. He continues this practice in his praying and in following all the doctrines of the Islamic religion.

About four people, person 8, 9, 10 and 17 made their commitments in about a year from the period of encounter. Person 8 publicly declared before the sheikh in the Mosque her commitment to be a Muslim. She was led to recite the *Shahada* before the sheikh. She is continuing this commitment in her daily prayers, dressing and the respect she is offering other Muslims as taught by Islam. Person 9 also likewise did his in Mosque after sharing it with the sheikh who later led him in the confession of faith. Person 10 was even much excited after making it public in the Mosque for he

even further told his Christian friends in previous church who relayed the matter to the pastor and elders who made the announcement in the church about his conversion to Islam. His commitment is much shown in his changed attitude, social life, life style, moral life and in his education. Person 17 confessed his commitment while in the refugee camp in a private residence. He maintains the five times of prayer in a day and follows strictly the Islamic culture. He sees such commitment much better because it controls him from bad companies in crime, immorality and others.

Six people, person 2, 3, 4, 6, 16 and 19 made their commitment in a period of about two to three years. Person 2 did it privately other people learnt about it without public announcement. His commitment is confirmed by his life which is entirely based on Islamic values right from morning to evening on daily basis since making his commitment. He does show it by observing his prayers, fast, supplications, charity and assisting others, teaching others etc. person 2 also made his commitment in public. He publicized it in his acceptance and profession that there is only one true God to be worshipped and Muhammad is the last prophet. His commitment is demonstrated in following Islamic commands which makes him feel that he is a very committed Muslim. He prays five times a day and performs good deeds as per Islamic law. This is shown in his changed life which had made him a resourceful person in the community. Person 4 made her decision in public and it was in her wedding. She demonstrates this commitment in her dressing, praying, fasting, and socializing with other Muslim women, in acquiring a new name and in her preaching (propagation) of the word of God. She considers herself a very committed Muslim in her prayers and following Islamic rules among others. Person 6 made her commitment in her friends – later her husband home. The husband's brother was a local Imam in their village Mosque when this became public her friends, family and previous church were

surprised when they saw her in the *hijab* ‘veil’ and consequently attending the Muslim school and Mosque for prayers. Her commitment is shown in her following what God wants as a human being does. She performs her prayers, helps needy when she has enough and even preaches Islam. Person 16 made his commitment privately for he believed his action alone will publicize of his new faith in Islam. Person 19 made his decision in a period of two to three years in public while he was attending the mosque on Friday. He demonstrates this commitment in maintaining five times of prayers and maintaining a changed life.

Persons 1, 15 and 20 respectively made their commitments in 8, 7 and 13 years. Person 1 got encounter in 2000 and by March 2007, he made his commitment public in a local Mosque before an Imam where he was made to kneel down and was made to vow and later he was instructed everything on Islamic prayers ‘*dua*’ both public and private. Since then he began praying five times a day as required by Islam. He still does not describe himself as a very committed Muslim because his family – wife and children are not yet Muslims. They attend the neighboring Africa Inland Church. He believes that God may not hear his prayers because he is carrying the cross of the rest of the family-wife and children. He still beliefs Allah would give him some little help. He blames poverty as the factor behind; for in Islam a man is required to provide for his family. Person 15 made his commitment in seven years in private. His brother who was a Muslim spread the “good news” to others who did not yet reverted to Islam. He prays daily five times by God’s grace. He tries to stay away from the bad practices that are not acceptable in Islamic *shariah*. This is demonstrated by his not taking or doing those *haram* ‘unlawful’ substances and activities. He is in peace in his mind and the rest of the community when he was concluding his responses I had concluded, in my research questionnaire with the statement “Thank

you for accepting to do this research with me” this respondent responded that, “I wish you the best and become a Muslim before death by God’s grace as you pursue this research, Amen”. This is amusing indeed. Lastly person 20 made his commitment after 13 years since encounter. This may be the longest of all kind. He did it in public and among the things he claims are proves are his conversion documents like certificate of conversion from Christianity to Islam and in his taking oath from the mosque. He claimed his commitment to Islamic faith in his five times prayers daily and in his obedience of the Islamic doctrine. He continues to demonstrate his commitment through his maintenance of a high degree of hygiene and his expressions of faith to enable the Islamic faith and practices to expand.

### Consequences

#### ***Persecution***

Although most conversions to those converting from Islam to Christianity experience persecutions of many kinds; it is very minimal in those converting from Christianity to Islam. The reasons could be because Christianity is a relational religion while Islam is a communal submission to the will of Allah. Even in this research, there were cases of persecutions of some kind. Person 2 was not persecuted by his Christian family but instead received rejection from the Muslims. He remembers an incidence one day one old man snatched the book he was reading by claiming that he was ‘*kafir*’ ‘pagan’. This did not deter him from his mission to achieve his objective of entry to Islam. Person 3 another Roman Catholic when he denounced Christianity he got excommunicated from home and got imprisoned for a week. These acts gave him more courage to research about Islam and later embrace it fully. Person 13 after he was converted at the public mosque; word spread that he had become a Muslim; he confirmed to many enquirers of the same truth. His family disowned him; they

rejected to sponsor him for college/university education just because he's become a Muslim. Other of his siblings was sponsored for further education while he was left. He differed and separated from his family till recently when they mended the relationship. The Muslim *ummah* did assist him to do three months beginners course in Islamic studies in Kisumu and later proceeded to Thika college of *Sharia* and Islamic studies.

Among the women the situation is a little different. It seems they enjoyed the conversions without family interference or conflict. Person 4 separated from the husband when he married several other women; he remained with their four children she now lives with her parents a single lady while she attends a secondary school at Kakuma refugee camp as she had dropped in form one. She had done a one year early childhood Teachers training as well. Person 5 divorced her husband when he neglected providing for her. She came back from Malava to join her brother working with registration of persons at Kakuma. She had two children with him but has since remarried another Muslim. Both of these ladies are still faithful Muslim women. This can be seen as persecution not associated with the faith but normal family breakages in Islam.

### ***True Conversion In Islam***

Woodberry contends that,

Traditional Islamic thought has not had a general word for the concept of conversion. What non-Muslims would call "conversion to the Muslim faith" Muslims describe by such words as Islam (surrender [to God]); Iman (faith [in God]) and ihtida (following [right] guidance). Conversely, what non-muslims would call "conversion from the Muslim faith" Muslims call irtidad (apostasy)...conversion in Islam can be an individual or a group act that involves knowledge, right intention, repentance, faith and submission to God, witnessed to by verbal confession in God and his Apostle and by righteous deeds ( 1992, 22-40).



My impression after interviewing these 20 people is that, there is no real spiritual, relational and transformation a conversion in Islam. Therefore, there is no salvation in Islam but there is conversion. Although such conversions may touch some deep levels of their existence; but in reality it is not transformational but may be termed as cultural or societal. Most of these people justified their reasons of conversions with claims that; they pray five times a day, fast during *Ramadhan*( fast), lead pure non- immoral lifestyles, dress in an Islamic manner and even assist the needy as well as abiding strictly by the Islamic practices and traditions (*hadith*). Some go to the extent of mentioning their Muslim marriages and change of names as valid reasons as to their conversion and a true Muslim. It implies that just that identity and physical attainment of such requirement in itself justifies their being right with Allah and the ummah. It is a kind of social conversion.

Brainbridge states that,

According to Strain theory, people join a religion in order to satisfy conventional desires that unusual personal or collective deprivations have frustrated. According to social influence theory, persons join a religion because they have formed social attachments with persons who are already members and because their attachments to non-members are weak (1992, 178).

This is true of the conversions from Christianity to Islam among the Turkana. The argument from many of them has been there is immorality, drinking alcohol and smoking in Christianity than in Islam. There is the claim that they are given assistance and rapport by the *ummah* unlike Christianity that strives in individualism and isolation. The aspect of brotherhood and sisterhood as some termed it. There is a lot of the good of Islam being exposed and the badness of Christianity. The oneness of God was another main factor among others.

### *Allegiance*

Allegiance usually is a deep level (world view) assumption of people's personality. The assumptions of the Turkana Christian's allegiance and loyalty at their conversions to Islam are highly challenged. They struggle between their specific families still Christians and their new Islamic faiths. Most often to some, their kinship ties gets cut or strained.

Person 1 was considering divorce at the time of the interview. He claimed that he was not very much committed Muslim for his family-wife and children are not Muslims thus Allah can not hear him very much as he is carrying the cross of the rest of the family. He claimed poverty as the main factor behind all that as he saw himself a failed Muslim by not providing for his family as needed by Islam. At the time of interview, he had been interdicted from the neighboring primary school two years ago with no valid reason without compensation to date. He was therefore jobless and helpless.

Person 3 since he was excommunicated and consequently jailed for a week by his family for converting to Islam still lives alone in isolation with the ummah without any reconciliation with his family. While person 13 mentions that he even hated his own people for rejecting to sponsor him for joining Islam. He is still on his own with unchanged attitude towards his family.

### *Inner Changes*

Person 1 terms it as baptism. Person 19 mentions that he saw a vision where Jesus teaching on *Injil* 'gospel'said, "Look for the truth and follow it" That became his confirmation to Islam. He considered it the truth of God's word. Person 16 makes it even much clearer when he states that, "on the day of my conversion, what I felt

could be well compared to what Christians term as being born again. I felt new with new name and new brothers and sisters in a new faith and besides these a few gifts”.

My impressions with the interviewees was that once they recite the *Shahada*, vow and are given gifts then the declaration to defend Islam, measure Islamic standards and maintain it comes automatically. Islam to my conclusions is very humanistic; many unfortunately desire comfort and not pain. There is the assurance of the rewards in heaven for those living the Islamic faith to be very much adherent and hardened.

Christianity is down looked and highly despised. In fact they sympathize with Christians for being misled by the Western missionaries. The attitude to live and die a Muslim other than a Christian transcends. Although most Somali Muslims are comparatively rich as compared with these converts, their general impression is that there is a potential with them catching one day with their comrades in Somali community as many of them are self employed-majority are running bookshops, butcheries, retail shops, open air markets while others are working for the Somali wholesalers as sellers. Therefore, there is that general satisfaction and feelings among them with most aspects of life improved after conversion.

The table which summarizes research results related to stages 5-7 at the next page ends this chapter. Based on these findings, I will in the next chapter show how this information can be applied to Muslim Christian witness to the Turkana.

TABLE 2

STAGES 5-7			
Person	Interaction	Commitment	Consequences
1	Imam, Teacher	2000, 8 years	Divorce threat-wife
2	Sheikh, Friend	1992, 2 years	Scolded Kafri by a Muslim old man
3	Friend	1997, 2 years	Excommunicated and jailed -family
4	Friend, Husband, Mosque	1996, 2 years	Separated from husband
5	Family, Husband	1989	Divorced
6	Family, Husband	2 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> years	Positive, family shocked
7	Sheikh, Friend	1997, immediately	Positive
8	Friend, Husband	1987, 1 year	Positive
9	Sheikh, Teachers	1983, 1 year	Positive
10	Friend	1992, 1 year	Positive
11	Classmate	1995, 13 years	Positive
12	Cousins	2004, 1 week	Positive
13	Friend, Schoolmate	1999, immediately	Rejected by family
14	Cousins, Aunt	3 months	Positive
15	Friend, Preacher	1990, 7 years	Positive
16	Friend, Schoolmate	1994, 2 years	Positive
17	Friend	1990, 1 year	Positive
18	Friend	1997, 6 months	Positive
19	Friend, Brothers	2 years	Positive
20	Sheikh, Teacher	1999, 13 years	Positive

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS FOR WITNESS

#### Challenges and Opportunities for the Church

We have learnt from the Turkana Muslims that for them Islam was initially not an option; they had to experience some crises and or get to know a significant other person while to some they had, like the Berean Church, to examine the Islamic literature and compare and contrast with the Christian teachings for them to realize that Islam was theirs as well. One of the converts could be scolded “*a kafir*” ‘pagan’ but that could not deter him from becoming a Muslim.

#### ***Need of Paradigm Shift***

There are many denominations in Turkana. Many of them are spread along the Trans-Africa Highway connecting Sudan through Lokichogio. Almost none of these churches are interested in communicating their messages to the Muslims in Turkana. On the contrary, Islam seems to be recognized as another way of worshipping God and because Muslims are not bothering us the Christians so then why bother? There therefore need to change such an attitude for the church to effectively reach the Muslim population.

In Mathew 28:18-20 on the great commission command and mandate and in 2 Timothy 2:2 which states, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witness entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”. This challenge is one of the most important for those who are involved in reaching Muslims. The discipleship ministry not only to Christian converts but more so to the

Muslim believers. Most converts confirm that once they confessed the *Shahada*; they were immediately enrolled in the *Madrassa* and in fact they were sent to Kisumu, Nairobi, Garissa, Mombasa and others Nguluni for basic Islamic studies training.

In our Christian churches except the Roman Catholic Church and the Africa Inland Church, most other churches especially the Pentecostals and Charismatic do not have these nurture and spiritual growth teachings. Although majority of these converts are Roman Catholics, the blame may mainly be in lack of proper Biblical teachings and preaching's from the priests and the church's failure to uphold the holiness and sanctity required of those embracing the Christian faith. The laxity in permitting moderate drinking, smoking and no action to those considered living immoral lives destroys the integrity and the trust of the church and her clergy.

### ***Demonstration Of A Transformed Life Is A Possibility For The Church***

There is no salvation in Islam, there is cultural conversion. The Christian therefore is advantaged that one is not only saved but is spirit filled and is capable to live and demonstrate a holy and godly life that challenges and supersedes the Islamic legalistic type. One person interviewed mentioned that he was ignorantly made to confess and vow the *Shahada* without knowing what is happening but later told he was now a Muslim then from there he was to attend *Madrassa*.

The Muslims are practical people in their faith. As Christians, we need to do more than them in our lives, attitude and words. Holiness is attractive whether one is a Muslim or a Christian. Muslims would not listen when our lives, conduct and words and actions are not consistent. If our lives are patterned to the teachings of our Holy Book; we shall have every reason to challenge them through our pious lives.

For us to reach Muslims with the gospel of Christ, our lives need to be pure enough to be respected by them. True Biblical holiness will definitely be respected by

most Muslims. 1John 3.1-3 urges everyone who has this hope to purify himself just as He is pure. In 1 Timothy 5: 12 he urges the church to keep herself pure...not to share in the sins of others. Possibly the Muslims have in blanket condemned the entire church simply by the sins of a few unregenerate members. Such people are also in Islam as the case of a drunkard husband of person 8. But because Islam is far different from Christianity, we cannot have an excuse. In 2 Corinthians 6: 3-10 we should not put stumbling block...that our ministry will not be discredited. In verse 6, it mentions in purity, understanding, patience, and kindness; in the Holy Spirit! In verse 7, it states in truthful speech ...with the weapons of righteousness. This is the commitment required of us the church towards people of other religions including Muslims. The target thus is not only outward to Muslims but inward as well with our own members who need to grow in the faith, in the grace and in the fellowship with other believers ( Luke 2: 52). All round growth as was Christ Jesus: In stature, in wisdom, in favor with men and God. Thus when our relationship with God is temporary, so is our relationship with men and others hence a failure to abide by the great commandment of loving God and neighbors.

### ***Strategies for Those Converted to Islam***

The church in Turkana is quiet helpless on what to do. First the clergy are Ignorant of Islam and its current trends. 100% of the clergy had never taken an Islamic course or awareness. There is need therefore to orient and equip the clergy with the knowledge and the know how to reach Muslims. While those converted to Islam are already gone and may be less reachable the clergy could strategize to reach and disciple their families so that through family contacts such people could be easily reached. While these converts are believed to target converting their families to Islam the Christian family members could respond by witnessing to them through a

harmless contact and fellowship. The clergy on the other hand should promote dialogue amicable with the Muslim Imams and Sheikhs but such dialogues should be used as avenues to clarify the misconceptions each have of the others faith. They should use dialogue to avoid controversies or anything that might lead to debates or contests. Contest that might lead to other conversions to Islam or conflict with Muslims should be avoided. The Christian clergy should be knowledgeable enough of Missions, Bible and theology. There were those who were in dilemma of returning back to Christianity but somehow decided to hang on in Islam. There is need to identify such persons and encourage them to make that choice and if possible make continuous follow-up with such persons.

### ***Meeting Other Felt Needs***

For many of the people I had interviewed, just that recognition by the *ummah*, the hug, the ululation, the gifts, the free training and brotherhood when assistance is provided with concern and care was enough to restore the persons confidence of the goodness and comfort available in Islam. Such things are assumed and hence are minimal in Christianity. There are such psychological needs as love, care, concern, encouragement, motivation, being counted one of them and community (brotherhood) and sharing. We need to confess lack and the laxity of the church to these crucial Christian practices.

The provisions of jobs and scholarships to the university coupled with other physical support attract many individuals to Islam. Christianity can do more than Islam in providing scholarships and showing concern for suffering Turkana. Our beliefs are compartmentalized where as in Islam it is an everyday life. We can do likewise in seeing that Christianity is lived throughout ones life and practices.



### ***Practical Recommendations***

Most of the people I have interviewed converted at their adolescent stages. There are a number of ways for the Church to influence the youth. One way could be through youth camps during the school holidays. Some of the churches in Turkana have youth camps almost every school holiday. In Africa Inland Church in April, they have a one day youth rally in each local church; in August holiday they have a DCC 'District Church Councils' youth camp and consequently in December they organize regional youth camp for a week. In this manner the church would assist many young people encounter the Lord and also utilize their energies to serve the Lord. The Africa Inland Church should open these youth camps to youths of other Churches.

Another way is by the church initiating programs in schools such as CYA 'Christian Youth in Action' as used by Africa Inland Church and YCS 'Young Christian Society' by the Roman Catholic and CU 'Christian Unions' as facilitated by the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship 'KCSF'. Although some of these programs are confined in Secondary schools and in the churches, the need to diversify them to include those in Primary school would be ideal in every primary school in Turkana.

There are usually pastoral studies every Friday which is usually taught by the priests or pastors. This may need to be strengthened as well. In my research, I realized that majority of young persons read Islamic literature out of curiosity hence converting from convictions to Islam. It is true that Christian literature are lacking in Turkana. Even the recent pastors Book Project by SIM 'Society for International Ministries' never reached Turkana district and on the other hand they could not have afforded the Kshs. 6000/= that was required. There is need therefore to set Christian libraries if possible in a section of the library of every school. With the youth self

explorations and discoveries they would read and make personal decisions' about the Christian faith. Clergy need Church libraries too.

When a child is born in Turkana, there is always celebration. Consequently spiritual birth should have the same significance. I therefore recommend that a type of communal celebration should be specially arranged for those that have converted to Christianity in the churches. This is a kind of welcome, initiation and inclusion in to the new faith. When Islam could go to the extent of offering gifts, they then overtake us on the good things they do. This seems to have value to the convert than to the mature followers.

### *Areas for Further Study*

During the studies of my research, two thoughts haunted me every time: first, "What is in confessing the *Shahada*?" 'Confession of faith'; second "what are the motives for the gifts that people are provided at that moment of public confessions?" This would have helped me to understand Turkana conversion to Islam better. I will recommend this as an important area for further studies.

The other and equally important study is to find out more about the impact and the role of basic Islamic studies and *Madrassas* in strengthening the Islamization (conversion) process of many converts. It is very necessary to investigate further on these areas.

## **CONCLUSION**

Reaching Muslims is possible. The Christians have an obligation to know Islam and know the Muslims as people with needs as the Christians are. The Muslims are thirsty and questing for the truth about the right way to God. As Christians we have learnt through the Bible that there is not any other way to God except through

the person of Christ. Muslims are not aware of that as Islam denies the deity of Jesus Christ.

The Christians need to strongly believe and practice what they teach and passionately communicate what they believe and practice. The research clearly shows that majority of the converts became Muslims because the Christians failed. The Christians compromised their practices and believes to the detriment of the Christian faith.. The Christians failed to be light and salt that the Bible requires of them.

For the Christian life to be fruitful, our practices and believes must be according to the Bible. We should be eager to share not only the gospel of our savior Jesus Christ but even our own resources to fulfill the great commission command and mandate (Mathew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Rev. 22:7 and Mathew 24:14).

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Person 3, 2008. *Interview by author*, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 4, 2008. *Interview by author*, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 5, 2008. *Interview by author*, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 6, 2008. *Interview by author*, 1<sup>st</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 7, 2008. *Interview by author*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 8, 2008. *Interview by author*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 9, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 10, 2008. *Interview by author*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 11, 2008. *Interview by author*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 12, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 13, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 14, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 15, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 16, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 17, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 18, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 19, 2008. *Interview by author*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, Kakuma

Person 20, 2008. *Interview by author*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, Kakuma



## LIST OF APPENDICES

### Operational Questions

The following Operational Questions are meant to open up each of the research questions, and will be used for the informal interviews except the operational questions for research question number 4 which is asked in a questionnaire that will be given to all interviewees (formal Interview). Those unable to fill the questionnaire themselves will be asked the questions for them to answer orally.

Research Question 1: what is the common understanding of conversion among the Turkana Christians?

Operational Questions: What are the Turkana terms for conversion?

How can you explain the meaning of that term?

Research Question 2: how does conversion from Christianity to Islam affect the identity of the Turkana people?

Operational Questions: What has changed in your life since you “converted” to Islam?

Research Question 3: what are the motivating factors for Turkana conversions from Christianity to Islam?

Operational Questions: Can you tell some most important motivating factors for converting from Christianity to Islam?

Were there other reasons for conversions?

What are they?

## Questionnaire

Research Question 4: what are the stages of Turkana conversion from Christianity to Islam?

Operational Questions and Questionnaire for formal interview based on Rambo's stage model:

**Context**

Where did you grow up?

In which context were you exposed to Islam for the first time?

Home  School  Mosque  Work  Other

Where did conversion take place?

Home context  Market  School  Mosque  other

**Crisis**

What made you think of changing religion?

Can you describe what happened and how this made you convert?

**Quest**

Did you feel that something was missing (meaning, power, blessing, fulfillment or any other aspect) in your life before converting?

Did you convert in order to find what you missed?

**Encounter**

Can you remember the first time you were challenged by the Islamic message?

Describe:

Did this encounter lead you to conversion?

How:

Who was the person who encountered you with the message? E.g. friend, muslim teacher etc.

Title (no names):

### **Interaction**

How did you interact with the Muslims in this period?

Describe:

Did they welcome you into their ummah?

Can you tell a story of how it happened?

Did you receive special training or help from the Muslim ummah to make you a better Muslim?

Describe:

### **Commitment**

How long did it take from initial encounter until you committed yourself to Islam?

Did you make this commitment in public or was it in private?

How did you make it known?

Would you describe yourself as a very committed Muslim?

How does this commitment show in your life?

## QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology pursuing MA in Muslim/Christian relationship. I am carrying out a research titled "Factors contributing to conversions from Christianity to Islam among the Turkana."

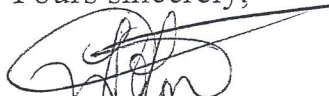
I am writing to request your participation in completing the attached questionnaire. The findings will be useful in establishing a positive relationship between the Muslims and the Christians in our regions as well as other regions beyond Kakuma and Lokichoggio.

Please read each question carefully and answer as appropriate, for the study to be meaningful. Kindly complete all the questions.

Responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.

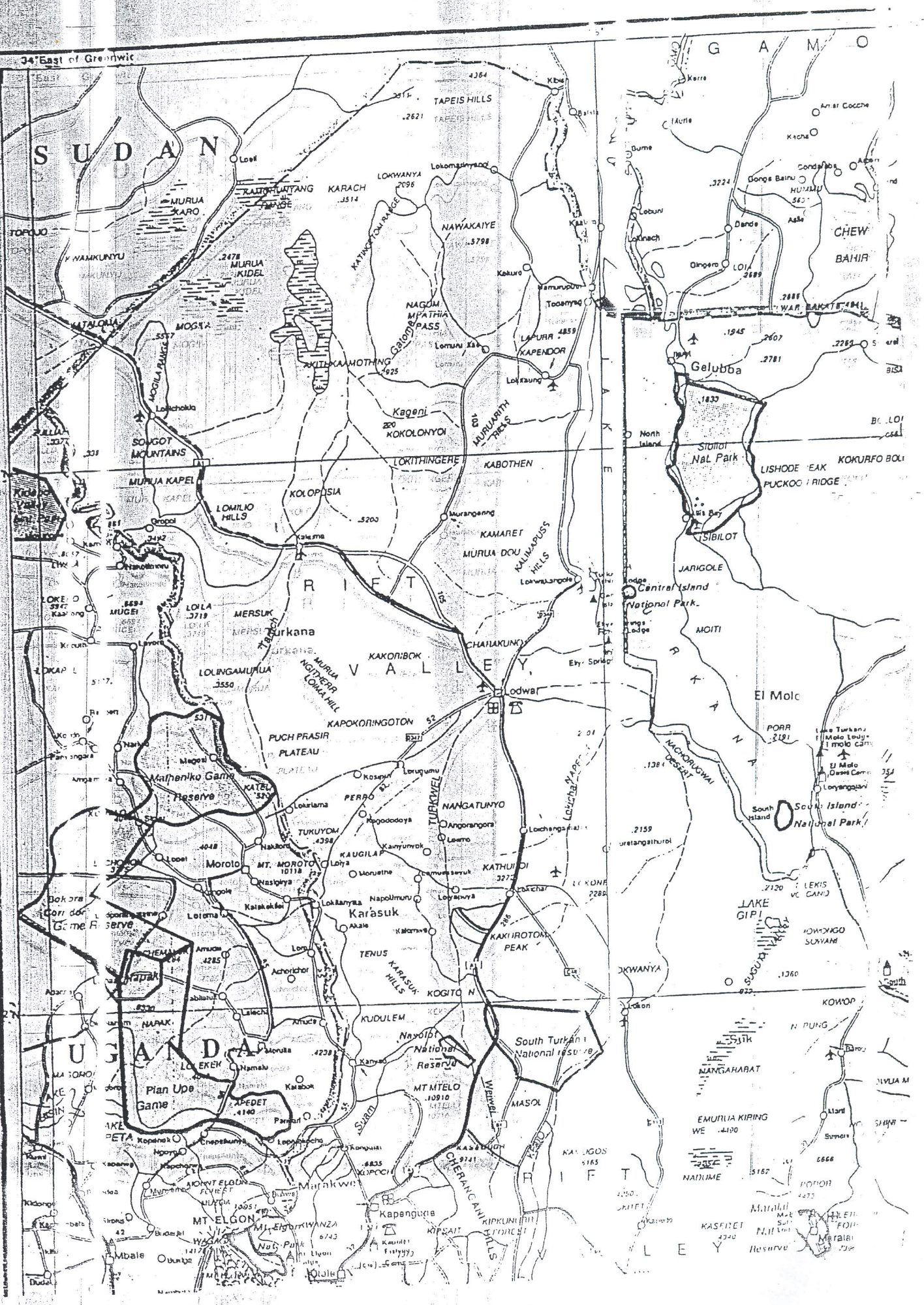
Thank you for your participation.

Yours sincerely,



Oliver E. Lowton

# Turkana



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST BENEFICIENT, MOST MERCIFUL  
KWA JINA LA MWENYEZI MUNGU, MWINGI WA REHEMA, MWENYE KUREHEMU

CERTIFICATE OF REVERSION TO ISLAM  
SHAHADA YA KUSILIMU

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad (S.A.W) is the Messenger of Allah

Ninakiri kwa moyo wangu na ninatamka kwa ulimi wangu ya kwamba hapana Mola apasaye kuwabuduwa kila wa kaka ila Allah na Muhammad (S.A.W) ni Mtume Wake

Place of issue <i>Mahali ilipotolewa</i>	Home District <i>Wilaya Anakoioko</i>	Date of Issue <i>Tarehe ya Kusilimu</i>
		Date of Reversion <i>Tarehe ya Kusilimu</i>
Former name <i>Jina la Awali</i>	Adopted Name <i>Jina jipya</i>	Age <i>Umri</i>
		I.D/ Passport No. <i>Tarehe ya Kusilimu</i>
Father's Name <i>Jina la Baba</i>	Reverted from <i>Dini na Dhebebu kabla ya Kusilimu</i>	Address <i>.....</i>

I hereby state and certify that I have become a Muslim by reverting to Islamic faith on my own accord and choice. I declare that in case of my death, burial succession and issues arising therefrom shall be conducted in strict accordance with the Islamic laws and rites.

Nathibitisha kuwa nimesilimu kwa khiari yangu bila kulazimishwa na yeyote na ninaazimia wakati wa kifo changu, mazishi yangu, urithi wangu na mambo yatakayofuatia kifo changu, yatekelezwe kulingana na mila na sheria za kiislamu.

Certified true copy of Registered Entry  
Nathibitisha hii ni nakala sahihi kama ilivyo katika Register

Signature of Reverttee \_\_\_\_\_  
Sahihi ya aliyesilimu \_\_\_\_\_ Imān \_\_\_\_\_

Witnesses Mashahidi  
Name Jina \_\_\_\_\_ Signatures Sahihi \_\_\_\_\_  
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

# DAR - UL IRSHAAD CENTRE

By the authority of the Ahle-Shourah granted in September 10<sup>th</sup> 1997 by the act of Assembly, the Mudir and the Administrator hereby certify that they have conferred upon

A certificate of completion of Islamic studies in a three months course from

In testimony of proficiency in the several studies and exercises prescribed by this institution for granting such.

In witness whereof they have ordered that this certificate be attested by signatures of the members of the institution

Given at Dar-Ul Irshaad Centre this 5<sup>th</sup> day of August 2007

We implore the bearer to remain a God fearing person , Inshaalah

P.O.BOX 71464, TEL 6767683, Juja Road Estate, Eastleigh, Nairobi

**PERFORMANCE REPORT FORM**

**Name:**

**Date of admission:**

**Date graduated:**

**Course Duration: 3 Months**

No.	Subject	Score	Grade
[1]	Quran		
[2]	Adhkaar		
[3]	Fiqh		
[4]	Akhlaq		
[5]	Seerah		
[6]	Tawheed		
[7]	Qiraa Wal Kitabah		

Date