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NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

A STUDY OF THE ABAGUSII CULTURAL PRACTICES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE MISSION
WORK OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN KENYA

BY


JOHN NYANG'AU OSUGO

A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School,
in the partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters of Theology

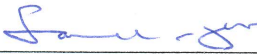
OSUGO, JOHN NYANG'AU 'A' STUDY
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LUTHERAN CHURCH IN KENYA

Approved:

Supervisor


Stanley Mutunga, Ph.D.

Second Reader


Samuel Ngewa, Ph.D.

External Reader


Mary Getui, Ph.D.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS viii

CHAPTER 1 1

 INTRODUCTION 1

 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 3

 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 3

 1.3 OBJECTIVE 3

 1.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY 4

 1.5 METHODOLOGY 4

 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW 6

 1.7 DELIMITATION 17

 1.8 DEFINITIONS 17

CHAPTER 2 24

 THE ABAGUSII WORLDVIEW 24

 2.1 THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF 24

 2.1.1. Nature of God 25

 2.1.2. Role of God 28

 2.2 RITES OF PASSAGE 30

 2.2.1 Birth 31

 2.2.2 Naming. 32

 2.2.3 Initiation 37

 2.2.4 Marriage 45

 2.2.5 Death and Thereafter 55

 2.3 THE SOCIAL NETWORK 63

 2.3.1 Nuclear family 64

 2.3.2 Extended Family 64

 2.3.3 Kinship 67

 2.4 MYSTICAL POWERS 77

 2.4.1 Magic 79

 2.4.2 Witchcraft 80

 2.4.3 Sorcery 83

 2.4.4 Medicine-men 85

 2.4.5 Diviners 86

 2.5 EFFECTS OF MODERNITY AND URBANIZATION 88

CHAPTER 3 91

 THE MISSIONARY METHOD AND PATTERN 91

 3.1 THE EARLY MISSIONARIES ARRIVAL 91

 3.2 THE MISSIONARIES' CULTURAL BELIEFS 92

 3.3 THE MISSIONARY AND GOSPEL APPROACH 94

CHAPTER 4 98

 PRESENT CHALLENGES IN ELCK: "The Excluded Middle" 98

 4.1 WITCHCRAFT 101

 4.2 MAGIC PRACTICES 103

 4.3 CIRCUMCISION 104

 4.4 DANGER OF SYNCRETISM 107

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 5 | 111 |
| RESEARCH FINDINGS | 111 |
| 5.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS | 112 |
| 5.2 INTERPRETATIONS | 128 |
| 5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY | 137 |
| CHAPTER 6 | 139 |
| TOWARDS A CONTEXTUALIZED APPROACH | 139 |
| 6.1 THE BIBLE AND CULTURE | 143 |
| 6.2 THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH | 150 |
| CHAPTER 7 | 159 |
| CONCLUSION | 159 |
| 7.1 SUMMATIONS | 161 |
| 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS | 162 |
| GLOSSARY | 165 |
| REFERENCE LIST | 170 |
| APPENDIX | |
| A. MAPS | |
| GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF ABAGUSII | 176 |
| BOUNDARIES OF KISII AND NYAMIRA DISTRICTS AND THEIR CONSTITUENCIES | 177 |
| B. NEWSPAPER EXTRACT ON WITCHCRAFT | 178 |
| CURRICULUM VITAE | |

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ATR | Africa Traditional Religions |
| DC | District Commissioner |
| ELCK | Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya |
| KJV | King James Version |
| KNA | Kenya National Archives |
| LNC | Local Native Council |
| LWF | Lutheran World Federation |
| M.Th. | Masters in Theology |
| NAS | New American Standard |
| NEGST | Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NKJV | New King James Version |
| PC | Provincial Commissioner |
| TEF | Theological Education Fund |
| TEV | Today's English Version |
| SDA | Seventh Day Adventists |
| SLM | Swedish Lutheran Mission |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study inquires into the problems concerning the Abagusii culture and missionary work in the Lutheran Church. This culture, which is considered a hinderance to the proclamation of the Gospel, is investigated. The words "mission", "worldview", "Culture" and "contextualization", are defined. The social life-style, the beliefs and other activities in the Abagusii society are investigated. Various issues of the Abagusii Culture are theologically tackled.

The Abagusii people, who live in the Western part of Kenya, are bordered by the Luo to the North and the Kuria and Masai to the South, and the Kipsigis to the East. History reveals that the origin of the Abagusii was Central Africa around the Congo region; present day Zaire (Ochieng 1974,32). They were among the Bantu immigrants who crossed through the Ugandan border to Kenya about 500 to 700 years ago. These immigrants who included the Luhyia and the Kuria (who are believed to be brothers of Mogusii, the great grand father of Abagusii), travelled together but separated when they arrived in Kenya. (Ochieng 1974,39-45)

Missionaries from the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) in Europe started missionary work among the Abagusii in 1948.

This society sent their first missionaries to settle at a place called Wanchare Hills where the Head Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) is situated today. As a result of the mission, the Church, now known as the ELCK was established. This study focuses on the culture of the Abagusii, and investigates whether it is a hinderance or a blessing for the missionary work of evangelization and church expansion. Various cultural aspects such as witchcraft, magic, and taboos to mention a few, have been dealt with in this study. The study reflects on how the missionaries handled different cultural issues as they endeavored to preach the Gospel in the past. An attempt is made to discuss how some of the culture can be utilized to promote Gospel proclamation in the ELCK. Culture as the focal point of the study has been evaluated from various perspectives and how the Scriptures can be applied in the Abagusii cultural setting. The Abagusii beliefs have also been an issue to tackle in relating the Christian message to their understanding and the worldview. The religious activities within the Abagusii tradition are pointed out. This will help the ELCK to discover some of the evils and dangers in the culture which may lead the Christians into syncretism once converted.

In conclusion this study can provide some understanding of the Abagusii cultural beliefs and will enable the missionary work in the Church to prosper.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is an investigation into the Abagusii cultural practices and their effects on the mission work within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the key cultural beliefs within the Abagusii world-view?
2. What were the methods and patterns used by the pioneer missionaries of SLM for evangelization among the Abagusii?
3. Which are the cultural practices that can be contextualized for effective evangelism and which must be rejected?
4. What are the possible Biblical principles of contextualization that can be applied by the ELCK today?

OBJECTIVE

The research objective is to find out how the early missionaries in the ELCK handled the Abagusii culture as they preached the Gospel. Also, how some of these cultural practices can be handled so as to promote the proclamation of the Gospel.

This information may help the church in missionary work among the Abagusii people and possibly among other ethnic groups.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is of great importance for both the Kenyan pastors, evangelists, and the expatriate missionaries working in the ELCK. That is, to the evangelization ministry in identifying the cultural aspects which can be a blessing or a hindrance to church work.

It is assumed that there can be better ways of facilitating the gospel to be actively proclaimed among the Abagusii than the present approaches which seem not to be very effective.

This attempt is the first of its kind to my knowledge, especially within the ELCK circles. So far, no similar study has been conducted and therefore I consider this one as a new approach. This study is a new approach in the ELCK missionary work among the Abagusii people, because the writer who hails from the Abagusii community provides the inside information from both the Abagusii culture and the ELCK missionary work.

The Abagusii people who number about 2.5 million¹ need church workers who understand their culture and contextualize what is good in it rejecting what is evil according to the christian faith.

METHODOLOGY

I have used three methods to acquire information for this study.

These are : library research, field work using questionnaires which were prepared and distributed to several categories of

¹.According to statistical census of 1989.

people in the ELCK. The respondents included both sexes. Other people were missionaries from SLM, who first started work in the ELCK, and some from Finland who are teachers at Matongo Lutheran Theological College; the pastors and evangelists who have served in the ELCK since it started as a mission church and some who have joined it in recent years, and the elders of the congregations, youth, school teachers, and Bible school students. Also, one deaconess responded to the questionnaire and in total there were 66 male and 19 female. A minimum of one hundred forms were distributed; which represented the sample of Abagusii believers in the ELCK, who are in about four hundred congregations scattered in Kisii and Nyamira districts.

After collecting the data, the responses of various people from both the questionnaire and the interviews were compiled.

Statistical tables have been drawn, to indicate the opinion of various people, as it appears in chapter five below. The final analysis demonstrates how the Abagusii culture has been handled by the ELCK mission, and how it ought to be handled for effective proclamation of the Gospel and church growth.

Library:

Library research was done at various institutions- NEGST; Nairobi University; Kenyatta University; Kenya National

Library; Kenya National Archives; and Matongo Theological College.

Field Research:

Visits were made to various mission stations within the ELCK, as well as to the Head Office and District Offices. The researcher also interviewed some local pastors and some expatriate missionaries in order to obtain first hand information. These included eleven men (pastors) and three missionary women of between ages thirty-six and seventy-four.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this literature review in the areas of missionary work and culture. The materials are essentially based on missionary work and various cultural practices. They address issues which are similar to what I am investigating in this study.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FOR MISSIONARIES

by Paul G. Hiebert

This book is a good work in the field of missiology. Hiebert, a professor of anthropology and born to missionary parents, gives specific cultural insights for missionaries. It is an important manual for students who need to study anthropology and missiology. It enables one to understand the people that one serves in their historical and cultural

settings. This can help one to avoid the pitfalls made by missionaries in the mission field. Several topics which have been dealt with are very relevant to missionary work, especially in the area of culture and mission. This book is relevant and useful to my thesis and it provides information concerning missiological terms in my study, particularly in chapter six

THE RITES OF PASSAGE

by Arnold van Gennep

The author has handled the rites of passage from Birth, Puberty, Marriage to Death. He makes it clear that these rites of passage belong to the culture of a people, since they are marked by different ceremonies. This material is useful in understanding the Abagusii rites of passage, as it can be related to cultural understanding especially in chapter two.

CULTURE AND HUMAN VALUES: CHRISTIAN INTERVENTION IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Jacob A. Loewen

This book tackles major issues on culture and missionary activities among various Asian tribes. However, the method of missionary communication on other cultures in other continents, can be applied in an African context. It is a good book for learning and understanding culture and human values as for what the people believe and consider to be bad

or good within any particular society. It is a useful book for understanding the "culture and human values" in comparison to the Abagusii culture and their values.

"THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ABAGUSII OF WESTERN KENYA, 1909 - 1963"

by S. N. Bogonko

Basically, this thesis provides an overview of the educational situation as it was handled by the missionaries during the colonial era, and how it affected the Abagusii community.

This is an essential document, containing material on the historical development of missionary work among the Abagusii. This thesis is essential in chapter two and three as it reflects on historical innovations among the Abagusii.

INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN RELIGION

Second Edition

by John S. Mbiti

The book is essentially introducing the African Traditional Religion as the title implies. Several issues concerning African beliefs and world-views have been dealt with. It is a good book for comparing other beliefs with the Abagusii religious belief. The author is a prominent theologian in this field. His study is relevant particularly in chapter two.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Richard J. Gehman

The book deals with African beliefs and how Biblical teaching can be applied. The author reflects upon his own missionary experiences with the Akamba people, whom he has served for many years. This is an essential document for comparison with the Abagusii religious beliefs in light of the Bible. It is used in chapter three, four and six.

THEOLOGICAL PITFALLS IN AFRICA

by Byang Kato

The book points out some of the shortcomings which emerge from the theological understanding of African religions. Being African, the author gives some insights into African beliefs, as reflected by African theologians such as Mbiti, Parrinder, Idowu, Agbeti and others.

The book forms good material for theologians, both missionaries and national church leaders, to understand various ideologies of theological developments in an African context. The book is a good one for understanding the ideological positions of the belief of the Abagusii people as reflected in chapter two.

A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

by Stephen Neills

This is an essential book as far as Christian mission is concerned. The author narrates Christian history from the first century to the twentieth century. He has pointed out how the gospel has spread through the ages, as it was proclaimed by various missionaries who were led by the Holy Spirit. It started from Jerusalem to many nations of the world. The book is helpful for chapters three and six in understanding the missiological development of the Christian Church, and comparing the ELCK Church growth in Gusii.

A PRE-COLONIAL HISTORY OF THE GUSII OF WESTERN KENYA A.D. 1500 - 1914

by William R. Ochieng

The book deals with the historical backgrounds of the Abagusii people, their culture and settlement in Western Kenya. The author provides an in-depth history of the people before the colonial era. It is basically one of the best sources of material as far as the Abagusii people are concerned. This is specifically used for chapter two.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

by R.D Winter and S. C. Hawthorne, eds.

The book is a large volume with several authors who have dealt with various topics concerning the Christian Movement.

These topics respond to the whole question of mission, culture and the proclamation of the Gospel. This book is an excellent on missions. It helps to understand chapter three and six in the question of missionary work among the Abagusii, their culture and how to contextualize the Gospel.

GUSII BRIDE WEALTH LAW AND CUSTOMS

by Philip Mayer

This book is a source of material on Abagusii customs. The author, who did very extensive research among the Abagusii people during the colonial era, seems to have gathered what can not be found today. Some of the customs which he mentions have disappeared, while some still exist. This work is particularly useful for chapter two.

TRANSFORMING MISSION: PARADIGM SHIFTS IN THEOLOGY OF MISSION

by David J. Bosch

The book is an excellent one in charting the development of missionary work as it "shifts" in different situations and in several peoples' cultures.

The author indicates how mission has been shifting through the ages, from the Old Testament times through the New Testament, and in Church History. He suggests that the words "mission", "culture" and "contextualization" are inseparable in doing mission work effectively. This helps in understanding how some of the Abagusii cultural practices have

shifted from the past to the present. It is useful for chapter six.

CONFLICT AND ACCOMMODATION IN WESTERN KENYA: THE GUSII AND THE BRITISH 1907 - 1963

by Robert M. Maxon

This is a very good book for this study which looks at the Abagusii people as they struggled with colonial rule, and how the society is organized into several clans. The material classifies different kinship relations among Abagusii.

It is a very useful book in understanding Abagusii kinship and their historical background. It is a good document for chapter two.

BRIDE WEALTH LIMITATION - GUSII 1948

by Philip Mayer

The material contained in this publication gives a clear picture of a Gusii Traditional Wedding. It starts from the time the family of the boy introduces itself to the girl's family, until the marriage is over and relationships are well established. This material is very well researched, although written by a foreigner. The author is a sociologist. It is useful material for chapter two.

CONTEMPORARY MISSIOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

by J. Verkuyl; Translated and edited by Dale Cooper.

The author gives the definition of the word "missiology" as, "the study of the salvation activities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout the world, geared toward bringing the Kingdom of God into existence." He provides the historical background of missiological studies and its development in various countries in Europe, United States of America, Latin America, Asia and Africa. From the Biblical point of view, he sets the foundation given in the Scripture "Worldwide Mission Mandate," and how the Gospel was communicated in the time of the Old Testament, New Testament and during early church times. This book is good for comparison with church growth trends among the Abagusii.

SALVATION IN AFRICAN TRADITION

by Tokunboh Adeyemo

Written by an African, the book gives some insights into how Africans regard the attainment of salvation. It is a good book for trying to solve the questions of those who want to know whether Africans had salvation in their African Traditional Religions. It gives the understanding in salvation when comparing other African tribes with the Abagusii. Particularly concerning sacrifices which are offered to ancestors. It is useful especially in chapter two.

CONCEPTS OF GOD IN AFRICA

by John S. Mbiti

This book, written by a well known African theologian, conveys the African understanding of God, His nature, attributes- anthropomorphic and the natural relationship which exists between God and Man.

The book is an excellent one for the study of the concepts of God in the Abagusii context; how the people knew the existence of God and His attributes. It is specifically useful for chapters two and four.

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION

by George W. Peters

The book has been organized in a way that it states missiological theology Biblically. The author has chosen and tackled the topics which are very relevant in missiological studies and how one can be an effective missionary in the Church. He mentions the necessities which can enable one to do missionary work.

This work is helpful in understanding missionary work in relation to the Abagusii people and the ways in which the work should be done according to Biblical teaching. It is useful in chapters one and six.

WHEN YOU CROSS CULTURES: VITAL ISSUES FACING CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

by Jim Chew

The major topics which the author has tackled, especially in the areas of culture and contextualization, are the issues which missionaries wrestle with in the mission field. He has pointed out that the family background of those who join missions contributes a great deal to their success or failure in the mission field. The author has drawn a lot of his experiences from Asia. He also worked with Navigators in Malaysia and New Zealand. No reference is made to Africa, but the material can be applicable even to the African context, and especially to the Abagusii.

The Biblical texts which are cited by the author are essential in understanding mission among the Abagusii people; useful for chapter six.

THE AFRICAN CHURCH AT THE CROSSROADS: STRATEGY FOR INDIGENIZATION

by Zablon Nthamburi

This book, having been written by an African with wide knowledge and experience in Church ministry and in the teaching profession, demonstrates the truth of an African mind concerning culture and missionary activity. Some chapters are on the meaning of African Theology, its sources and theology, "Made in Africa". Other chapters include: The

African Concerns on the Mission of the Church, the Unity and Diversity of the Church in Africa, and The Last Hurrah: Reaching and Unreached.

This book is useful in understanding how the church in Africa should be indigenous. The book tackles the relevant issues which are facing the church in Africa. Also, it provides useful material for understanding the Abagusii cultural problems in the light of mission work, in chapter two, three and six.

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES OF MISSION

by Arthur F. Glasser and McGavran

As the title implies, the authors have extensively dealt with the theologies of mission. They are well known authors in the field of missiology.

They demonstrated their broad knowledge, theologically and biblically. Some of the major topics that are handled are "What is mission?", "The Whole - Bible Basis of Mission", "Making Doctrines Missionary Effective and Biblically Correct."

Although many of the references are directed mainly to Asia and Latin America, much of what is said can be applied to the Abagusii context and many other ethnic groups in Africa. This book is relevant in chapters one, three and six.

This study acknowledges the contributions made by the above authors in this field of study. However none of them has

dealt specifically, with the topic under consideration, involves the Abagusii culture. So, the present study comprises a major contribution in the field of missiology and particularly in ELCK.

DELIMITATION

This study concentrated on the Abagusii people, who are Bantu. As stated earlier, they occupy the Western part of Kenya; Kisii and Nyamira districts.¹ Since this thesis deals with cultural and missiological reflections, the Biblical teaching will be of central importance as well.

DEFINITIONS

The words "Culture", "Mission", "Contextualization" and "World-view" have been chosen for definition simply because they will be used several times in this work and they are the key words in the investigation. Secondly, these words are often used in various contexts which have different meanings from the ones intended in this particular study. Some authors of different disciplines use the words to convey a message different from the one we want to convey here. For example, the word "mission" may be applied in diplomacy, (a person or people from one country who go to another country to seek or create political or economic relationship and welfare). The

¹Appendix A, *Abagusii tribe in Kisii and Nyamira among other Kenyan tribes and Kisii and Nyamira districts and their neighbors.*

usage of these words will therefore, be limited to Christianity and its involvement in the Abagusii community.

Culture

Briefly, the word culture, involves the behavior of a people and their beliefs. "Culture is closely bound up with language and is expressed in proverbs, myths, folk tales, and various forms of art, costumes, food, social activities, customs, life-style, cues, rituals, rites of passage, standards of conduct and so on. Culture is never static, there is often a continuous process of change, modification and addition of the new to the original" (Winter and Hawthorne 1981, 509).

In his book, Kraft (1979, 45-63) has mentioned that culture has some models which originate from the creation of each human being; in every particular society. In every society, the concept of culture might not be recognized by a member of that society, but can easily be noticed by anthropologists or an outsider of a different culture, who would be shocked to observe certain differences in another society.

Some culture traits are implicit (can not be easily observed by an outsider, such as beliefs, proverbs, myths and so on) while others are explicit (can be easily noticed by an outsider, such as the way people dress, eat and do certain things).

Hiebert (1985,30-52) defines culture in three basic dimensions, namely:

1. The cognitive dimension which deals with knowledge, logic and wisdom;
2. The affective dimension which deals with feelings, and aesthetics; and
3. The valuative dimension which deals with values and allegiances.

He further points out that culture involves "behavior and product". These are the manifestations of culture that we can see, hear, or experience through our other senses.

Therefore, the appropriate definition of culture for this study is that; culture is all that people in the society consider to be good or evil. For example, the Abagusii regard as evil, the practices of magic, witchcraft and sorcery. In contrast, good practices are such things as hospitality, respect to elders in the society and obedience. Certain cultural practices can be inherited through various generations, and can be manifested when people do certain things in certain ways. Other cultural practices can be identified in the rituals, the behavior, the language (proverb and myths), the peoples' life-style (what and how people eat, dress and talk).

Mission

Since the word "mission" implies various things, it is better to indicate how the word may be understood and applied in Christianity.

Basically, the word "mission" means "sending a person or people to a specific place for a purpose" (Peters 1972,15). In the Biblical context, it is "carrying the gospel across cultural boundaries to those who owe no allegiance to Jesus Christ, and encouraging them to accept Him as Lord and Savior and to become responsible members of His Church, working as the Holy Spirit leads, in evangelism at making God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven" (Glasser and McGavran 1983,26).

The Old Testament does provide an impression that missionary strategy was not sending out God's people, Israel to the nations, but the nations to "come" to Israel, whom God had appointed for the other nations' salvation. But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ commissions His believers in the Church, to go out to the nations of the world and proclaim the gospel of salvation for those who believe it. What Peters (1972,15) has stated in his book concerning missions, should be noted. He says, "the emergency is the fact of sin in the world, which threatens the very existence of mankind. There would be no need for a Christian mission if sin were not a serious reality". So Christians are supposed to go and tell the people who still live in sin to repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and savior in their lives. They must go out to those who have not heard the Gospel of Salvation, so that they witness to them of God's love. Christians should be missionary minded, in proclaiming the

Word of God which can 'destroy the power of satan and set free those in sin. Therefore, Christians are sent for mission to the people (unbelievers) in their immediate homelands and also to others in different tribes, or countries.

Contextualization

The term "contextualization" in the field of missiology has become very popular. It was first used by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) in 1972 (Nicholas 1979,20). It indicates that the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be interpreted in the context of the people to whom it is proclaimed. Kato however has given the following definition "We understand the term to mean making concepts or ideals relevant in a given situation, in reference to Christian practices", (Douglas 1975,1217). Gilliland (1989,10) explains "contextualization of theology" to be, "the way in which the Word as Scripture, and the Word as revealed in the truths of culture, interact in determining Christian truth for a given people and place".

In his opinion, Tippett has said that contextualization of the Gospel "is the process of making evangelism and the Christian life-style relevant to the specification of the time and place" (Winter and Hawthorne 1981,287).

After critically analyzing the word "contextualization" in the people's culture, Hiebert states that, "True contextualization, whether of word, practice or institutional

structure, requires a deep knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of both the Christian message and the culture into which it is to be planted." Hiebert seems to have the same opinion as Tippett, as he states "From a theological point of view, contextualization is always an on going process" (Hesselgrave 1984,295)

A summarized and condensed definition of the term "contextualization" is given as "the process of making the Biblical message meaningful, relevant, persuasive and effective within the community" (Gaskin 1986,102).

World-view

World-view is one of the key concepts in this study concerning Abagusii culture. Every society, group, or community has its own worldview in which the reality of the world is perceived. Some people may have a different worldview from others, though they may belong to the same society or group. For example, Christians or Muslims of the same society may have a different world-view from nonbelievers. McGavran has pointed out that we may have, "the Biblical World-view, "the Secular World-view" or "the Marxist World-view", (Glasser and McGavran 1983,23-5). It is also pointed out that "at the very heart of any culture is its worldview, answering the most basic question: "What is real?" This area of culture concerns itself with the great "ultimate" 'questions' of reality, questions which are seldom asked, but

to which culture provides its most important answers" (Winter and Hawthorne 1981, 363).

Kraft (1979, 53) defines worldview as,

the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture

In Hiebert's definition, the "worldview" means the "assumptions about the way the world is put together." Some of these assumptions called, "existential postulates", deal with the nature of reality, the organization of the universe and the ends and purposes of human life. It also includes values and norms, for instance differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong. Some of these assumptions are made explicit in people's behavior (Hiebert 1983, 356).

In his book Geertz (1973, 127), defines the term "worldview" as the people's

picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order. Religious beliefs and rituals confront, and mutually confirm one another

After reflecting on the definitions of the words "culture," "mission," "contextualization" and "worldview", let us now tackle the areas in which the Abagusii worldview is demonstrated in the following chapter; such as in their religious beliefs, their rites of passage, their social networks, and finally, the mystical powers among them.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABAGUSII WORLDVIEW

In every community or society, people have their own worldview, a way in which they observe and interpret their environment. It is through these observations and interpretations that they can formulate and have certain beliefs. The people's worldview shapes and molds them into a certain behavior and character.

Each society is identified by their own worldview, because every society perceives its environment differently. For instance, the African worldview differs from the European, American, or Asian worldview. The ways in which an African perceives things in his environment perpetuates his beliefs, behavior, character and cultural values. These can be questioned by a person in the different worldview, yet, for the person from the same community things seem to be normal. We will now concentrate on the Abagusii religious beliefs, rites of passage, social network and mystical powers.

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Abagusii people are immersed in their own worldview through which they can interpret their religious beliefs,

rituals and cultural practices. In most cases people who are strangers in Abagusii society can be faced with a cultural shock, for example, the pain and experience of the initiation ritual for both male and female children. It is the culture and the worldview of Abagusii which unites the community and makes its people feel secure in their religious beliefs.

There is limited literature on Abagusii culture and beliefs. For this reason, their culture and beliefs have been transmitted from generation to generation orally. One can learn and understand the culture and belief of the Abagusii, through elder's teachings. It is through such learning that one can understand the Abagusii religious belief in God and His attributes. Let us now see how they understand the nature of God.

Nature of God

The nature of God among the Abagusii people is identified by the terms which are associated with Him. They believe that there is only one Supreme God¹ who created the heaven and the earth and all the things in it. This belief in one supreme Being is very common in many African tribes, although the approach in worship may differ. This idea is also reflected by Adeyemo (1978,21) as he strongly states that, "All over

¹The supreme God is believed to be staying far away in the sky and can only communicate with the ancestors in the spiritual world. These spirits can often come to be with the living, especially at night.

Africa people generally assume that God created the heaven and the earth and all their contents". It is indicated by Gehman (1989,189) that among the African people, there is a universal acceptance that there is a Supreme Being who knows everything and from whom we cannot hide anything.

The life of the Abagusii is centered in their cultural and religious beliefs, as they are manifested in their daily activities, behavior, taboos and rituals. They believe in the supremacy of God through His role in the creation of their land, their animals, their crops and the natural vegetation. They knew and believed in the existence of God even before the coming of Christianity.

The Abagusii names which are attributed to God and that emphasize His nature are "Engoro", "Nyasae" and "Omotongi". The name "Engoro" indicates that the creator is the Heavenly Being². This is derived from the word "Igoro", meaning Heaven. This word "Igoro" can also mean, above everything, or on top of everything. Similar to the word "Engoro" (God) is the word "Enkoro" which means heart.

The term "Engoro" for God among the Abagusii is not used often in normal conversation. It is mainly used by elderly people when referring to worshipping through ancestors. This is the time one can mention the word "Engoro". The most

²In the Abagusii conception, God is like a human being who can see and hear what is said or done in their community, who is able to punish the evil doers and reward or bless those with good deeds.

commonly used terminology among the Abagusii for God is "Nyasae". The word "Nyasae" is also used by other tribes like the Luo, Luhya and Kuria. Although the word "Nyasae" is commonly used among the Abagusii for general speech and church worship, it seems to have been borrowed into the Abagusii language. Therefore, one can conclude that the original name for God among the Abagusii is possibly "Engoro" which is explained by the two similar words, "Igoro" (above everything) and "Enkoro" (the heart). This means that the "Engoro", who is above everything ("Igoro") is perceived through the "Enkoro" (heart). In that perspective, "Engoro" is also known as "Omonene", which means Lord. This term means the one who is respected, so God must be respected for his nature of being above everything.

The Abagusii realize that they cannot physically speak to God but, only through the ancestors. Therefore, since God is above everything and cannot be reached by any physical contact, He can only be perceived through the heart of each individual.

The sun which is also believed to be the "eye" of God, is feared if seen at night. It is generally believed that after sunset and especially after midnight, the sun returns back from West to East to begin the day. Therefore during this movement, if one is unfortunate and sees it, he will make

a sacrifice, which is very complex³. If the sacrifice is not properly done, the person may die or suffer as a result of seeing the "sun" at night. In fact, in this case it is not very clear what is called the "sun" that corresponds to the nature of God. This is because those who have seen whatever the image is, are prohibited, by those who make the sacrifice for them, to explain the details of the occasion.

Perhaps, the "Sun" that is seen at night might be the small insects (moths) which twinkle like stars. Sometimes they can come together and form a very bright circle like the sun.

We now discuss the Abagusii view and belief in the role of God.

Role of God

The two names of God explained above indicate the nature of God. The third name, "Omotongi" mentioned above explains the role of God in the Abagusii understanding. This name simply means, "the Creator of all things." It specifically implies the role of God in which He continuously restores, in creating all the things.

First, the Abagusii believe that the "Omotongi" not only created their beautiful land with fertility and plenty of rivers and springs but also created them and placed them at the Abagusii highlands. They realize that the role of God is

³ *Sacrifices of this kind must be directed by a diviner, and therefore the person concerned must consult the diviner who will say which animal, its color, gender and so on, is to be offered when one sees the "sun" at night.*

to provide adequate rain for their crops, although some people, rainmakers ("abanyibi") claim to possess power to cause rain. In connection with this idea, Mbiti states "rainmakers are believed to be servants of God." He continues, "we find rain-makers all over Africa. Many of them are deeply religious people who spend a lot of their time praying to God to give rain to their people..." (Mbiti 1991,160).

... In many parts of Africa God is referred to as "the Rain Giver" or "Giver of Water," (Mbiti 1991, 160-161).

Secondly, the Abagusii believe that the "Omotongi" also preserves life. It is His role to destroy the powers of satan ("Nyachieni") and protect His people from evil and death. This idea of preservation of life as God's role is widely acknowledged in different African tribes. Adeyemo (1978,23) lists some of the tribes which maintain that it is God's role to provide and to preserve life. For that reason prayers and sacrifices are made to God for providence and preservation. Adeyemo states, "since the majority of African peoples hail from farming communities, rain, fertility, plenty and health are prime avenues of God's providence to them". Although Adeyemo has made it clear that prayer and sacrifices are made to God by farming communities yet we should not exclude those African communities or tribes whose main occupation is either fishing or pastoralism. They also have the obligation to pray and make sacrifices to God as they acknowledge His providence and preservation.

Another term which is used to indicate the role of God is

"Omorendi" which means the protector. He protects His people from harm, danger and any other evil against them; such as sickness, enemies and even starvation.

Finally, it is believed that God controls and protects the life of the Abagusii people from birth until death and thereafter. This is demonstrated through various rituals in the community.

rites of passage

Van Gennep (1990,vii-viii), defines rites of passage as an "any life - Crisis ceremony" which can establish the validity of the threefold classification, which are: separation, incorporation, and transition. Hiebert(1985,176), sees the rites of passage as the "life-cycle" of human life, which are important marks of one's transition and of certain rituals. These marks are birth, initiation into adulthood, marriage and death. We perceive these concepts to mean the different stages of life which a person has to undergo and are usually religiously or ritually performed and involve the family or the clan. While some of these stages are compulsory in certain clans or tribes, others seem to have no significance at all.

In this section, we shall specifically discuss the Abagusii ceremonies or rituals concerning birth, naming, puberty initiation (which deals with circumcision), marriage, death and thereafter.

Birth

It was believed among the Abagusii that, "Engoro", whose eye is the sun, could see through it and listen to any request presented to him. For example: when a woman gave birth, at sunrise, she could take the child in her hands, face the sun and say, "Rioba nderere nainche nkorerere", which means "sun take care of this baby for me as I take care of it for you". As she continues to say this prayer, she points to the sun with her breasts and expresses milk from them. This kind of ritual was the realization of the belief and indication that the sun, which was the eye of the "Engoro" (God), could provide protection for the baby's life from evil.

Similarly, if a woman bears children and they regularly die, she could wait for the moment she bore one, then take it early in the morning to the way-side. Assisted by other women, she could shout out (any alarming sound), requesting people to come for help. They could say that they had met a wild beast for example a fox, hyena, lion or leopard. As people ran with their weapons to kill the dangerous animal, suddenly they were shown a new-born baby hidden in the bush, wrapped either in animal skin or some clothing. Then every person could be requested to put something beside the baby as a sign of good will. This could be any simple possession that a person could have. If one had nothing to give, he could cut a branch of a tree and place it beside the baby. This ritual could last for about an hour, then the woman could take the

baby home where they could perform the religious ceremony of offering a sacrifice to "Engoro". This offering of a sacrifice could be accomplished after making amulets for the baby for protection from any harm and danger. This implies that the Abagusii people realize the existence of evil powers which bring death to children; that they seek protection from God, to whom must be offered sacrifices and that He gives blessings to the people who also recognize His major role in the survival of the children. This tradition, in some parts of Kisii and Nyamira Districts, seems to have ceased while in others it is still exists.

Naming.

The religious ceremony of naming, acknowledges the supremacy of God and His role of protection. Any child who is ritualistically named, "Ogotakerwa", is given a name of either a wild beast or an insignificant name in the community.. Such names could be like, "Makori", (path-way), for both male and female children; "Nyanchera" for female and "Onchera" for males - which also means path-way; "Kemoni" (cat) for both female and male children; "Nyang'au" (hyena) for both female and male; "Gesimba" (small animal that belongs to the fox family) for both sexes; "Bitutu" (bushes -refers to where the baby was hidden during the ritual), for females only. These names and others of similar kind demonstrate Abagusii understanding of God's providence and preservation.

Such rituals which acknowledge the supremacy of God in life since birth can be found in other African communities. In his book, Gehman (1989,52), states that, "African religious attitudes and activities surrounds the whole process of birth and childhood".

What Gehman states is clearly demonstrated among the Abagusii, whose belief in religious ceremony begins when a child is born. Although it has been mentioned above concerning naming children whose mothers had other children die regularly, we have to note also that every child born among the traditional (not Christian) Abagusii community is named in a traditional ceremony. When the child is born, it takes about a month before the mother invites the paternal grandmother of child and all her sisters-in-law for the naming ritual. Food and traditional drinks, "Amarwa" (beer), are prepared for those who will name the child. During such traditional naming, the ancestors are consulted for the name of the child. The grandmothers, after they have eaten and drunk, ask the mother of the child to hand over the child to one of them. This grandmother of the child would start greeting it and calling the child various names of people within the family or clan of the father who have died and were respected in their life-time. If she mentioned the proper name which the ancestors accept, the child could begin sneezing several times. This would confirm that the ancestors of the family have accepted the name given to the child. Then

all the other grandmothers begin to call the child by the name agreed upon. They will also for the first time shave the child's hair. In some instances the child may not sneeze after any of the names given to it. Then the grandmothers will ask the mother of the child to say some names of her family or clan where she is married. But this rarely happens, since new born babies sneeze frequently due to the change of weather conditions that they experience. Sometimes a child is given two names, one from the father's family and another from the mother's family. But as the child grows up one of the names becomes usual and the child will prefer to be called by his or her favorite one.

Abagusii did not name children after people who were alive. This was due to fear that the person may soon be "called" by the ancestors and therefore would die quickly. Today this kind of fear has changed and some people especially the christians, do not have this belief any more.

Generally, most names given to children among the Abagusii have their original meanings. Some of them indicate suffering, happiness, or historical occasions which should be remembered. Names that indicate suffering are those which could be given to a child whose mother had problems and performed sacrifices and well-wishes rituals, as mentioned above. Today some of these names are inherited without any ritualistic act being done to the child. One such name is "Barongo" (Twins). Children born as twins could be wished

well in survival by making a special ritual of planting a tree called "Omokubo" for them. This tree does not dry up quickly even during dry seasons. It is usually found in the thick forests. The tree planting is accompanied by an offering as sacrifice to ancestors who should allow these twins to survive. It was believed that the twins could die if there was no special ritual done to them. Other names are "Getakwa" (refuses death), "Mogoko" (happiness), "Matoke" (banana) - when bananas were introduced to the Abagusii, "Nyabando" or "Getuma" - when maize was introduced, "Ongige" or "Nyangige" when locusts destroyed crops, "Obonyo" certain locusts that destroyed crops, "Manoti" when paper money was introduced, "Siringi" when the shilling was introduced, "Kwamboka" when the Abagusii crossed Lake Nyanza (Victoria), "Kemunto" the end of the lake where it is easy to cross.

There are so many Gusii names with specific meanings which cannot be mentioned in entirety. It is worth mentioning that most of the names of dead people of a family or clan given to children are to show that there is a chain of contact in the family and the clan. The good spirit of the dead is retained among the living through the children who are born. When people who have bad reputations in a family die, children are not named after them. This is because it is feared that their bad spirit may enter into the children. It is commonly believed that the spirit of a popular dead person with a good reputation can empower a child who is named after him or her

to reveal the personality and the character of the dead person. In some African societies, it is believed that the bad spirits can kill children before they are given names.

Mbiti(1991,92-94) has correctly mentioned that there are names which are given to reflect the feelings of the parents, those relating to the time of birth and those which describe the child or its background.

For the Abagusii, there are very few instances where parents give their children names which reflect their mood or feelings during the time of birth. However, there are those who give their children names which indicate the children's background. It is well known that many of the Abagusii people take nick-names which eventually become more popular than their real name. These names are either given by their colleagues at work, age-mates, or parents, to identify one's character. Some people take names as a way of pride and they are well known by such names.

An example is my father, whose real name was "Osugo," yet he was well known as "Achiel," meaning "number one" in the Luo language. Everybody knew him by this name, which was popular, but we came to realize that his real name was "Osugo," which was written in his identity card, and was the name of the family and the clan.

He acquired that name Achiel during his youth when he used to play foot-ball at Kericho Tea Estates, where he worked with people from the Luoland. So, in the foot-ball match he

always played position number one. As many of his Luo friends cheered him, they called out; Achiel, Achiel..... (number one, number one.....), so those who did not know his name, called him "Achiel." They thought it was his real name.

Initiation

Abagusii people circumcise both male and female children as a part of their culture. All children who are between seven or eight years (presently), and ten or eleven years (in the past), are circumcised. Children are often eager to go through circumcision and their elders motivate them to do so.

This ritual is significant, because the children have to enter into the new stage (from childhood into adulthood). The night before the surgery they are taught by their seniors how they will behave before their parents and adults or elderly people. They are trained on how to persevere the pain, without showing any fear. Those who are brave are recommended as they will face the circumciser with no fear. At such a time children are also trained on how they will stand during the surgery.

The traditional circumciser for boys carries out his activities under a tree. (Only certain species of trees are accepted, such as the "Omosocho," "Omwobo," and "Omogonchoro,"). At the boys come to the tree they are escorted by older boys armed with fighting weapons such as spears, clubs and swords. Only one boy at a time is ushered

to the tree and told to hold the tree back-handed. They do it as they had rehearsed and been instructed the night before by their seniors. The first boy to hold the tree should be the bravest. Each one is threatened with death if he tries to cry or show any sign of fear, when he is being circumcised. So each one perseveres the pain. The ritual can take about two to three hours depending on the number of boys being circumcised. Usually it starts between four and six in the morning. At the end of the ritual the circumciser starts singing a traditional song which is sung until the boys are put in the prepared hut where they are secluded for about one month to heal.

The songs which are sung on the way home are never sung in any other occasion. They are only sung for the circumcised children. The boys' songs tell how they should be strong and fearless to defend the Abagusii tribe in fighting the enemies who surround the community. These are the Kipsigis, and the Maasai who went through such rituals, rustled cattle from Gusiiland and were considered to be enemies of the Abagusii. The Luos were never considered to be enemies because they were not circumcised, though there has been cattle rustling and they are bordering with the Abagusii. The song is lead by one boy who is a graduate and all others respond in unison. The song is:

"Oyo Oyooo X2/Oyoo
Kwabeire omomura X2 ee/Oyoo
Orwane Sigisi X2 ee/Oyoo

Orwane Botende X2 ee/Oyoo
Orwane Bomanyi X2 ee/Oyoo

Oyo Oyoo X2 ee/Oyoo
Kwabeira Omomura X2 ee/Oyoo
Oturerwe itimo X2 ee/Oyoo
Nai nguba imbibo X2 ee/Oyoo

This can be translated as:

This one, this one...2/this one
You are a man, Yes x2/this one
You fight Kipsigis, Yes/this one
You fight Tende Yes/this one
You fight Masai Yes/this one

This one, this one...x2/this one
You are a man, Yes x2/this one
A spear has been invented for you x2 ee/this one
And a strong shield x2 ee/this one

The song can be extended by mentioning seductive words which are encouraging the boys to become warriors in the society and are joyous for the occasion.

Usually, the women follow the young men who take the young boys to be circumcised, from a distance. When they hear that the boys are singing towards a circumcised boy's home, they also begin singing joyous songs of welcoming the boys home. On arrival both the old boys and all the people sing and dance around the compound and request for food and traditional beer ("amarwa").

Before the circumcised boys are taken into the house, a ritual is done. The boys do not enter the house through the door but through the window which they should be using all the time they are in seclusion. A sacred-fire is lit, by the older boys, particularly by one who should be known as "Omosegi", one who is in-charge of giving instructions to the circumcised boy while in seclusion. He should be a close relative or friend

to the family of the circumcised boy. In lighting the fire he has to use certain sticks from trees known as "ememiso" for that activity known as "Ogosegesa", (rubbing two sticks together, one in horizontal and another in vertical position). They are rubbed very hard until they produce fire. The fire will be strictly cared for so that it is not extinguished while the boys are in seclusion. It can be left to go off only after the entire period of seclusion and an extra night is over.

The fire is a symbol of uniting the circumcised boys with their ancestors, preserving their purity in the Abagusii community, and retaining life for both the living and the dead. If the fire suddenly goes out, this will result in some kind of sacrifice for purification (or rectification in order to be accepted into the community). If this is neglected, those concerned will face serious problems in life as a result of the extinguished fire.

The boys also receive some instructions from their seniors on how to become men and care for the family; how to respect their elders and defend their clan.

After this survey of circumcision among the Abagusii, we can say that there are some main issues which are connected with it. First, it is a mark of the passing from childhood to adulthood. At this stage, a boy is encouraged by the fact that he has become a man who can defend the family and the community from any outside enemy. Secondly, he has to have

respect for his elders, parents and relatives. He should avoid making jokes with the opposite sex or entering into certain places, for example, his parents bedroom. Thirdly, the boy steps into a stage of male roles in the society which are distinct from the female roles. Fourthly, the boy becomes a member of the family of the Abagusii community and he is traditionally accepted by the ancestors.

On the part of girls after clitoridectomy they are taken to stay with their grandmothers, to get various instructions on how to become mature girls and later wives. They are also taught to know the distinct roles of women. Finally, they become members of the family of the Abagusii community and are traditionally accepted by the ancestors.

To achieve this acceptance into the community of the Abagusii, one must enter it through the shedding of blood⁴. So there is the significance of blood in this occasion of circumcision and clitoridectomy. Those who have not shed blood are neither united with, nor acceptable to the ancestors. She or he remains a child who cannot be told the secrets of the family and the community.

Generally and ideally, circumcision and clitoridectomy are regarded as the turning point from childhood to maturity, though in some cases especially today children are circumcised when they are still young, both mentally and physically. Similar cultural practice can be observed in other communities

⁴ This view is also reflected by Mbiti (1991,98)

where initiation rituals are compulsory⁵.

Among the Abagusii the uninitiated boy is known as "Omoia", and the uninitiated girl is called "Egesagane". These terms have a negative connotation and so are quite loath and unacceptable.

In the past the circumcised boys used to stay with young unmarried adults at central places where cattle were kept mainly to protect them from enemies (wild animals or thieves) and for grazing purposes. These places were known as "Ebisarate (plural) or "Egesarate" (singular). These centers served as "schools" where those involved learnt how to become men. For girls, they would stay with their grandmothers, who could teach them how to become respectable girls, have good manners before their parents, to prepare meals, and play their future role as wives.

The female circumcision, in recent years has been an issue of discussion in academic circles, meetings, newspapers and magazines. There are so many people who oppose this tradition saying that it is a ritual which destroys the sexual sensitivity and causes obstetrical complication (See for example Mwaniki (n.d) Female circumcision). But there are also those who do not want to abandon their culture and are not convinced by the reasons for abandoning female circumcision.

⁵ It is totally impossible for one to get married without passing through the ritual. See also Gehman (1989,52-3) and Mbiti (1969,133).

The controversy over Abagusii female circumcision started long ago, during the colonial era in Kenya, but the practice has continued. A letter from the District commissioner (D.C) in Kisii, on 27th October 1944, to the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza states:

The Kisii - Abakuria (Abagusii and Abakuria) L.N.C (Local Native Council) passed the Standard Resolution in 1928. The Kisii have always performed a mild form of operation and Bakoria (Kuria people), although they used to perform the more severe type have improved and no complaints have arisen

To the best of my knowledge there have been no convictions under this L.N.C. resolution since it was instituted. The medical officer writes:

During my experience in South Kavirondo (now Kisii, Nyamira, Homa Bay, Migori and Kuria Districts) nothing has occurred to attract my attention to the above. I cannot remember having seen any obstacle cases where obstruction was due to a circumcision scar, nor have I been requested to perform plastic operations for the relief of fibrous constriction of the vaginal orifice. The Luo and Abasuba do not circumcise. The general situation would seem to show an improvement.

W.A. PERREAU

DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, S. K"

(Kenya National Archive, Nairobi, DP/1/90).

Concerning clitoridectomy, the medical officer in charge - (Kisii) wrote a letter which explains that, "the head of clitoris is removed, generally leaving little scar and not interfering with vaginal orifice", (26th October 1944 Native Hospital Kisii District Hospital). In a later letter of a meeting, between 19 and 20 March 1957, for controlling the female circumcision, it is shown that the efforts were not successful; (DP. 1/61 K.N.A).

Initially, the question of female circumcision was raised

by the Secretary of State (during colonial era) in his circular letter No. 16 of 4th May, 1931. This was an investigation into whether this ritual among the Abagusii and other tribes which circumcise girls was a "serious operation of decliterisation".

This issue was first handled by the District Commissioner, South Kavirondo on 14th October, 1937. The Provincial Commissioner's letter of 29th October 1944 was an inquiry of the situation after several years (DP/1/90, K.N.A. Nairobi).

Although we can see the essence of colonial struggle with the practice of this cultural ritual among the Abagusii, we are not conversant with the origin of the practice.

We have already mentioned the encouragement songs used for boys during their circumcision. It is also worthy to mention the girls' encouragement songs during their clitoridectomy. This indicates how they could be future responsible wives. One of the common songs says:

Oai Oyee, Ee, Oai Oyee X2
Kwarenge mokabaisia, Oai Oyee X2
Kwabeire mokabamura, Oai Oyee X2

Which can be translated as:

This one here, Yes this one here x2
You were a wife to uncircumcised boys this one here
x2
You are now a wife of circumcised men this one here
x2

This can also be translated;

You, you in particular, yes, you in particular you were a wife to uncircumcised boys, yes, you in particular. You are now a wife to circumcised men, yes, yes you in particular.

After discussing this cultural practice among the Abagusii, we can observe that, both the male and female children are initiated (circumcised and clitoridectomized) to mark a new stage in life.

Marriage

The Abagusii people consider marriage as one of the most important stages in life, which both boys and girls must go through. This may be compared with circumcision, which all male and female children must experience. There is no excuse for anybody not to get married.

According to the Abagusii culture, a girl is married for the caring responsibility which matches the name given to the married lady, that is "Omokungu." Her responsibility of caring, is known as "ogokunga" for all family members and the properties at a home. For the man, "Omosacha", his responsibilities are "ogosacha", that is, to seek for the family wealth. In reference to most African tribes, Mbiti (1969:133) states that, "Marriage is the focus of existence", therefore, it is a curse for anybody who rejects it.

Among the Abagusii if a boy or girl has certain physical defects which can not make marriage meaningful, the marriage

can still be arranged by the family for either the boy or girl who has a defect. This is because marriage is a family issue and not an individual affair. Family members may make up for the marriage defects. Mbiti, has further pointed out that, "Unmarried men or women are unthinkable in traditional African society. There is no traditional category for single ladies or single men" (Ibid). Also it is observed by Parrinder (1974,97) that, "It has often been said that African husbands and wives have no choice in their marriage". It may sound strange to some outsiders to hear that, among the Abagusii community, love was not the first thing thought of in marriage, but love could be established in marriage itself. What marriage involved as responsibility for caring for parents or grandparents in the family, caring for the properties and inheritance (land and animals like cattle, sheep, goats etc) of the family. Marriage also involves the question of the bride-wealth (price) that could be paid by a family for a young man to get married. This means that a married woman is supposed to love not only her husband but all the family members, and that can be manifested in her good deeds and competence in her role. For such a woman the bride-price which is given to her parents is worthy, but the one who does not love and is not able to fulfill the required responsibilities, the bride-price given to her parents is considered lost.

Therefore, marriage among the Abagusii is not understood to be a relationship between a man and woman but a

relationship between a man's family and a woman's family. It is even regarded as a clan or community marriage. The responsibilities performed for the family by a married woman are for the whole clan and community as well. Her services to the family such as respect and hospitality within the family, are qualifications and approvals of a good wife. This could also be in accordance with her hard work in the farm, firewood collecting, fetching water from the stream or spring, and also cooking good food.

The Abagusii people have no specific age for marriage. The minimum age could be about seventeen or eighteen years for girls and twenty to twenty two years for boys. In some instances there could be a marriage much earlier or much later for both females and males. Some boys could delay their marriages because of lacking the bride-price. Other young men could be asked to marry very early especially if they were the only boys among the many girls. This marriage, which was done for a young boy, was called "Okoboerera". This usually happened when only one boy was born among many girls who could be married and bring a lot of cows to the family. So, to utilize the cows, the family could bring a wife for the young boy and pay out some of the cows which could be a burden for the family to care for. If there was no boy in the family, the father could use the cows for marrying other wives. This means that the father had to marry wives younger than himself. This was culturally acceptable and there was no objection from

his first wife or the girl to be married, since polygamy was a normal practice among the Abagusii.

The first wife was usually known as "Mosiaraiibu", and the young wife was called "Nyamesanchu". A man who had many wives was generally respected and honoured in the community. Usually such men were elected to be elders or chiefs in the community.

Marriage among the Abagusii community was ceremonially performed and involved some kind of oath taking. It all started by finding a person who could go between the families of the young man and the young woman. This person (usually a married man or woman) was known as "Esigani". "Esigani" should be a person who knew both families well. He or she is involved and participates in the various negotiations of the marriage process. If there could be any problem, that may bring hindrances to the marriage, "the Esigani" must be notified. He or she would find ways of solving the problem together with both families. This person was regarded as very important and worthy of respect from both families. He or she was the first person to approach the family of the girl to ask if they could accept the marriage between them and the family of the boy which had sent him. If the response was positive, or negative, he or she could return to the boy's family and report the matter. If the response was positive, the boy could be called by his family and be informed. Then he could prepare other boys of his age group, about five or six of them

to visit the girls' family for what is called "Ekerorano"⁶, which may be literally translated, as "seeing each other". This could be the first time that the boy and the girl met at the girl's home; through the arrangement of the "Esigani". It is the time they will know each other and accept the plans of the "Esigani" that they get married. Generally, the plans are never rejected since they are a family matter already accepted by parents.

After "Ekerorano", the boys went back home. The bridegroom's family invited the girl's father for dowry negotiations. This function is known as "okomana chiombe" which means negotiating for and receiving dowry. Normally, several cows are given, and a bull, which must go along with the cows. Also one or two goats are given which are known as "chimbori nyamatonge", which means goats for food (millet ugali). These goats are slaughtered about a week after the arrival of the selected cattle at the girls' home. The meat is carried raw together with millet meal ("Obokima bwobori) and taken to the boys' family which confirms that the cows have arrived and indicates that they are accepted after "okomana".

Eventually, after various negotiations and preparations, the Abagusii traditional wedding could be performed by a

⁶ Even if the boy and the girl had known each other yet "Ekerorano" could be arranged by "Esigani" so as to start the marriage process.

special traditional priest known as "Omokundekane"⁷. He was a very highly respected person for his duties included taking of ~~oats~~ from the woman's side, and sacrifices. Usually the man ~~is~~ not requested to take an oath of being faithful in the sexual relationship or bound to his wife as the woman was to her husband. This was because men were culturally allowed to be polygamists. So it was the woman who was bound.

Like modern weddings, in the Abagusii weddings there could be "Omoimari," first maid. And unlike it, the Abagusii did not have "omongwasi" (best-man), but only the bridegroom "Omonyomi", who could go for his wife alone. However, a person to conduct sacrifice "Omongwansi", could join him. He (the bride-groom) could dress traditionally like a warrior, with a spear ("ritimo") in his hand, a shield "enguba" in the other hand, a traditional crown on his head "ekiore", and a skin worn on the body "esumati". The girl could dress in a cultural costume⁸, "engobo", (skin cloth) and "chisonoi" (beads) as decorations. She could carry a small pot, "enkondo," which may be likened to the modern flowers carried by the bride. This could be given to the man's mother the moment she arrived at the home. The mother could receive the pot as an indication of acceptance of the girl to be a part of her children in the family.

⁷ Such a person could be categorized as the present pastors or priests who are accepted to officiate in church weddings.

⁸ Most of the traditional costumes were made of skin from the goats.

The costume of the girl "chingobo" was usually skins from goats. The front skin was known as "omoyaba" and the back was called "enkururi". Every wedded woman could be given a wedding name, ("Erieta ria Egetinge"), which could be used by the ~~new~~ family she was married to. This could also indicate the status of the woman; thus, from a girl "Erieta ria Oboisake", to wife "Erieta rii Egetinge". So the name could be popular and commonly used throughout her life. It was the girl who could choose her favorite name apart from the childhood name given by her parents. After the marriage, Abagusii people had no idea of divorce.

However during the colonial era the question of marriage, divorce and inheritance started causing controversy between the missionaries and the government. The following are some correspondences; which reflect the divorce and inheritance controversy during the colonial era. This reveals that

marriage and divorce discussion was started at the request of missionaries. It is stated that; "In 1925, a committee was appointed to inquire into the laws of the colony in their application to Africans. On this committee the reports the Governors were considered and on the advice of Executive council it was decided that there was no pressing need to proceed with contemplated legislation and in consequence the committee ceased for sometime.

In 1929 the committee was revived and strengthened by the addition, among others, of the Bishop of Mombasa and Monsignor Brandsma. Clause 6 should be instrumental in securing to natives, who have come to recognize that monogamy is a higher state than polygamy marriage previously contracted and entered upon under native law and custom. The desire among the native tribes of Kenya that a widow is inherited, together with the rest of her late husband's property, by his next-kin, and by native

law and custom she has little or no voice in the disposal of her person. This position is, of course, intolerable to a Christian widow inherited by a pagan brother-in law. (Native Christian Marriage and Divorce Ordinance, 1931-32. Extracts from Kenya National Archives, Nairobi Microfilm Co. 533/413/5.)"

The above extracts indicate that there was a great concern by both the state government and the church on the formulation of the law which could be applicable for Africans' marriage, divorce and inheritance, for both Christians and non-Christians.

In the case of churches, the 1931 law was very strong on their practical services or ministry. It is stated that "most churches refuse baptism to any who claim to be married under 1931 Ordinance." Speaking from the Protestant churches' point of view, it indicates that the Anglican church, in their 1930 conference at Lambeth,

Re-affirmed as our Lord's principle and standard of marriage, a life-long and indissoluble union, for better, for worse, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side and calls on all Christian people to maintain and bear witness to this standard" (Section II).

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa maintained a similar rule, which the Methodist Church, also recognizes, the validity of marriage by "native custom". It strongly urges a service of "blessing of marriage" upon all baptized persons, but does not insist upon it as a condition of baptism or of admission to Holy communion (Ibid.)

Although the above development of the law concerning

marriage seems to be over a long period, some of the essential factors have been retained to the present, both in the government and the church.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, no institutional regulation has been developed apart from what the Scripture directly states in Gen. 2:18 ff, Mk.10:9-12, Eph.5:23-32. In those portions of scripture, it is clearly stated that God was not pleased to see the person who He had created to be alone, but that he should have a helper. Therefore God created the helper from the man and she was called a woman. It is further stated that the two shall be united according to God's word, and therefore every man or woman is not allowed to divorce and be remarried; since that will mean adultery, which is sin before God. To strengthen the unity in the married couples, the scripture states that they should love one another.

While other Churches, the Roman Catholic and Orthodox consider marriage as a sacrament which must be validated only by the priest, the Lutheran Church regard it as a religious ceremony which must be fulfilled according to the Scripture.

It is mentioned above that the Abagusii marriage in the past was very essential to every adult male and female, even if one had a physical defect. If a man could not physically fulfil the sexual relationship with his wife, his brother or cousin could be requested to meet the need on his behalf, and

bear children for the brother (Cf Mbiti 1969,147). The wife could respect both, yet the one who married her was the official husband. Likewise, if the married woman could not bear children, or only bore girls, who were regarded as outsiders of the family "abaisiko", she could "marry" a lady for bearing children especially boys for inheritance "moka mwana". She could ask a man of her choice to have sexual relationships with the lady. The children born could be known as grand children of the woman who "married" the lady. They could inherit the property of their grand parents, who had no children or had only girls. The man who was the father of the children could be given a cow as thanks for his services.

We can say that marriage is very important among the Abagusii, who often do not regard anybody who is not married as a grown-up. A man who is not married is called "Omogesi" and has no right to join a group of the married, either in discussion or communal activities. In many instances, he can be scorned like a child. Even if he has a good hut, "esaiga" (only the unmarried live in "esaiga"), he will never be known as a person with a "enyomba" house⁹. Having a house in the Abagusii worldview is meant only for married people. And in the hidden meaning, it is the wife. If a person asks, "Does so and so have a house? "Nyarebe nabuate enyomba?" This means "Has he got a wife?".

⁹ The word can also have reference to the house-hold (Husband, the wife and children), and in the wider sense the clan.

If a married man unfortunately died and, left a widow, then the elders of the family could assign one of the late husbands' brothers or paternal cousins to care for the wife in both sexual relationship and in labor assistance. It was not a matter of choosing, as mentioned by Le Vine (1966: 52-54), but an order from the family elders. Nowadays, the widow chooses whoever she likes for financial assistance. Family elders do not play their role as strongly as they did in the past.

Death and Thereafter

In the Abagusii worldview, the origin of death is narrated in a myth which says:

In the beginning of the Abagusii community there was no death. But one day their leader, who had two wives was asked by "Engoro" (God) to go and meet Him on a certain mountain where the person could choose one of the powerful deities of the world. These were Life and Death. The man knew that he could choose Life for the survival of the community, but for certain reasons he decided to send his two wives to meet "engoro". One of his wives was bright and followed her husbands' instructions, but the other wife was not and could not follow exactly what her husband said, though she could quickly respond and approach any issue. On this particular occasion, their husband told them that when they reached the mountain where "Engoro" was and they were asked concerning life and death of human beings, they should say, "Motienyi Okwa Osira na Monto akwa aboka", which is, "The moon dies without arising but human beings die and arise." But as they arrived where the "Engoro" was, at the top of the mountain, and when He asked them concerning life and death; the foolish wife quickly responded by saying contrary to what they were told, "Monto okwa asira na motienyi okwa oboka," which is, "The human beings die without arising and the moon dies and arises."

So, as a result death started among human beings and

there was no physical resurrection after one died, but only for the moon; which can be seen as new after the old has disappeared. This is how the origin of death is mythically told in the Abagusii community. (Other African myths on death, see Mbiti 1991, 116-117).

Although the Abagusii believe that death cannot occur without a cause or be attributed to some kind of witchcraft or evil spirits, they accept that "Engoro" (God) could allow death to happen. It is believed that those who die go to join the ancestors in a spiritual world which is under the ground. When a person dies, some people say that he/she has gone to weed potatoes, "Ochire koburuga ebiyasi", or they just say that he/she has immigrated, "Ong'anyire". Some can simply say God has taken him/her "Nyasae omoirire."

So, the Abagusii belief is that "Engoro or Nyasae" has a role of taking the spirits "Omoika" of elderly people and uniting them to the ancestors' spirits which are said to be alive and active.

The Abagusii people consider death as the worst enemy. It is feared and regarded as a thief who steals members of the family. Often, at the funeral, when people are grieving they recite the Abagusii saying, "Amakweri na amaganga akonyakoira kw'omo buna nyomba imbaichora", which means, 'Death is a thief which takes one by one as if there are so many in the family'. This saying is to comfort those who are in great sorrow not to be so fearful, but take courage and bear with the situation.

Whenever a person dies in any family, those who are present, notify the neighbors, and the larger community by very frightening, loud wailing. Immediately some of the close neighbors come to comfort the family, and quickly the bad news is spread to relatives of the family who also come to stay and comfort the grieved.

Traditionally, the Abagusii believe that when death occurs in a family, meals should not be cooked in that particular home. Food and drinks are prepared by the neighbors or relatives and brought for the grieving family and for those who stay with the family to comfort them. In the past, the body of the dead person was not left too long before burial. Usually, it took less than two days. For children, the burial could take place even within a day. This happened because there was no proper method of preserving dead bodies for long, as we have nowadays.

The burial of any dead person could be directed by the elderly men of the clan or family. They are the people who point to the specific place where the grave should be dug. Normally, at every homestead, the houses were built with two doors known as "egesieri gia gesaku", ("the door for the public,") and "Egesieri kia Bweri", "the door for the cow shed". (Only for respected people to enter through). So, whenever a married woman dies she is buried outside the house towards the "egesieri gia Gesaku" through which her body is taken out, and a married man is buried outside towards

"egesieri kia bweri" through which his body is taken out. The implication is that men own cattle and join ancestors through a special door, while women are outsiders.

The female children and unmarried girls are buried at the back place of the homestead, while the male children are buried in the front part of the homestead and more especially at the position of "egesieri kia bweri". The implication here is that males, when they die, are united with their clan ancestors, while females are regarded as "outsiders" to the clan, though born in that clan. They are supposed to be married and join different clans.

As mentioned above Abagusii believe that the dead, although separated from the living, are united with the ancestors in the spiritual world. Paradoxically, the ancestors are not separated from the living. If the living do not respect the ancestors and fulfil their needs, they will cause harm and destruction to them. The author has mentioned above that the newly born children are given names of dead people from their clan or family. These names should be of people with good reputations because the parents believe that the spirit of the dead enters the child at the time of naming. If the person had bad or good behavior and character, the child will inherit it.

This means that there is no end of life, according to the Abagusii belief. Male children are very important for the continuation of the family in the union with ancestral spirits.

and also for the future memory and inheritance of the family.

Adeyemo (1979,64) has stated how various African tribes view death as an entrance between the "world of human beings and the world of spirits, between the visible and the invisible.

Some writers, on this subject accept that most African people believe that the dead, although physically separated, have very strong spiritual ties with the living (Mbiti 1968:25). The Abagusii people are included in this. After the burial, and especially that of an elderly man or woman with children and grand children, a significant sacrificial ritual is performed. This is known as, "okorenta omogaka gose omongina nyomba", or "okogororokia ebinto" which means to bring the late father or mother to the house, or to put things upright. This simply means the ritual of uniting the dead with the ancestors, and then the living identifying the dead as being in the spiritual world. To "bring into the house" can also mean that the dead are brought back to the family, although death has separated them physically.

It is believed that if an old person with a family (composed of sons) dies, he or she is not dead yet, but is still alive in his or her children. This reflects the Abagusii saying, that, "Takweti nigo abutokera, chimbande nchireo." (He has not died, but has just been cut off, the shoots are surviving). This is a very comforting saying to the grieved family. Sorrowful and uncontrollable grief occurs

when an unmarried man, or woman dies. This is because there is no "shoot" left behind for the continuation of his or her spirit. It is said that such a person is a "fallen log," ("orutwa omwaro") and the names of such people are never given to the newly born babies. This is because of the fear that they may also be possessed with a spirit that is linked to the dead person, a spirit which may kill them in their youth¹⁰. This is in line with Adeyemo's (1978,65) finding concerning the Yoruba of West Africa; they believe "that death is meant for the aged and that given the right conditions, every person should live to a ripe old age. Therefore, when a young person dies, they consider it to be a tragedy and enter into mourning".

In his comment on the subject, Gehman(1989,53) says that death does not mark the end of human existence, but man continues to survive in an ancestral spirit world; with contact and relationship with the living. The same idea is echoed by Idowu (1973,17) when he states, "Generally, it is only those who have offspring and who have become old before their departure who become ancestors. But it appears that even those who depart in the prime of life or relatively young can become ancestors, provided they have offspring before their demise".

¹⁰ This idea is connected to evil spirits which are believed to "hunt" children in their young age. Sacrifices are offered for cleansing and protective amulets and charms are used to avoid death.

In my view, Idowu's idea that "after death, the continuity of the deceased in the living memory does not exist among the aged who have no offspring but also the young," is not convincing because when he further states that "these are the ones who can become ancestors and who can be remembered in the society", this limitation of ancestors on the grounds of having offsprings who can remember them is weak. Mbiti has also made a formula of "sasa" and "zamani", however, the reality of ancestral ties does necessarily depend on memory. The truth remains that all have their origin in a family, clan and tribe. They have their extended or distant ancestors whom they do not know, yet, they are their ancestors, to whom their family ancestors are a part. For example, the whole tribe of Abagusii has as their ancestor, Mogusii-who is their distant ancestor and there are many others who are close to each clan such as "Ogetaorio and family such as "Nyakundi", not known to individual clan and family members, yet are regarded and honored as their ancestors, though no memories of all of them exist. Most Africans believe that there is a real spiritual world dominated by ancestors and where the dead go and exist to perform some functions which they used to do in the physical world. In that spiritual world, one can also have certain needs for survival. Although this idea may not apply in some communities, such as the Abagusii, yet it is an old traditional belief in Africa and even in other communities of the world. It is mentioned by Parrinder (1962,99) that "in

ancient Mesopotamia and other parts of the world, chiefs were buried in a different respect from the "commoners". This can also remind us of the Egyptian Pharaohs' who were buried with the necessary possessions for survival in the spiritual world.

As mentioned above, the Abagusii people basically believe that every death which occurs has a cause, normally from people who will it. Abagusii say that, "Tiyanya gokwa etaberegeti getondo," Which means that there is none who dies without someone being implicated. In his research, Gehman (1989,62) says that the Akamba people could not be convinced with any apparent cause, but had to seek for "the medicine-man to inquire into the metaphysical (supernatural) causes of death".

We have already discussed the issue of the Abagusii worldview in connection with the rites of passage. These are the rituals which are performed during birth, naming ceremony, puberty initiation, marriage, death and thereafter. These rituals are important in the Abagusii beliefs and life values. They also indicate the life link between the living people, their children and their ancestors. These life links or ties are also demonstrated in the social life of the Abagusii community. We now turn to the social network of Abagusii. This comprises the nuclear family, the extended family and kinships. (See Parrinder 1962,106-7,137)

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

In the introduction to this thesis, various definitions of the word "culture" as understood by the anthropologists and missiologists were given. But for the sake of the present topic, "Social Network", we need to apply a definition which takes the sociological perspective.

The term is applied to explain how the Gospel may spread from one person to another. Hunter, in his chapter titled, "The Bridges of Contagious Evangelism: Social Networks", establishes the historical background, by stating that,

social networks composed of the relatives and friends of caring credible believers have made up The Bridges of God, (McGavran in 1955). The faith is not usually spread between strangers, but between persons who know and trust each other. The social networks of the body of believers provide opportunity for a "web movement" of the Christian faith (Wagner, Arn and Towns, 1978, 71) Hunter states that "the contagious bridges are along kinship networks or friend networks.

In the question asked by Linthicum, "What is networking?" He provides a definition that:

the term itself comes from the world of business and it simply means the creation or maintenance of a "net" of contacts through which one effectively carries out an enterprise. That net can be a human net or a corporate net or even an electronic net... (Linthicum 1987, 32-35)

He further maintains that there is a Biblical framework of networking, in which the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a net (Mt. 13:46-47). And that Jesus described the fisherman's net as an image to gather all people for judgement.

For the sake of this study among the Abagusii, I regard social networking as the social relationships or contacts

which are created through family, both nuclear and extended, among the kin of various Abagusii clans. Such relationships may be a means of understanding the Abagusii social network by which the proclamation of the gospel may be channeled through.

Nuclear family

By nuclear family is meant a family consisting of the father, mother and the children. This is a family structure which cannot be comprehended in the Abagusii worldview, because there is always an interaction between the family members and relatives who may need assistance or some kind of support. There is no family which can live in isolation, since marriage always creates a wide range of relationships and linkages between various families. It has been shown above that, in marriage, the family relationships are linked like a web from father and mother to children and grand children, even to great grandchildren. Also, the married man and woman have responsibilities to their in-laws on both sides. They are obliged to support and assist them whenever there is a need. Some other roles or responsibilities which belong to both men and women are not limited to the nuclear family but extend to the clan at large.

Extended Family

It is mentioned above that marriage is what unites people to become related and to begin a family.

In the Abagusii community, the social network is demonstrated when a person lives and feels secure in the family, which is widely extended. One is not only secure in the family but also responsible for various activities in his or her extended family. It is understood within the Abagusii culture, that the role of a man ("omosacha"), is not only bound to his family but extends to the clan as well. It is also true for protection from enemies. He does not only protect the properties and land of his family but also those of his clan. The woman ("omokungu"), is not only responsible in the roles which are specifically for her family but also the roles which she must perform in an extended family situation. These include such work as cooking food for extended family members when they need assistance, especially when in a problem; rearing her children so as to fit into the wider family, fetching water and firewood (for own family and for extended family members who may be unable to fetch). In the Abagusii social network, within the extended family, one is responsible for not only his or her mother, father, sons and daughters, but also, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, father-in-law, mothers-in-law, brothers-in-law and any others who are in the extended family. These are the people who one can have free social contact with and who one can establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence with. To be responsible means that if one is less fortunate economically, or has any kind of need that requires

support, one has to approach any of those family members for help. It also means that one who is able must step in and save the situation. For instance, if a boy needs to marry but lacks dowry, those of the family members who have many cattle could contribute cows for this cause. Those cows may be refunded later in life when the boy is able to do so or it can be taken as a donation. Presently, the major issues which need family involvement are such ones as help to pay school fees, medical bills or in finding a job.

The Abagusii family becomes more extended when the two who are married are blessed with children and their children are old enough for marriage. These children create a marriage relationship by which their respective parents refer to each as, "korera" or "chikorera"(plural) , meaning, "the parents in-law of the children". And if the parents are blessed to see their grand children, then the family relationship continues to extend. This means that the grand parents can feel responsible to assist their grandchildren who may be in need, in any way they can. It also means that the children, grand and great-grand children are responsible for caring for their parents and grand parents and in assisting them during sickness or when old age sets in. This is why Mbiti (1992,114) says that "children prolong the life of their parents" by taking good care of them in a way which makes them comfortable.

Children are regarded as inheritors of their parents'

properties, procreators and propagators of the family tree. Concerning the social organization and how decisions and authority are reached in a society, Tippet (1981, 637 in Winter and Hawthorne, eds.) rightly states that, "Groups exist at different levels of social organization, and authority for decision may lie at different levels - e.g, it may be the responsibility of the household, extended family, village or clan". The Abagusii social structure functions as Mbiti (1992, 115) states that "Everyone knows how he is related to other people in the family which also extends to include the departed, as well as those who are about to be born". So the social network, in the Abagusii worldview is stronger in the extended family than in the nuclear family.

We now look at kinship and its significance among the Abagusii. This is revealed in the organizational structure of the clans.

Kinship

The Abagusii community is made of big clans called, "ebisaku" and small ones known as "chinyomba".

According to Le Vines' observation,

The proximate Gusii lineage system is made up of kin groups of increasing inclusiveness and generational depth, from homestead group to clan, all based on the principle of tracing descent through the male line to a common ancestor. (Le Vine. DC/ KSI/5/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi).

Le Vine, has stated that among the Abagusii "exogamy is practiced and classificatory kinship terms are used. Gusii

often describe a clan's people as "those who do not marry each other". Beliefs in a common ancestor makes all clan people kin and the use of classificatory kinship terms organizes people of the same clan still more conspicuously into a great family".

Ochieng a historian who has done research on the Abagusii states that:

the Gusii (Abagusii) themselves speak of Mogusii as the founder of the society and the person after whom their tribe was named. They also say that Mogusii's father was called Osogo, son of Mohuguhia, son of Kigoma, son of Ribiaka, who was son of Kintu... It was Kintu, they say who led the migration from "Misri" (Egypt) to Mount Elgon... Gusii tradition also indicates that Mohugulia, the grand father of Mogusii, had a number of sons who founded various Baluhya sub-tribes or clans, and Mogikoyo (Kikuyu). Osogo's descendants are said to have founded the Gusii, Kuria, Logoli, and several Suba tribes, while the Meru and the Embu tribes, and according to a few elders - the Kamba tribe as well are descendants of Mohugalia. (Ochieng' 1974, 12).

This means, perhaps after these Bantu immigrants travelled down from Egypt, they went to West Africa and then from there they had to travel to East Africa, through Uganda to Kenya.

In his argument, Ochieng, states that, "Since the "Misri" mentioned is the Biblical Egypt, in the historical account of the Abagusii and other Bantu tribes, "I am tempted to conclude that the Gusii, many Luhya and Haya clans (in Tanzania), must have settled at one time in their history in the region north of Mount Elgon...". (Ochieng' 1974, 39).

Many historians and anthropologists such as Ochieng and Le Vine (1966) believe that each clan of the Abagusii has its

own totem from which the names of the founder and the clan are derived. Ochieng' (1974,55), for example states that "leading Gusii families are specially believed to have tamed and kept their totem animals in their homes as symbols of authority over their clansmen".

The following are Abagusii clans and totems.

TOTEM TABLE

| CLAN | ANCESTOR | TOTEM | DERIVED NAME |
|------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Ababasi | Tereri son of Mogusii (nicknamed Mobasi) | Rigwari (also known as Enchage)-Zebra | Okobaasa -to skin animals |
| Abagirango | Mochorwa son of Mogusii | Eng'o -Leopard | Omogiro - to refrain from killing or eating Leopard |
| Abasweta | Mosweta son of Mogusii (also known as Oibabe) | Engoge - Baboon | Ngoge -to refrain from killing or eating Baboon |
| Abanchari | Monchari daughter of Mogusii | Enchiri (Engubo) - Hippopotamus | Enchiri- to refrain from killing or eating hippopotamus |

The above illustrates the Abagusii kinships and clans of their inter-relationship down to the founder of the tribe of Omogusii. Each clan has small clan leadership known as "Abanyamaiga", while the big clan leadership is known as "Etureti". From "Etureti" we have the leadership of "Omogambi" who is known to be the Assistant Chief or the Chief. A traditional leader is known as "Omokumi", (Plural: Abakumi), who was respected as the representative of the clan's ancestors and could lead religious functions and other social activities. Le Vine (1966,5) points out how respect was maintained in a kinship system among the Abagusii community.

He states,

Respect to parents and all classification of parents is the paramount. Although one can joke with grandparents, that does not mean that he/she does not show respect. Jokes are intended for learning, since it is mostly the grandparents who could teach their grandchildren the social relationships, behaviors and beliefs of the clan. The father-son and uncle-nephew relationship requires high respect without jokes. Sons/daughters who do not respect parents could be cursed in life and be either sterile, sick, die quickly, have children who in turn do not respect them, or have no fortune or wealth in life.

Kinship among the Abagusii worldview can also be identified when there is a problem especially when a prominent person dies. People of the same kin group must attend the funeral to comfort the grieved family. The Abagusii regard the male lineage to be the basis of kinship, known as "eamate" (Plural chiamate), while the female lineage is known as "omoiri" (Plural abairi). Within the "eamate" there are the core relatives which is the "enyomba" or "abanyamaiga", who can share kinship festivals of various kinds: For example, weddings, circumcision of children, harvests, and sacrificial ceremonies. Usually, the male children, are taught by parents or grandparents to know their kin in the patrilineage by memorizing their grand and great grand parents. Some may know all generations back, to their common ancestor "Mogusii" from where the plural term "Abagusii" is derived.

In Gusii (the land of the Abagusii), there are only four major clans which are said to have come from the ancestor Omogusii, and which form the social network of the whole tribe of Mogusii. These are; Mobasi, Mogirango, Monchari and

Mosweta. According to Mzee Onyansi Manyara, (interviewed by this author), Mosweta is the largest clan which includes several clans such as, Morangi, Momachoge, Mogetutu, Nyaribari, and Mosamaro, (Onyansi interview, 17/4/1994). Other clans have also some small clans within them.

The Abagusii community has some clans which respect each other by not inter-marrying because they are considered to have originated from a common kin, that is their great grandfather. They share common problems, assist each other in political issues and social agricultural development activities. They are also supportive of each other, especially manifested through "Risaga"¹¹ (Mayer 1950, 25).

Although Mayer and Levine have pointed out the social ties of the Abagusii, they have overlooked the kinship ties of clannism, such as the blood relationship, which strongly unifies and recognises the kin as a brother or sister of the other. In every clan, there is a spirit of oneness, in that each person knows how to behave and do things for the favor of his or her clan; or for the identity and dignity of the people of the clan.

Mayer has pointed out that in Gusii, the kinship can be broken down to the people who can share funeral rituals, such as shaving of hair. These are those who genealogically have

¹¹ "Risaga" was a group-work called by one who had a lot of work to handle. After the work people had to be provided with traditional drink (amarwa) and food such as "ugali".

one grandfather within a big clan. They are known as "Abanyamatati"¹², or "those who shave together." Mayer states, "The idea of oneness among "abanyamatati", expressed in the joint eating of the funeral sacrifice, finds another reflection in the rules about payment of compensation for killing" (Mayer 1950, 18-19).

For the Abagusii, the "abanyamatati" or "abanyamaiga"¹³, assume responsibility for death of a member of another clan but caused by a member of their clan. Hence they pay any compensation required to the other clan. The word, "enyomba" for "house" is also used to mean "a clan or lineage of the clan". But when the word "egesaku" is used it has a wider meaning than what Mayer says. What Mayer did not recognize is that, marriage can be between two "chinyomba". The word "egesaku" can not only mean the lineage in the wider sense, but also the whole tribe in Gusii is called, "Egesaku kia Omogusii" meaning "the Abagusii tribe". Mayer therefore weakened his book by not understanding various Abagusii terminology used in other clans, such as "egesaku", "enyomba", "abanyamaiga", and "abanyamatati".

Ochieng's thesis is very specific on most of the Abagusii lineage and kinship relations. He has detailed the whole

¹² About a week after the funeral, people were supposed to shave their hair. These are the "Abanyamatati" which can be translated as people who share sorrows.

¹³ People who can support each other in the clan

picture of various links of the Abagusii people. In his interview at Manga which was attended by three prominent elders from various clans and which was also in agreement with this author's interviews conducted elsewhere, he states that the sons of Mogusii, who is believed to have died in his old age at Kano, are:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Omosamaro | 5. Onyaikoma |
| 2. Osweta | 6. Mobasi |
| 3. Osiango | 6. Motabori |
| 4. Nyamaronge | 7. Onyangore |

The list above is an addition to the one mentioned in the table and we realize that some other clans came out of the above mentioned and spread in Gusii land (Ochieng 1974, 115). It is realized that some readers may not agree with the above order by which Abagusii kin groups are formed but, this author through research is convinced that it is the way kinships are formed among the Abagusii.

Through these clans, we can see how the families are organized, and the social network emerging through the attendant relationships.

In the extended family and even in the clan level, there are several things which are forbidden and regarded as taboos. Such things are known as "omoiro" or "omogiro". Such prohibitions are not only forbidden for discussion, but also there are some which are also forbidden for narrative. For example, the circumcised person cannot narrate to the

uncircumcised the activities which he went through during his seclusion period. Also, it is a taboo for a woman who is traditionally wedded (enyangi y'egetinge) to talk about the activities done to her during the ritual ceremony:

It is taboo to greet one's father/mother-in-law by hand, since this is considered as a body contact implying sexual relationship (presently this taboo is not effective among the Christians and some few non-Christians who have been influenced by modernity). Women and all female children are prohibited to eat meat from a wild animal hunted. The author found out that, since the Abagusii clans had wild animals as their totems, if the women could eat any wild animal, they might, by mistake eat their own totem which could mean an offence to the clan. But men knew their own totem.

It is a taboo for a father to enter the house of his son who is already married. Even those persons who are regarded as uncles, fathers and mothers-in-law do not enter the house of their sons or daughters. If, unknowingly, one is found to have entered the house, it will mean they have to offer a sacrifice of a goat. The idea is that the respective parents are not supposed to see the place their children undertake procreation.

It is taboo for parents to openly mention reproductive organs or discuss sexual matters with their children. Even when a woman has given birth, if asked by her young children, how she got the child, she will say that she found the baby in the forest or on the road. She cannot say that she gave birth

through her birth canal since it will mean breaking a taboo.

It is a taboo for a menstruating woman to pass through certain crops in the fields, since the crops may not yield but wither even before they get ripe. This idea is commonly thought of crops like potatoes, pumpkins, beans and maize. Although this may be true, but the implication could be to prohibit women not to go to the field when they are in their menstruation period. This is because in that state, they were considered unclean hence if they came in contact with crops then crops could wither. They were also considered weak and prohibiting them from passing near crops as a way of keeping them out of work.

All these taboos, and others which I have not mentioned, have specific hidden meanings which demonstrate the social relations. Some mean certain dangers or harm to an individual, family or society which must be avoided or be dealt with. If by mistake one committed the taboo one could offer a sacrifice as prescribed by a diviner or a medium who could understand mystical powers behind a specific taboo.

After discussing the Abagusii social network in both nuclear and extended families, and their development, (from their ancestor Omogusii who had various clans), we now look into the mystical powers which exist among them. This will include magic, witchcraft, sorcery and medicine-men.

MYSTICAL POWERS

In many African communities there is a belief that certain people among them have powers which can be used to cause health problems or solve certain problems in the society. While some people do not know whether or not they have these powers and they can only be manifested on certain occasions, others possess the authority and power to tap them for use whenever they want to practice. Such people who do not know their powers are known as "abasoi" and "abanyabibiriria" (the evil-eyed). Some of them, it is believed if they look at something or somebody who can attract their eyes, that one can have problems or die. Mbiti says, "People believe that there are indivisible, mystical forces and powers in the universe" (1991,166).

Such people who possess mystical powers and forces knowingly are the magicians, sorcerers, diviners and witchdoctors.

Mystical powers, are understood to describe all sorts of forces or dynamics that exist and work mysteriously. They can be applied and controlled by people empowered by them to carry on good or evil deeds towards other people. Mbiti rightly states that, "Africans believe that there is force or power or energy in the universe which can be tapped by those who know how to do so, and then used for good or evil towards other people" (1991,19). Also, Gehman (1989,70) states that "in the Akamba world-view these mystical powers are believed to exist

although their source or nature cannot be explained. They are in plant and animal life, manifest through spoken words and mediated through specialists"

However, there are groups of people whom Abagusii call "abasoi" and "abanyabiriria" (the evil eyed people). These can both be born with and inherit them from their parents.

Concerning sorcerers, the Abagusii distinguish their roles as having to do with poisoning innocent people, either in food or any drinking substance such as liquor, water, or porridge. In the past they used to prepare ashes from poisonous plants and snakes known as "obosaro". But nowadays they may use modern poisons as well.

In the Abagusii community, the mystical powers are believed to exist in the community (not specific place) and controlled by people who are empowered by it. Such people include, the magicians¹⁴, witchdoctors¹⁵, sorcerers¹⁶ and medicine-men¹⁷. In the following sections we will discuss their activities as reflected in the Abagusii worldview and the effects in the society.

¹⁴. Are people who use mystical powers to trick others for bad desire (bad or evil) or for good (good or defensive).

¹⁵. They usually use mystical powers to bewitch innocent people.

¹⁶. Usually are those who give or put poison to food or drink.

¹⁷. According to Abagusii, they are those who are knowledgeable in medicines for healing activities in the community. They are imply traditional healers.

Magic

But before I discuss them let me explain a general understanding of the word magic as given to these people with mystical powers.

In many African communities, magic is not only feared as an extraordinary power possessed by certain specialists, but also as a threat to the community and more especially those who do not practice it. Using the mystical power, the magicians do exercise their work in the public, and more especially during day-time

As mentioned above, the word magic indicates the mysterious powers which can be used by certain people to create fear in people and cause them to believe in the magician's powers. Magic is commonly practiced with an intention of getting money from those who may believe in the magician's statements and activities. They cause people to accept their work, so that they can cheat or trick them. Such kind of magic is known to be "black - magic" in contrast to "white - magic" (Gehman 1989,74). Mbiti (1991,166) calls such magic as "evil magic" in contrast to "good magic". Parrinder (1989,74) uses the word "offensive magic" in contrast to "defensive magic" as used by Gehman .

What these authors illustrate is that, magic can be regarded as two sides of the same "coin". On one side the magical power demonstrates destruction of life, while on the other side, it seeks preservation of life. This means that

there are people in the community who have magical powers for protecting others from evils and determining the causes of evils in a community. There are also those with power for damage and causing trouble and eventually death.

As mentioned above, not all magicians among the Abagusii are practicing evil in the community. In fact, the basic reason for those who seek to have magic powers, is to protect the family and community. However, some use the power for business and for enriching themselves, and for causing other people in the community to fear them. In the same breath, the Abagusii people believe that magicians are the ones who cause problems in the community by using the mysterious power to cause death or disease in the community.

Witchcraft

According to the Abagusii world view, witchcraft can be secret practices, which are usually done at night by certain people in their community, with the intention of causing fear and death. Such people inherit these practices from their family members who had them. The practice is known as "oborogi", while those who practice it are called "abarogi". It is commonly believed that witchcraft is practiced by women. Nowadays, even men are believed to be wizards.

The essence of witchcraft among the Abagusii is not easy to determine. It is an evil act, which is rejected in the community, but still exists through people who are said to

inherit it and are mystically empowered. Mbiti (1991,166) correctly states that "witchcraft is a manifestation of those mystical forces which may be born in a person, inherited, or acquired in various ways". In Kato's (1975,22) opinion, witchcraft is historically known to be universal.

In an anthropological and sociological research which was conducted from 4 Jan. 1949 to 10 Feb. 1958, among the Abagusii people, even though it does not indicate the person or group of people who did the investigation on witchcraft, it is stated,

...Still affects everyone. It is generally of the "Uganga" variety and ingredients of the craft are roots, flowers, grass, soil, honey, snake flesh (this latter is often dried and ground up and rubbed into a cut to make a person immune to witchcraft). All ingredients are ground up and kept in a store cows horn [Sic]. One of these is often kept in the house as a charm. A Kisii (Omogusii) specialty is to cut open the skull, by removing a little square of bone, and drawing some blood which is supposed to remove the evil. Another branch of the art is in administering herbal laxatives to clear evil from the stomach. "Uchawi" had always been punishable by tribal law with death, but occasionally rears its head. Usually it takes the form of placing dead animals in doorways of huts or on a path as a charm to cause death, (this is known as "chindoswa"). All witchcraft is still widely believed in and practiced (though "Uchawi" is rare). In many cases the people still go to the tribal mganga in preference to the doctor (Kenya National Archives, Dc/Ks./Dp/1/91/ADM 15/16/2).

What we can learn from the author(s) of the above document is that there are two types of witchcraft:

1. the "Uganga" (medicine-man) which can be translated as magic "Omonyamosira" and 2. the "Uchawi" which is the actual

witchcraft often known as "Oborogi". While it is believed that the magicians ("abanyamesira") use their medicine to counter witchcraft ("oborogi") in the community, some of the magicians are associated with witches because they can use their medicine to kill or help the witches not to be killed if they are hunted by magic. Mbiti (1991,167) tries to give a distinction between the magicians who fight against the witches and those who associate themselves with witches by calling them, "bad magic" or "evil magic". While Mbiti states that in the villages people do not see this distinction, it cannot be totally accepted since the work of the evil magician is well known by the people, as are the witches (although their work is done secretly and often at night). The work of magicians who fight against diseases or evils in the community are well known and such are called medicine-men. Apart from the magicians and witchdoctors, another group of people who use mystical forces are the sorcerers. They terrify people and are often viewed as enemies who can not be spared within a community.

Although witchcraft has existed among the Abagusii community for many years, it seems to be something which does not cease, but is advancing in our present era. In the pre-colonial era, those who were known or suspected to be witches were killed. But during the colonial and even to present time, the law protects everybody including the witches.

Concerning the recent cases on witchcraft the reader can

refer to chapter four, (4.1), where it is noted that several people were lynched in Kisii and other districts like Uasin Gishu and Siaya. Lyching people suspected to practice witchcraft was declared illegal by government and several villagers who were suspected to have lynched others were tried in courts of law.

Witchcraft is not common among the Abagusii community exclusively, but also as Gehman (1989,119) shows among many tribes in Africa, and even world-wide. Nowadays, we are informed by the mass-media that there are devil worshippers¹⁸ among the Kenyan elite, leaders, and also in schools, colleges and universities,. Such devil worshippers are not only an advancement of witchcraft practices but also the worst enemy of our time. Without discussing this too much, since it is not our concern here, the practice of devil worshipping is invading every community and tribe; because those who are advocating it are people with authority and education in our midst.

Sorcery

The Abagusii believe that sorcerers and witches exist and do cause injury and destruction of people in the community. Sorcery is believed to be one of the common causes of death along with witchcraft and magic. It is one of the

¹⁸ Devil worshippers meet secretly and especially at night for their devilish activities at places known to them only.

enemies which are rejected among the Abagusii community. The typical term for it is "amaebi", which was also used for killing. In his book, Adeyemo (1979,66) states that death is not only believed to be caused by magic and witchcraft but also by sorcery.

Abagusii people not only view sorcerers as enemies in the community, but also as murderers, and hunters of the lives of fellow members of the family, clan and society. In his book, Gehman (1988,71-74) has extensively explained the difference between sorcery and bad magic, good magic and witchcraft. Among the Abagusii community, it is mainly women who are believed to be sorcerers, as in the case of witchcraft. (Women are not believed to be magicians among the Abagusii community.)

In his explanation in the Lineage Principle in Gusii Society, Mayer (1949,6) states that the maternal descent is believed to be "a channel for the transmission of magic powers . Good magic, which is believed to help people in the community, either for healing the sick or for fighting against the evil magic and witches, was commended, and could be one of the qualifications for a leader among the Abagusii community in the colonial Era. In his thesis, Maxon says that "those chiefs who were selected were appointed, as the provincial commissioner (P.C) was latter to remark, "on account of their supposed medicinal or magical power" (Maxon 1987,27).

Medicine-men

As mentioned above medicine-men are those specialized in assisting people in fighting off attacks from witches (Gehman 1989,75). Several terms have been designated for medicine-men by various authors. Some call them "witch finders", "doctors" and some use the term "medicine-men."

This indicates that medicine-men play a double role in the community, the leadership and the magical. Probably this was true, because most chiefs who were appointed by the colonialists, had first to demonstrate certain leadership qualities and attain acceptance from their respective clans. Often those people who displayed healing skills could be appointed as chiefs.

The Abagusii people call them "abanyamariogo". The word has the same meaning as medicine-men. Medicine is called "eriogo" plural "amariogo", and when the personal prefix of possessive is added, then the word changes to be "abanyamariogo".

In the Abagusii worldview, as mentioned above, most medicine-men have some idea of magic acts. They not only treat people using the knowledge they have of plants, but they also learn magic acts through certain knowledgeable people in the community or they inherit them from their ancestors. Men or women who are knowledgeable in plants may become medicine-men. They are friendly and accepted in the community as they help to treat the sick without the use of divine mystical

forces. Gehman (1989,75) correctly states that, the "medicine-men are not merely accepted, but highly respected and feared".

Diviners

Along with medicine-men, there is another group of people who are known as "diviners". The Abagusii call these people, "abaragori", and "abanyibi" for the rain-makers. Mbiti (1991,157) states that, "diviners normally also work as medicine-men". The function of the diviners, mediums, oracles and seers, is to find out hidden secrets or knowledge and pass them on to other people. As Mbiti (1991,166) says, "We must distinguish them from medicine-men in the way they operate. Some may have certain mystical powers for performing their ministry, but the other groups must be involved with spirits and mystical forces."

To summarize this chapter on the Abagusii world-view, it may be said that the religious beliefs of Abagusii people prompted them to realize the nature of God to whom they gave several names. These names not only demonstrate God's nature as the Almighty and Creator but also His role as a Provider, Preserver and Sustainer of Life.

In the case of the Abagusii rites of passage, we have already dealt with various issues around birth, naming ceremony, puberty, initiation, marriage, death and thereafter. All these important marks of life are significant, in that,

for each ritual, a sacrifice is performed. Also, as we have seen, there are more social links in the extended family than in the nuclear family. In the social network, we have also discussed the Abagusii kinships, as seen in different clans, their common ancestor being Omogusii. Each clan originated by choosing a clan totem which eventually made it significant. Some clans respect each other by not inter-marrying and by assisting each other in social responsibilities.

Finally, we have discussed the mystical powers which exist among the Abagusii people. These mystical powers include; magic, witchcraft, sorcery, medicine-men, and diviners. Their engagements and how medicine-men are respected people, as compared with others who not only cause fear in the community, but also destroy lives of innocent people have been discussed. Some magicians who are known to have "white" or "good" magic are also good servants in the society.

The next chapter will concentrate on the missionaries method and pattern in their first contact with Abagusii culture.

Before getting into the next chapter, there is need to answer a few questions that may arise in the readers mind.

1. How has modernity generally affected the Abagusii World-view?
2. What effect has urbanization had on the Abagusii World-view?

EFFECTS OF MODERNITY AND URBANIZATION

In answering the above questions, it can be said that Christianity has brought a great change in the Abagusii world-view in their religious beliefs, but still there are people who hold firm to their traditional beliefs. The Gospel is preached, yet some cultural beliefs still entangle many, whom preachers should know how to approach by understanding their culture. However, missionaries have brought new innovations in the areas of education, by building schools and teaching people how to write and read and to educate children for employment. Missionaries built churches, hospitals and dispensaries for health services. For example, instead of people depending on magicians, or medicine-men for treatment and even thinking that every sick person is bewitched, now there is modern medical treatment and understanding that sickness may be caused by forces such as malaria and fever. This does not still rule out the mystical powers, that still exist and cause death. Modernity has also changed issues around birth and naming of children. Expectant mothers go to the clinics and most of them deliver in hospitals. Children who are born can be given baptizimal names and clan names without going through ceremonies or rituals of any kind, and yet families which are not christians still honor old traditions. This means that to some Abagusii, modernity has changed their world-view. They see things differently from their ancestors. In the case of marriage, modernity has

transformed the meaning and honor or respect which accompanied this ritual. Nowadays, boys and girls look for wives or husbands without the knowledge of their parents. Some even live together as wife and husband, especially in the urban areas without any marriage ceremony. Some girls have problems of children out of wedlock, and that has led to a large number of single mothers in both rural and urban areas. At the same time modernity and urbanization has made people to live independently. Such was not known in the Abagusii community. In regard to circumcision modernity has slightly changed the method but not the act. Both males and females (a few families do not circumcise their girls) are still circumcised either traditionally or in the hospitals. Urbanization has also changed the culture of the Abagusii in that, many men move to cities to seek or do jobs and leave their wives or parents in the rural areas. This breaks the families or clans relationships and some have "city culture"¹⁹ which is different from their home. Eventually, some people loose contact with families. They lack the Abagusii world-view in many cultural practices, what is good or evil in the culture is not comprehended.

Generally urbanization can create tension between the rural and urban dwellers in the areas of cultural practices.

¹⁹ This means the life-style which is different from the one which one was brought up in the rural area; Also some can have new world-view in which things are perceived and understood differently. Children can have a different language from the parent's.

While the urban dwellers see the rural dwellers as uncivilized, the rural dwellers see the urban dwellers as moving away from their culture, hence endangering or destroying it. This ends up as cultural conflict. Now we enter the next chapter, which is on the "missionary method and pattern" that was applied during the early missionary era.

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CHAPTER 3

THE MISSIONARY METHOD AND PATTERN

THE EARLY MISSIONARIES ARRIVAL

The first ELCK missionaries to arrive in Gusii were the late Martin Lundstrom and his wife Gunborg (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya 1963-1988, 1988). They arrived in Kisii town where they stayed briefly before going to Itierio in January, 1948. The second family which followed was Enock and Magda Salomonsson who arrived at Itierio in August, 1948.

The two missionary families experienced hardship as they lost their children who contracted malaria. The Salomonssons lost their son Jarl, shortly after their arrival at Itierio and the Lundstrom's lost their daughter Karin in 1952.

Although they all faced these terrifying conditions, they did not give up proclaiming the Good News. These missionaries did not only endure sorrow in the death of their loved ones, but also the difficulties in acquainting themselves with the local culture and communicating the Gospel to the Abagusii people. The food, the color, and the language could easily create a tremendous barrier, or gap, but they "stood in the gap and proclaimed the word of God" (Osugo 1985, 26)

Soon the cultural barriers were partially broken down as they acquainted themselves with the people. But the missionaries had their culture and beliefs which caused some misunderstandings and mistrust among the Abagusii people hence the proclamation of the Gospel was therefore hindered.

THE MISSIONARIES' CULTURAL BELIEFS

It is worth mentioning here that missionaries were supposed to learn as children the culture of the Abagusii people that they had to serve. The actual views and specific examples concerning the beliefs of missionaries are mentioned in chapter five, the section that deals with the "Interview Questions". This reveals that, they were supposed to know and understand how to communicate with the Abagusii people in their cultural setting, for the proclamation of the Gospel. As they had their own cultural beliefs and world-view which they already knew well as they entered into a new culture, some of them resisted the new culture or had wrong assumptions concerning the new culture due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the culture.

Some missionaries believed that any convert should reject his or her "evil" culture and adopt the new missionary culture. For example they taught the polygamists to divorce other wives and stay with one, in order to be allowed into baptism. Yet for the Abagusii culture all these wives were

legally married to the particular man.¹ The missionaries knew that monogamy was the only "christian" way. They attempted to separate their converts from the community but it was impossible. Some missionaries gave clothes² to their converts, to dress like them. Some converts were introduced into the missionary cultural behavior which they adopted. For example, the way they dressed, ate, talked and walked. Such cultural practices which were known by missionaries, were believed to be "Christian". Therefore the missionaries believed that their converts could develop a detachment from their cultural beliefs and adopt the missionaries' cultural beliefs.

However, there are some cultural practices that still present challenges to the ELCK as we will see in Chapter Four. For example, the mystical powers, circumcision and sacrifices in various rites of passage.

Although I do not agree that there is a "Christian culture", yet I believe that there is a "Biblical culture". This is the "culture" in which the scripture was written and illustrated. These were people who had a culture which influenced their authorship. Stott (1992,301), states: "We also affirm that the Bible is a culturally conditioned book, in the sense that each of its authors belonged to, and spoke within, his own particular culture. There is good reason for

¹The bride-wealth was paid for every wife and culturally this signified being wedded.

²Some missionaries used clothes as an inducement for their acceptance into the community, or as gifts to the converts.

believing in the dual authorship of scripture, namely, that behind the human authors stood the divine author, who spoke his word through the words and that his word transcends both history and culture".

It is believed that God can use whatever culture one is acquainted with, to bring people to Himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then the missionaries' task is to discover the proper method and pattern of approaching the people of a different culture from their own, with the Gospel.

Next is a discussion of the missionary and the Gospel approach.

THE MISSIONARY AND GOSPEL APPROACH

It is realized that the most important task of a missionary is to convey the Gospel message or to witness to the people the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the Savior of all people. Basically, the Gospel is above every culture and can penetrate into every culture of this world as it can be directed and permitted by the Holy Spirit.

The first approach the missionaries used as a means of conveying the Gospel, was through education³. They opened a primary school at Itierio where they had settled; and invited children from the neighborhood learn how to read and write. Eventually some of these children become the first Christians

³ It was to teach how to read and write aiming at producing good religious teachers (preachers, pastors and nurses).

in the church, which was under the leadership of SLM.

Secondly, the missionaries opened a baptism class and worship service at the mission station. And on December 23, 1951, the first baptism was held for 18 people, among them were students from Itierio Primary School.

As usual, the missionaries invited people for Sunday Worship service, Sunday School classes and baptismal classes. This became a trend in every place they were invited to establish mission work.

Thirdly, the missionaries opened dispensaries for treating people as one of the ways of reaching them with the Gospel. Those who came, for treatment were also preached to.

The missionaries perceived the possibility of opening schools as a method of preaching and teaching the Word of God to young people, who in turn could be witnesses to the community. Basically, the missionaries travelled on foot when going for evangelistic trips, since in many places there were no passable roads for vehicles. They used to preach in English or Kiswahili with an interpreter. They distributed christian literature to schools, and used personal contact in witnessing. In certain instances, they voluntarily taught Christian Education at the schools which they had started. They also provided basic health care in certain mobile centers or at schools (ELCK 1988,31).

As the early missionaries started their work among the Abagusii, one thing which was realized was that, the Abagusii

had their own strong culture. Certain practices of the culture were explicit but some were very implicit. For example, the missionaries knew the circumcision practice which was explicitly performed yearly in the month of October and November, after harvesting period. And also marriage ceremonies and even death. But they did not realize the sacrifices which were behind each ritual. For instance, when a child was born, the naming ceremony had to be accompanied with sacrifices.

For those cultural practices which were explicit, they condemned them thinking that was primitive or uncivilized, and so they concentrated on teaching what they thought was good for the people, thinking that once people are taught enough and became civilized, they could abandon the practices. They also believed that when the natives became christians and knew how to read the Scriptures by themselves, they could abandon "bad" culture. As mentioned earlier, female circumcision was thought that it will be abandoned soon, but until today it has not.

Concerning mystical powers, the missionaries never thought of it as real, but as only superstitious beliefs. Some even thought that the traditional weddings had certain superstitious forces, or mystical powers such as witchcraft because they did not understand how they were performed. Infact, everything they did not understand was thought to be unreal and superstitious.

As already mentioned above the missionary method and pattern which we see in the New Testament reflected by Jesus

and His apostles was lacking. They were supposed to learn the Abagusii culture as infants.

In summary, the early missionaries who arrived among the Abagusii had to struggle to fit into the culture and had various problems, some of them lost their children at the expense of proclaiming the Gospel. It is also clear that some missionaries' did not take much time to learn and understand the Abagusii culture and belief systems. For example, some who came to serve as missionaries could not finish their first term of mission before they quit and went back home. It is not good to mention them here, but anybody may notice that even nowadays there are some who quit due to cultural difficulties. We are informed how Christ came to the world to learn the people's culture as an infant so as to proclaim the Good News to them (Mt.1:21-23). Therefore, learning the culture as an infant and identifying with the target people is essential in Gospel proclamation. We have also discussed how the early missionaries in the ELCK made various innovations such as schools and health facilities in the Abagusii community with the Gospel message in their approach.

We now look into the present challenges which still face the Lutheran Church, known as the "excluded middle." These are aspects such as witchcraft, magic, circumcision and syncretism.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENT CHALLENGES IN ELCK: "The Excluded Middle"

Many of the first missionaries who came to Africa, did not understand some of the cultural practices and certain mystical powers, which in many cases, seemed to them as cultural myths or legends. Such practices and mystical powers which include witchcraft and sorcery, white and black magic and circumcision have been avoided or excluded from teaching the Christians in the community, and missionaries did not know how to address them and give solutions to the Christians. Gehman (1989,120) calls this a tragedy. He writes:

The tragedy is that in our Bible Schools and Colleges as well as our Churches the subject of witchcraft is not taught or preached. A major reason is because the older pastors remain faithful to the teaching of the missionaries. Because the pioneer missionaries considered witchcraft superstition, they dismissed it as unreal. Consequently, the pastors have never been trained in our Bible Schools and Colleges to deal with mystical powers (Gehman 1989,120).

We understand the "Excluded Middle" (Hiebert 1984) as those cultural practices which missionaries could not comprehend. These practices are those which have to do with mystical powers, such as of magic, witch-doctors, witch-craft and diviners. Since nobody among the missionaries had to teach against these practices, those who became Christians did not regard them as evil. Some Christians accepted to come to

Church and listen to the Gospel, but continued to practice the mystical powers or those who did not practice the mystical powers went for help from those who practiced. Since these issues were not addressed in the proclamation of the Gospel or at the biblical institutions (Bible School and Colleges), they were not taken seriously by converted Christians as evil practices.

Other cultural practices which were never addressed by missionaries and still remain to be our challenges are such issues like, circumcision and sacrifices during certain ritual ceremonies. It is just recently (1990's) when it was accepted that African Traditional Religions (ATR) should be in the teaching curriculum of Matongo Lutheran Theological College. Previously, it was rejected and neither the missionaries nor the national pastors addressed it in their teaching or preaching ministry. We will see later in this chapter how these excluded middles are great challenges in the ELCK.

Hiebert (1985,184-185) has pointed out that the "past missionaries often made the decision and tended to reject most of the old customs as "pagan". He further states that "sometimes this rejection was rooted in the ethnocentrism of the missionaries, who tended to equate the gospel with their own culture".

Although certain cultural behaviors or practices such as mystical powers were considered bad, yet missionaries seemed to ignore them and did not know how to deal with them. The

problem has been inherited and is a great challenge today in the ELCK. This is interfering with the proclamation of the Gospel. Hiebert advises that exclusion of these cultural practices from Christian teachings, causes three major problems:

1. Creation of a cultural vacuum.
2. Encouragement of bad culture to be practiced secretly in the church and eventually the emergence of a syncretistic church (mixture of Christianity and tradition).
3. Missionaries and church leaders will be like police to watch over their converts. This will not allow the spiritual growth of the Christians to make proper decisions in their Christian faith.

It is believed that among the Abagusii that magic (the black magic) and witchcraft¹ can be used for destruction of life or making a person sick, when his or her belongings such as clothes, hair, nails, faeces, pieces of sheets or blankets that one uses are mixed with the magic objects by the magician. Such belongings are secretly taken by either a close neighbor or any other person in close contact who can get access to them. After preparing them with ashes from plants, insects, snakes and frogs, they are taken to the

¹ Witchcraft is done at night. The Abagusii see "black magic" and witchcraft as "brother" and "sister". One is done by men and the other is done by women at night. Often they co-operate in their activities. Witch doctors protect witches, by their medicine, from being hunted by "white" magicians when they cause evil.

targeted person's house or gate or garden or some place where he/she can cross. The object then can be effective and cause sickness and eventually death. This kind of witchcraft is technically known as "contagious" witch.

Abagusii believe that black magic and witchcraft is given to certain people by others who were also taught or inherited it from their parents. This means that some people are taught as grown-ups about such, mystical powers as witchcraft, while others are brought up with it in their families (parents). This is not so different from what Mbiti (1991,167) says, that some people are "born" with it.

We now turn to how these cultural practices and mystical powers are hindrances of the Gospel. We will also discuss the danger of having a syncretistic church (mixture of both cultural and Christian beliefs).

WITCHCRAFT

Missionaries never believed that there are people known to be witches among the Abagusii community. The problem of not believing in the existence of witchcraft, is partially because witches' activities are done during the night, when people are sleeping, and also because they do not like to be identified by the public. However, every person who has grown among the Abagusii community has been cautioned of the danger of meeting witches, if one dares walk at night. It is believed that if one hears any strange sound at night, either

a knock at the door, or a wild animal such as hyenas, wolves, foxes and squirrels automatically one associates it with witchcraft.

It was shown in Chapter Two that witchcraft practices are done by people who are empowered by mystical evil spirits to do evil against other people; they do not want others to know them nor how they operate. Only those who have these spirits can identify each other and go out at night to do witchcraft. They are "wolves in sheep clothing" (Mt. 10:16), which means that they are hypocrites; during the day they are good people but at night they do evil things, contrary to what they pretend to be during the day, towards their fellows in terms of relationships.

In recent years, witchcraft among the Abagusii has been widely reported in the local news papers.² Witchcraft practices was not only reported among the Abagusii, but also among other tribes. For example, On Wednesday, May 3, 1989,

¹On Tuesday, January 12, 1993, Kenya Times reporters Richard Arap Kerror and Temu Amoro in Kisii, wrote that "eight people aged between 57 and 75 thought to be witches and wizards were burnt to death in Kisii District.

On Tuesday, June 1 1993, the Daily Nation reporter Peter Angwenyi, wrote that 3 sorcery suspects were lynched at Marani Division, Kisii District. They had forced a standard Eight schoolgirl to eat rotten meat.

On June 4, 1993, Tiny Kago and Steven Chemarum, reporters of Kenya Times stated that five more sorcery suspects were lynched in Marani Division (See the Appendix).

On Saturday, August 7, 1993, John Mokera reporter of the Kenya Times wrote that a huge crowd gathered at the Kisii Law courts to have a glimpse at 12 suspects arraigned for offenses connected with witchcraft.

in The Standard, Christine Mpaka wrote a historical narrative on witchcraft and magic. "Magic, witchcraft and sorcery," she said, "has developed in human history, in Europe, Africa and also in Kenya." The narrative quoted some Biblical texts which deal with this problem and also prominent magician, Dr. Ouma Maka Dudi, who gave some information on magic and witchcraft. Maka Dudi's text is given in the Appendix under the title, "Is Witchcraft a Myth?". On Wednesday, August 4, 1993, it was reported by Maurice Masika in Kenya Times that a suspected witch was hacked to death in Kasses Division, Uasin Gishu District. Also on Monday, June 6, 1994, Douglas Okwach reporter of The Standard, wrote that wizards and witches terrorized villages in Siaya District.

We therefore agree with Gehman (1989,166-16) that witchcraft and sorcery are advancing; and, as mentioned above, devil worshipping is another modern mystical power which needs to be addressed by the church in the community. It is a great challenge to the ELCK.

MAGIC PRACTICES

It is shown in chapter two that magic³ can be categorized as white or black. Mbiti (1991,166-7) calls it good and bad or evil magic. Likewise, the Abagusii people see magic in categories; (see Section 2:4:i). As witchcraft and sorcery,

³ A general understanding of the meaning differ. As mentioned earlier, the Abagusii people do make such distinctions between magicians, herbalists and medicine-men.

the magic practice is also advancing very rapidly. In the past, magic was practiced just among the people of one particular community. Nowadays the magicians are well known to travel from one ethnic society to another to practice magic. Some have opened houses for magic training and practices. Those who do not have buildings, show their magic in the open air markets. Some of these people are not from the Abagusii tribe but from other tribes of Kenya. And even those from the Abagusii community have achieved a more advanced magic from other communities. Magic is a terrifying act and causes fear among people and even creates hatred among the families, clans and friends. Gehman (1989,112) has correctly stated that, "a Kisii sorcerer (magician) explicitly acknowledged his effort to appear terrifying in order to strike fear in the hearts of others".

As Christians, both the missionaries and national leaders in the Lutheran Church in Kisii and Nyamira districts are faced with the magical forces that are advancing and spreading among the Abagusii people.

CIRCUMCISION

Another modern challenge among the Abagusii community is the circumcision practice. Although it is not one of the mystical powers, it is a challenge which we need to discuss here. We have already discussed this issue, but let us now look at it as one of the challenges which the church is facing.

in its mission work among the Abagusii.

Although male circumcision is widely accepted among the Abagusii, the practice has certain acts which are obstacles in the Christian faith. First, when a traditional circumciser is called and must use one traditional knife for all the boys, who are being circumcised and to shed blood with the belief that that is the right way of uniting the young generation with their ancestors, there is a danger both of exposing the boys to ancestral reverence or worship and also to the AIDS epidemic through the knife.

Second, it is believed that if a boy, who is being circumcised tries to touch the circumciser due to the pain, the circumciser will leave him and request a sacrificial animal (sheep or goat) for that act of touching the circumciser, which is prohibited and believed to cause fear to other boys to be circumcised and to spoil the ritual.

Third, the songs which are sung during the occasion seem to be inciting the young boys to see other tribes as enemies, whom they must be prepared to fight. Some of the words used in the songs are not only inciting but also abusive. One cannot feel comfortable to sit with respectable people such as parents, uncles or aunts, when the boys sing them.

Finally, when the young boys are taken into the huts where they stay for healing, older boys make a sacred fire for the circumcised, which must not go out. If, unfortunately it goes out, a sacrifice will be done for rectifying the sacred

fire for the victim not to be cursed by the ancestors.

The challenge to the Church among the Abagusii on clitoridectomy has advanced into various national discussions that ask them to refrain from the practice. Unfortunately, the Abagusii people seem to resist the call to stop the practice. It is believed that all that can happen to the boys, as mentioned above, can occur for the girls also. Another outrageous belief about girls' clitoridectomy is that if one does not bear children, it is believed that one might have cried when she was initiated or the fire went off when she was in seclusion. The diviner is consulted to prescribe an activity to rectify the matter. As mentioned earlier modernity and even urbanization has not changed the practice a lot, but only the method of the act.

All these, and some others which are not mentioned here seem to be obstacles to committed Christians who must be taught by the church how to handle these issues. We will point out some alternatives in chapter six.

So, we have to find ways and means of handling these issues which have been inherited in the Abagusii culture, because they may lead the church into syncretism. Syncretism will also be our task in the following section, because it is one of the challenges to the Church today. Let us discuss it now and show how it may endanger the church.

DANGER OF SYNCRETISM

The term "syncretism" may have broad definitions, depending on the topic one discusses. In discussing the cultural challenges that the church encounters in her proclamation of the Gospel, the term means the assimilation of cultural practices and ideas into the Biblical teaching and calling the combination "Christianity" (Winter and Hawthorne, 1981, 532). Gehman (1989, 271), in his extensive study says, "It is the union of two or more opposite beliefs, so that the synthesized form is a new thing". He further states that "the absorption of cultural ideas and practices in a local Christian community need not be syncretism. If these ideas and practices are consistent with the scripture and do not conflict with the essential message and world-view of the Bible, then syncretism is not a problem" (Gehman 1989, 271).

Hiebert (1985, 184), in dealing with critical contextualization, states that syncretism is "when pagan customs are practiced in secret, and they combine with public Christian teachings to form Christopaganism - a syncretism mix of Christian and non-Christian beliefs".

What Gehman tries to say concerning syncretism, is a great challenge. He explains that there are two types of syncretism, "negative" and "positive," and that there is a "conscious and deliberate syncretism" and "spontaneous syncretism."

What we can observe from his theory is that in any

culture there are good cultural elements which can be contextualized into Christianity as long as they do not conflict with the Scripture, and those which automatically can not be adapted; if forced into adaption, the result will be a syncretistic church.

Hiebert's opinion that syncretism is "when pagan customs are practiced in secret," can only be partially accepted, since some of the syncretistic practices can be publicly practiced⁴. It has been mentioned above that some of these syncretistic ideas or practices, in essence are from the mystical forces and are brought into the Christian faith by new converts who do not scrutinize the teaching or knowledge of the Christian teaching and how the Gospel applies to their culture.

The Lutheran Church among the Abagusii people faces this danger and challenge, not only from some of the independent churches which are working among them, but also from the new converts who are not taught enough of the Christian faith so that they may be "ripe" for baptism. An example of an African independent church is the "Legio Maria" which seems to be spreading its faith very rapidly. This group split from the Roman Catholic Church and equates their leader, the late Simeon Ondeto, to Christ. They called him the messiah Jesus

⁴ By this I mean some of African independent churches which have departed from scripture and accommodate traditional or cultural practices by regarding them as Christian. Some do it only so as to have more followers and to be comfortable.

Christ (Moreau and Kombo (AJET), 10.1. 1991,11-14)

It is believed that most of the Legio Maria adherents are people involved in magic or witchcraft or those who have been healed through prayers from their leaders. The Legio Maria followers, usually have over-night rosary-prayers and perform secret practices. Some of them claim to be ordained and empowered by certain spirits.

No one can deny that these people are a syncretist group which is a great challenge not only to the Christians among the Abagusii but also to all christians in Kenya.

Legio Maria and Roho Israel are examples of the various African independent churches which are in Nyamira and Kisii districts, and which are a challenge to the Evangelical Lutheran Church to face in her Gospel proclamation. Other cultural practices which have been mentioned above such as witchcraft, magic (both black and white), medicine men and diviners, are other dangers which may be carried into the Christian Church, even without the knowledge of pastors and eventually there is a Church with syncretistic believers who accept cultural practices without screening them, and who serve both the mystical forces and the Church.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the present challenges to the ELCK, which are often known as "the excluded middle." These are the mystical powers which missionaries did not know how to address or which they neglected calling them superstitions. These practices are no longer believed to be

superstitions, as it was in the early missionaries' thinking, but as real practices which need to be faced up to and addressed by pastors and all those who proclaim the Gospel. The discussion also touched on the cultural practices, such as circumcision, which is a present challenge in the church among the Abagusii. It was shown that such mystical practices are what we can call "bad" or "evil" cultures."

Research findings concerning Abagusii culture and missionary work in the ELCK are discussed in the next chapter.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

There are eight questions which were supposed to be answered by ticking the appropriate answers, a) Yes, b) No, c) I don't know. The questionnaire was distributed in four ELCK districts in Kisii and Nyamira. These are representatives of ELCK six districts with about thirty parishes and one hundred and fifty congregations in the area of study namely, Kisii and Nyamira administrative districts. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed and the results were as follows:

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As stated earlier, this study was carried out among the Abagusii people who are Bantu descendants and are found in the Western part of Kenya, in Kisii and Nyamira Districts¹. The goal of this research was to study how the early missionaries in ELCK handled the Abagusii cultural practices as they preached the Gospel.

In this chapter the results and interpretations of the data analysis for the research on the Abagusii culture and mission work are presented. The responses to the questionnaire and interviews are given in statistical tables, and the final analysis is shown.

¹See Pages 176 and 177 for Maps.

Question 1: Has missionary work in evangelism among the Abagusii been a success?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 1:

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|---|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 8 | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 18 | - | - | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 14 | 4 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders in congregations | 9 | 4 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth in congregations | 10 | 2 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers of primary and secondary schools | 12 | - | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students at Bible school ² | 3 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess ¹ | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Totals | 75 | 10 | 0 | 66 | 19 |

²The Bible school students from Kisii and Nyamira Districts were six in total and three responded.

¹In both Kisii and Nyamira districts there were two deaconesses who serve as co-ordinators of each District in women's programs and Sunday school programs, and one responded.

Question 2.

Are the cultural practices among the Abagusii people a hindrance to evangelism?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 2

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 5 | 3 | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 16 | 2 | - | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 15 | 3 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders | 13 | - | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 10 | 2 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 9 | 3 | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 3 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Totals | 71 | 14 | - | 66 | 19 |

Question 3

Do you perceive any conflict between culture and Gospel among the Abagusii Christians?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 3

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 8 | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 14 | 4 | - | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 12 | 6 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders | 8 | 5 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 10 | 2 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 11 | 1 | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| TOTALS | 65 | 20 | - | 66 | 19 |

Question 4

Does the church realize the effects of culture and missionary work among the Abagusii?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 4

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 8 | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 7 | 8 | 3 | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 14 | 2 | 2 | 18 | - |
| Elders | 10 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 12 | - | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 7 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 3 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| TOTALS | 62 | 15 | 8 | 66 | 19 |

Question 5

Do missionaries view the Abagusii culture as entirely evil and inapplicable in Christianity?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 5

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | - | 6 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 5 | 7 | 6 | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 8 | 7 | 3 | 18 | - |
| Elders | 11 | 2 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youths | 7 | 5 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 6 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | - | 1 | | - | 1 |
| TOTALS | 38 | 34 | 13 | 66 | 19 |

Question 6

Do the Abagusii Christians consider their culture as evil and inapplicable in their Christian life?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 6

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 4 | 4 | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 6 | 12 | - | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 8 | 10 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders | 3 | 10 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 2 | 10 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 5 | 7 | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Totals | 29 | 56 | 0 | 66 | 19 |

Question 7

Do missionaries view some of the Abagusii cultural practices as good and applicable in Christianity?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 7

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 8 | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 8 | 8 | 2 | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 10 | 8 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders | 10 | 3 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 10 | - | 2 | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 3 | 9 | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Totals | 52 | 29 | 4 | 66 | 19 |

Question 8

Do Abagusii Christians consider part of their culture good and applicable in Christian life?

TABLE OF RESPONSE 8

| | YES | NO | DON'T KNOW | MALE | FEMALE |
|--------------|-----|----|------------|------|--------|
| Missionaries | 8 | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| Pastors | 16 | 2 | - | 18 | - |
| Evangelists | 16 | 2 | - | 18 | - |
| Elders | 11 | 2 | - | 10 | 3 |
| Youth | 10 | 2 | - | 8 | 4 |
| Teachers | 12 | - | - | 7 | 5 |
| Students | 3 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Deaconess | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Totals | 77 | 8 | 0 | 66 | 19 |

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

The following four questions were posed to missionaries and church officials

1. What is your opinion of the view the early missionaries had on the Abagusii culture?
Did they accept the culture for the proclamation of the Gospel or did they reject it?
Did the missionaries consider that their own way of life was "Christian", so that every convert should be like them?
2. Do you think that there is any good in Abagusii culture? If so, what are the good things which can be applied in the church? If not so, what are the reasons why Abagusii culture must be rejected by Christians?
3. Are there some cultural practices among the Abagusii which are hindering the evangelization and expansion of the ELCK church? If so, can you name some of them? If not, what are the possible hindrances in your opinion?
4. What are the cultural practices among the Abagusii which can be utilized by the church for promoting missionary work in the areas of evangelization and church expansion?

The responses which were anticipated were either total rejection or total acceptance of the Abagusii culture, or

partial acceptance of the culture. This was an open interview in which one could give his/her opinion concerning the Abagusii culture. The intention was to get, (as a sample) five missionaries who have worked among the Abagusii people, and ten local church officials (pastors) [as a sample] who have served in both Kisii and Nyamira ELCK, districts.

I was able to interview the following missionaries.

| MISSIONARIES | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Dr. Reijo Arkkila and his wife | Teacher Matongo Theological Collage, He was Principal of the College 1978 - 1980, part-time pastor in several parishes in both Nyamira and Kisii Districts. Mission Secretary for Africa and Asia in Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF). |
| Dr. Rune Imberg and his wife | Son of the missionary, Joseph Imberg, who served among the Abagusii 1965-1970. Rune is a teacher at Matongo Theological College and a part-time pastor in ELCK parishes. Now, principal at Matongo. |
| Anna-Brita Albertsson | Served as a nurse in the ELCK. One of the first dispensary missionaries in Gusii, since 1950. One of the translators of the Holy Bible into Ekegusii language (Ebibiria Enchenu.) Serves in writing various Christian literature in the ELCK and other translation work. |

I intended to get ten church officials who have served as leaders (during missionary services) and who are from the Abagusii tribe.

I was able to interview the following:

CHURCH OFFICIALSRESPONSIBILITIES

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Rev. James Otete - age 70 | The first African pastor in THE ELCK and the first chairman (president) of the church. served under and with missionaries among the Abagusii for many years. Is now retired. |
| Mr. Francis Mongare - age 52 | A professional secondary school teacher for many years. Served as the Education Secretary of the ELCK for several years. Now, tutor at the Lutheran Teachers Training College at Matongo. |
| Rev. Francis Nyamwaro - age 61 | Widely travelled in Church activities. The current Chairman of ELCK. Served as pastor and the vice-chairman before being elected as the chairman. |
| Rev. Jephtha Michoro -age 74 | Now retired. Served as ELCK pastor and vice-chairman, district treasurer and served as evangelist during colonial era. |
| Rev. Joseph Osoro - age 48 | Served as evangelist and as pastor. Acquired official responsibility as acting district leader in the ELCK Nairobi District. |
| Rev. Henry Otworu - age 36 | Served as ELCK district leader and pastor of several parishes. Now serving ELCK-Kisii District as Education Secretary. |
| Rev. Samuel Nyangate - age 48 | Serving as district leader and pastor. Served in both Kisii and Nyamira districts. Now serving ELCK Nyamira North district. |
| Rev. Joel Mose - age 51 | Served as ELCK district leader in several districts in Nyamira and Kisii. Now serving ELCK South West District. |
| Rev. Joseph Oichoe - age 40 | Served as district leader and pastor. Served in both Kisii and Nyamira Districts. Now serving ELCK as district leader Nyamira Central. |

The following are some of the responses from those who

were interviewed. Dr. Arkkila and his wife, interviewed on 3rd Feb. 1994 at Matongo Lutheran Theological College, were not well informed on the view of the early missionaries, but hoped that they did not totally reject the Abagusii culture. However, they felt that the missionaries did not know the Abagusii cultural practices, and therefore some missionaries preferred their own culture which they thought was the only way which the newly converted Christians should have followed.

During the interview, the missionaries testified that there are some good cultural practices among the Abagusii, but also pointed out that there are some evil cultural practices which must be totally rejected. Such practices are fear of evil spirits, witchcraft, magic, sorcery, and ancestral worship. They also mentioned that certain practices, such as circumcision, customs concerning burial ceremonies and offering of sacrifices of various types, are the cultural practices which can hinder evangelism and the growth of the church.

The missionaries did not only state the cultural practices which can hinder the expansion of the Gospel, but they also recommended some practices which can be used as a means of propagating the Gospel. These cultural practices are hospitality, respect and communal responsibility.

This researcher also interviewed some national church officials from Gusii who also presented their opinions

concerning the Abagusii cultural practices. Among those interviewed were the former Chairman of Lutheran Church, and the Educational Secretary of the Church, both of whom are from the Abagusii community.

They all felt that there are bad cultural practices among the Abagusii which must be totally rejected and there are those which must be maintained. The practices which must be rejected, are polygamy, drinking of alcohol, witchcraft, magic, sorcery, ritual ceremonies and sacrifices which are done in honor of ancestors during certain rites of passage, especially in burial ceremonies. For good cultural practices, they stated that the Abagusii people should maintain their tradition in respect, hospitality, community responsibility for caring the sick, togetherness (unity for families, clans and tribe), and counselling the young generations for marriage and circumcision.

They felt that there are many things which can be discussed concerning the Abagusii culture. Just to mention a few, they said, these could include the way people talk, eat, dress, handle matters in the community, and understand things to be wrong or right in their culture.

On 14th June 1994, at Uhuru Highway Lutheran Church, Nairobi, the researcher interviewed two national pastors, one who is now retired and the current Chairman of the Church, both of whom are Abagusii.

It was learnt that the early Lutheran missionaries

refused most of the Abagusii culture while the Roman Catholic missionaries accepted some cultural practices. Some missionaries considered their culture to be "Christian" and that those who had accepted christianity should follow it. But the Abagusii, even the Christians, refused to abandon circumcision. The missionaries thought that for health reasons, the male circumcision could continue, but the one for females should be stopped.

Concerning what is good in the Abagusii culture, the pastors responded that respect between age-groups who knew their age mates and their superiors (ribu erimo and ebigori)⁴ was a good example that could be practiced in the Church. People should know those of their clan and how they are related (abanto ba mbaba). It was regarded to be a taboo (emuma), for anybody who was found in adulterous behavior (obonyaka)⁵, he or she was rejected. Christians should maintain respect in the family life, abstain from adultery and also keep respect in the church for their leaders, pastors, evangelists and church elders. Such a behavior was prohibited as a taboo with the Abagusii culture.

The Pastors continued to state that it was the culture of

⁴"Ribu" means the ash which was used on the body like a powder during the seclusion period after circumcision. Those who applied "ribu" during the same year constituted an age-group which was respected by those age-groups they preceded and which respected those which preceded them in applying "ribu".

⁵ This means people who have no respect in their sexual behaviors.

the Abagusii that, if one offended a person who must be respected, one had to go back and apologize to appease him with something he liked, to put off the anger. This could be either a goat or a cow if it was a big offense. This was known as "ogotoroba." A wife who misbehaved to the husband was sent to her parents and later examined by the council of family elders at her place of marriage; if found in fault she could bring a goat for "ogotoroba"

It was also noted that the Abagusii hospitality as a part of their culture astonished the missionaries when they visited their homes and they were welcomed. The missionaries' culture falls short of welcoming strangers and even those they know. That was foreign and could not be understood by the Abagusii, especially when they preached love to one another and yet they did not practice it in their homes.

Finally, the pastors noted that the hindrances to evangelization are witchcraft (for some people were hiding in the church while they were still practicing this evil). These hindrances, they said, may be seen among some Christians who do not forgive others, they do not show good examples, so that those who have not believed can follow and understand christianity as a loving and forgiving community.

Some christians also have bad behavior in deceiving other people. This can reflect a bad image of christianity and become a hindrance to evangelization. Another issue which hinders evangelization, is drinking and becoming intoxicated,

which can result a bad behavior before other people who do not drink. Some Christians do not forgive others, deceive others, drink and poison others (Michoro and Nyamwaro, 1994). Anna Britta Albertson, said, "The relationship between the missionaries and the African community (Abagusii) as a whole was good. Some Africans kept a distance and warned others. But as they learned to know our work, they became friendly. I have heard reports of some troubles caused by the Roman Catholics. Maybe they were true".

INTERPRETATIONS

The questionnaires sent out were one hundred. Those which were filled and returned to the researcher were eighty five; that was eighty five percent response.

The first question sought to find out whether the missionaries work has been a success among the Abagusii or not, the total positive answers were seventy-five out of eighty-five which was 88.23 percent of the total people who responded. The negative answers were ten which was 11.67 percent.

Secondly, it sought to find out whether the Abagusii cultural practices are a hindrance to evangelism or not, the responses to as follows: The total positive answers were 71 out of 85 people who responded. This was 83.53 percent. The negative responses were 14 which was 16.47 percent.

Thirdly, it sought to find out whether there was any conflict perceived between the Abagusii culture and the

proclamation of the Gospel. The responses were as follows:

The total positive answers were 65 out of 85 people who responded. This was 76.47 per cent. The negative responses were 20 which was 23.53 per cent.

Fourthly, it was to find out whether the church realizes the effect of culture on missionary work or not. The total positive answers were 62 people who responded. This was 72.94 per cent. The negative responses were 15, which was 17.65 percent and the neutrals were 8, which was 9.41 per cent.

Fifthly, the total positive answers were 38, which was 44.7 per cent. The negative responses were 34, which was also 40 per cent and the neutrals were 13 which was 15.29 per cent.

Sixthly, the total positive answers were 29 people who responded. This was 34.12 per cent. The negative answers were 56, which was 65.88 per cent.

Seventhly, the total positive answers were 52 people who responded. This was 61.18 per cent. The negative responses were 29, which was 34.12 per cent. And the neutrals were 4 which was 4.7 per cent.

Finally, in question number eight, the total positive answers were 77 people who responded. This was 90.59 per cent. The negative responses were 8, which was 9.41 per cent. The following is the table of the statistical results.

TABLE ON AVERAGE RESPONSES PER CENT

Table 1

| NUMBER OF QUESTION | POSITIVE RESPONSE | % | NEGATIVE RESPONSE | % | NEUTRAL RESPONSE | % |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| 1 | 75 | 88.23 | 10 | 11.67 | - | - |
| 2 | 71 | 83.53 | 14 | 16.47 | - | - |
| 3 | 65 | 76.47 | 20 | 23.53 | - | - |
| 4 | 62 | 72.94 | 15 | 17.65 | 8 | 9.41 |
| 5 | 38 | 44.7 | 34 | 40.0 | 13 | 15.29 |
| 6 | 29 | 34.12 | 56 | 65.88 | - | - |
| 7 | 52 | 61.18 | 29 | 34.12 | 4 | 4.7 |
| 8 | 77 | 90.59 | 8 | 9.41 | - | - |
| TOTALS | 469 | 551.7 | 186 | 218.8 | 25 | 29.4 |
| | | | | 2 | | |
| AVERAGE | 58.63 | 60.97 | 23.25 | 27.35 | 3.13 | 3.67 |

TABLE ON FIGURES RESULTS OF RESPONSES

Table 2

| ARRAY | POSITIVE | ARRAY | NEGATIVE | ARRAY | NEUTRAL |
|-----------|----------|-------|----------|-------|---------|
| 77 | 90.59 | 56 | 65.88 | 13 | 15.29 |
| 75 | 38.23 | 34 | 40.0 | 8 | 9.41 |
| 71 | 33.53 | 29 | 34.12 | 4 | 4.7 |
| 65 | 76.47 | 20 | 23.53 | - | - |
| 62 | 72.94 | 15 | 17.65 | - | - |
| 52 | 51.18 | 14 | 16.47 | - | - |
| 38 | 44.7 | 10 | 11.76 | - | - |
| 29 | 34.12 | 8 | 9.41 | - | - |
| | | | | | |
| Mean | 60.97 | 23.25 | 27.35 | 3.13 | 367 |
| 58.625 | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Range 49 | 57.47 | 49 | 57.47 | 10 | 11.59 |
| Deviation | 56.875 | | 49.25 | | 4.7 |
| Variance | 14.218 | | 12.312 | | 1.75 |
| SD | 3.77 | | 3.508 | | 1.083 |

According to the above figures from the questionnaire, it can be deduced that although missionaries had been evangelizing the Abagusii, the cultural practices have been hindering the proclamation of the Gospel. At the same time both the missionaries and the Abagusii people realize that there are certain cultural practices which are good and can be used for promoting the Gospel within the Abagusii community. It indicates that the church has not realized the cultural richness of the community, particularly those aspects that are not in conflict with the Scripture.

From the investigation of the opinion of those who were interviewed, it is clear that, some of the Abagusii cultural practices should be utilized in the church. But church workers must be careful of those practices which are from the mystical forces and which contradict the scripture.

Let us interpret what should be contextualized as far as the Abagusii culture is concerned, in the opinion of some of those interviewed.

In the interviews, several people pointed out that the Abagusii cultural practices on circumcision can be accepted by the church, especially male circumcision (since there is no Biblical evidence for female circumcision it is widely questioned). This is supported by Otete, who was the first African pastor in ELCK and the first African chairman (president) of the church. He says, " There are many things in the Abagusii culture which can be accepted by the church.

For example circumcision, although for the female it is questioned as to whether it should be done, but for boys, it is to be accepted. This indicates that one has moved from one stage to another, and respect is given to the one who has gone through the exercise (Otete, Interview 21/2/94).

Although Otete's view can be supported by many, there are those who strongly feel that clitoridectomy should continue more especially for the Abagusii people. In his opinion, Mongare says that the action makes the young girls feel that they have grown-up. And they know how to respect people when they have gone through that experience. This act is one of the cultural practices which the Abagusii can retain for their uniqueness as a community (Mongare, Interview 21/2/94).

This view is supported by people from other communities who practice clitoridectomy. There has been a debate in the mass media and even several meetings have been called to discuss how to refrain from this "hostile action" against female children in certain communities in Kenya. In an article entitled "A rite that transcends mere pain," Muchungu Kiiru (Daily Nation: Friday, March 11, 1994) states that clitoridectomy has got a lot of complicity, and should not be seen as "a harmful traditional practice that adversely affects the health of the women both physically and psychologically." Kiiru, who claims to be a surgical operator and knows the pain of clitoridectomy, says "these effects are as a result of infection, excessive bleeding, reduced sexual urge, fear of

sexual relations and complications of labor and delivery." Kiiru's strongest belief, that should not be over-looked, is the cultural life of the one who is to be clitoridectomised. He says "the surgical operation is usually bound up with the women's acculturation, initiating her into what the society thinks is her place." Finally Kiiru states, "as long as such considerations make female circumcision culturally significant to the women, it will survive no matter how zealously it is condemned as a painful practice". However, such a conclusion as by Kiiru that female circumcision will continue, goes too far, because some people among the Abagusii and other tribes such as the Meru, Kamba and Kikuyu who used to clitoridectomize have abandoned the practice. Therefore even the people or tribes which presently refuse to stop practicing female circumcision may change in future, and stop that cultural practice.

Van Genep (1960, 72-74) in his close examination on the subject of circumcision and clitoridectomy feels that the development and inheritance of this rite of passage among the semi-civilized communities is just a matter of "a procedure of collective differentiation", from a neighboring group. He regards circumcision and clitoridectomy as marks or any other kind of mutilations. Therefore, he states,

Mutilations are a means of permanent differentiations, there are also temporary differentiations such as the wearing of a special dress or mask, or body painting..."

Some anthropologists, who are quoted by Genep, provide

reasons for circumcision and clitoridectomy, which may be acceptable in relation to the Abagusii tribe such are:

1. It is a blood covenant. When blood is shed in such a particular ritual, it demonstrates ancestral acceptance into the inheritance of land possession and a mark of membership into the tribe in this case that of Abagusii.
2. It has sexual significance, for those who have gone through this exercise. They boast that being clitoridectomized they have had an adulthood experience of victory, and fearlessness, which means that one enters a new stage in life (a rite of passage).
3. It is a process of qualification in which the young are prepared for taking responsibility as men or women in the community.

In their response to the Abagusii cultural practices, the Arkkilas accept that "there are many good things in the culture which can be utilized by the church." Although they have worked among the Abagusii community as missionaries, mainly as teachers at Matongo Lutheran Theological College for several years, they regret not knowing the Abagusii traditional hospitality to visitors that can be utilized by the church. However, they are convinced that there are many other good cultural practices within the Abagusii community. Some of the cultural practices which must be rejected by the

church are such things as, fear of spirits, witchcraft, magic and sorcery (Arkkila, Interview 18/2/1994).

The Imbergs, who have been missionaries among the Abagusii and whose parents were missionaries in Kenya among the Abagusii and in Zambia, say that the early missionaries never rejected local culture, although there were certain things they did not understand in the culture. To them, "some cultural practices hindered the growth of the church. These are such practices as female circumcision, some sacrificial practices concerning burial, circumcision, taboos, witchcraft, magic and evil spirits" (Imbergs, Interview 18/2/1994).

Two of the local pastors also affirmed the weakness of missionaries not knowing enough about the Abagusii culture and equating most of the practices in the culture to witchcraft, magic or sorcery. They testify that the Abagusii culture has some good things which can be utilized in the Church. These things include hospitality, respect by age-group and even marriage customs that demonstrate recognition of status, among the Abagusii (Michoro and Nyamwaro, Interview 14/6/1994).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

SUMMARY TABLE ON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GOOD CULTUREBAD CULTURE

| MISSIONARY | | |
|---|--|---|
| Dr. Reijo Arkkila and his wife | Community/communality responsibility hospitality, respect | Fear of evil spirits, sorcery, witchcraft, and magic |
| Dr. Rurie Imberg and his wife | Hospitality, honesty, visiting sick people, caring for each other. | Burial practices, female circumcision, sacrifices to spirits, fear, taboos |
| Anna Britta Albertson | Good relationship, Friendliness | Fear of evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery |
| CHURCH OFFICIALS | | |
| Rev. James Otete | Marriage, traditional wedding customs, male circumcision, respect, hospitality | Burial ceremonies, sacrifices, witchcraft |
| Mr. Francis Mongare | Togetherness, circumcision of both male and female, respect marriage counselling | Polygamy, drinking of alcohol |
| Rev. Francis Nyamwaro and Jephtha Michoro | Circumcision, respect, hospitality | Witchcraft, magic, sorcery, drinking alcohol |

must be avoided or rejected, since they can hinder the proclamation of the Gospel. This opinion is also supported by the pastors, church officials, and all those who were interviewed and responded to the questionnaire.

The missionaries not only see the importance of contextualizing some of the Abagusii culture in Christianity, but also caution against the dangers of accepting what may involve mystical forces, such as magic, witchcraft, burial ceremonies, sacrifices, polygamy and drinking of alcohol. After analyzing and interpreting the research findings as seen above, it is realized that there are both bad and good cultural practices. The discussion now moves on to how some of these Abagusii cultural practices can be approached and be contextualized, for better evangelism and church expansion. This will be dealt with in the following chapter.

The interpretation concerning these views, is that, some of the early missionaries thought that the Abagusii culture could be a hindrance to their mission work, although they rejected it and encouraged their converts to imitate them. However, later missionaries perceive that there are a lot of good cultural practices, as well as bad ones, so that bad ones

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A CONTEXTUALIZED APPROACH

The aim of this Chapter is to demonstrate how certain Abagusii cultural practices can be contextualized without causing any conflict with the Bible. Since culture comprises a variety of issues in a community of people, only a few practices that are relevant to the church are considered with reference to the Bible. Therefore different ways of approaching culture in the contextualization process can be established among the Abagusii.

Hesselgrave and Rommen (1984,48-53), after a wide research various work on the subject, see it as a "debate" in which both "liberal and conservative" "ecumenical and evangelical" theologians contribute their opinion. Two Anglo-American evangelists, Nicholas and Kraft give some of these opinions by saying:

Culture, as the product of human life, is good, but it is also tainted by sin. Supra-cultural messages and phenomena invade the world, but they emanate from both God and Satan and therefore are sometimes divine, sometimes demonic.

Hesselgrave and Rommen (1984,59) point out that, Nicholas believes that the true contextualization is "dogmatic". It begins with biblical theology, and it results in judgement

upon all culture - some of which it rejects and some of which it recreates to the glory of God.

In his book, Nida (1960,280) states three positions (borrowed from Niebuhr) in which the Bible and culture can be contextualized. These are, "Christ against Culture," "Christ of Culture" and "Christ above Culture"

Kraft (1979,69) feels that culture would be through "dynamic - equivalence transculturation".

In Kraft's arguments, which were also borrowed from Nida, (1960,208-9), we can learn that there are various propositions taken and held by some theologians.

1. The God - Against culture proposition; that God is opposed to culture. This is a radical position which identifies culture with "the world" as used in passages such as 1 John 2:15-16 and 5:19.

Kraft remarks on this approach that it makes three serious errors. One, the word "world" in the Greek "kosmos" cannot be used with the word "culture" only in the negative view in the New Testament. There is a positive use of it, without reference to the forces of evil. Two, culture is not something external, but it is within an individual as well as around them; that is in their community or society. Three, not all culture is bad, although some may be used by Satan (1979,105-106).

2. The God-in culture proposition; is a position which

sees God (or Christ) as merely a culture hero, and; some of its proponents, see God as contained within or at least as endorsing, one particular culture.

3. The God Above - culture proposition. This approach dominates in the deism position in Western culture and is the predominant view of many African cultures.

Kraft commends this view of God-above-and- unconcerned-with-culture, and avers that it can be a Biblical view, especially when applied within the African context. Eventually in his observation Kraft says, "Culture therefore, is seen as corrupted but convertible; usable, perhaps, even redeemable by God's grace and power. Culture is perverted but not evil in essence."

4. The God-above-but-through-culture proposition. "The basic focus of this position is on the forms and functions of culture." Kraft (1979,103-115) states that this is likened to a "road map," made up of various forms designed to get people where they need to go." God can communicate with human beings through their culture, language and all its finiteness, its relativity, and its assured misperception of infinity. God used culture to reveal Himself and the incarnation of Christ. Kraft finally says that though God "chose to use culture, he is not bound by it in the same way human beings are.

Such positions as shown by Kraft seem to be good approaches to culture, yet there is need to be cautious of the dangers of syncretism.

Since God is always above man and is the creator of man,

and above culture, then this study adopts the position which states that Christ - above - culture according to Nida, or God - above - culture, according to Kraft in his proposition number four. This is because God's Word must always be authoritative to human beings' culture. Throughout human history God has been communicating to his people in their cultural situations. Although God can communicate through the culture of the people, He is not bound in that culture. He is above the culture but can use it when He wishes to reach out to the people according to His will.

For example, when we read the Bible that, "in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son;...", it indicates that God can communicate to His people through many ways (Heb. 1:1) - cultural behavior included and in the specific time He wills. Therefore, God is above culture but He can communicate through it.

The Bible shows that when Jesus Christ came into this world, as an infant (Lk. 2:6,7), He accepted the culture of His people, the Jews, but He was not enslaved in their culture. He was above the culture and therefore He was often accused of breaking the Jewish culture.

The Word of God can be heard in a people's language, through the use of understandable illustrations in a particular context. However the Gospel of Jesus Christ is

supra - Cultural and must always be given the first priority in the Christian faith. Only those cultural practices which can serve as channels in communicating the Gospel and have no conflicts or contradictions to the Gospel can be accommodated and contextualized.

The next sub-topic deals with the Bible and culture, by developing Kraft's theory, as reflected in the Acts of the Apostles.

THE BIBLE AND CULTURE

The Bible teaches a lot about missionary activities; how God dealt with His people in their cultural setting. As mentioned earlier, it is God who had performed the first mission¹ by sending His son Jesus Christ to save² humanity from sin.

Since it is not feasible to deal with the whole Bible, and its relationship with the culture, portions from the book of Acts, which implies missionary activities in a cultural setting are selected. The book has been taken to indicate the proper and scriptural approach in contextualizing the Gospel in Abagusii cultural setting. This is in harmony with the position taken in adopting one of the Kraft's suggested ways

¹See chapter one under the word "mission"

²The first missionary work was done by God after the fall in the Garden of Eden

of approaching culture, that is, "Christ- Above - Culture", according to Kraft³

The Holy Spirit who is also known as the Helper⁴, or counsellor or comforter or Teacher, was promised by Christ in the Gospels⁵ and in the book of Acts 1:8. He was to empower the believers to be witnesses of Christ, starting from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth⁶.

After the Apostles being filled⁷ with the Holy Spirit they started the proclamation of the Gospel to other parts of the World. Before they went out of Jerusalem, a community of believers was formed. This community was astonished on how Christ, through the Holy Spirit was leading the apostles to perform wonderful miracles, (Acts 2:43). These believers developed a culture in which they operated in their daily activities, and in their new religious world-view, where by Christ was above their old religious world-view. This community was known as Christians (Acts. 11:20, 26:28) which had to be witnesses of Christ no matter what sufferings⁸ they had to go through in the ministry.

Although it can be understood from the Acts that this

³The way of approach adopted by Kraft from Nida's book.

⁴John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7. TEV.

⁵John 14: 15-17. NIV.

⁶Acts, 1:8 compare Mt. 28:19-20.

⁷Acts 2:1ff NIV.

⁸1 Peter 4:13-16 NIV.

community of believers had to face persecution not only in Jerusalem but elsewhere especially after the death of Stephen (Acts 11:19), even then the Gospel of Christ had to be proclaimed.

After his conversion⁹ (Acts 9:19) the apostle Paul is viewed to be the greatest missionary of the New Testament who travelled a lot and was persecuted for the sake of the ministry of the Gospel. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, who empowered him to fulfil the commission of Christ (Acts 9:17). Before explaining Paul's ministry to the Gentiles as he was commissioned, (Acts 9:15); it is worthwhile to state that the apostle Peter also travelled a lot in organizing the New Christian community in Judea. And after visiting Gentile congregations as a missionary, he realized that God is above human culture and can act as He wills without favoritism. He testifies that "I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis" (Acts 10:34) (TEV). This was after he had seen a missionary vision¹⁰ which indicated that he should mix and associate with Gentiles in his ministry. He had to leave his Jewish religious world-view which considered Gentiles ritually unclean or defiled (Acts 10:28). In his testimony, Peter and other Jewish believers witnessed and were astonished to see that God poured the Holy Spirit to Gentiles just like He did to them. Then Peter ordered them to be baptized (10:45-48).

⁹Acts 22:6-16, 26:12-18, NIV.

¹⁰This was to make Peter aware that Gentiles were declared clean by God through the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:15).

Through the counsel of the Holy Spirit Peter came to accept the Gentiles as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of the differences between his own culture and theirs. Therefore Christ who is to be proclaimed is above culture in this context.

In Paul's ministry, he had to meet the Gentiles in their own culture but he had to start from what they already knew and believed. There is one example in Acts which is relevant to this approach of the Gospel. This is in Acts 17:16-34. In this portion Paul being in a foreign culture, where there were learned¹¹ people, started to understand them by discussions. Eventually, he was accepted to have a meeting with members of the city council, the Areopagus, who wanted to know the teachings about Jesus Christ.

Paul started teaching and preaching to these Athenians by beginning from what they knew well and believed that is from their own world-view. These people had their gods whom they worshipped, yet did not know exactly to whom these gods were pointing to and so they had an idol for the unknown God.

Such a situation can be applied to this study among the Abagusii who knew how to worship God through various¹² ways but yet, they did not know Him through Jesus Christ.

The Abagusii used to offer sacrifices in various ceremonies to the ancestors as means of pleasing God and being

¹¹These were the Epicurean and stoic teachers verses 18-19

¹² See chapter two.

cleansed from curses and evils some of which could come as a result of mystical powers. When missionaries came among Abagusii, they found them with their beliefs and cultural practices. Like Paul they should have learned the proper approach of contextualizing the Gospel into the culture of the people to win them to the Christian faith which they did not know, from an unknown God to the known God.

Gilliland (1989,132-133) believes that contextualization "opens the way to evangelize every nation as our Lord commanded, without paternalizing". He is convinced that contextualization must be maintained as a "principle" from the beginning of preaching the gospel message and continue through the church planting, nurturing and witnessing. He has stated that "Contextualization must give the highest place to God's word and must be guided by the call of Christ to evangelize and to build believers into strong communities of faith while keeping a respectful creative role for culture". Douglas (1975,1226-1227) has stated that, Contextualization is:

the identification of the Gospel from its cultural clothing; the communication of the same in pertinent, meaningful cultural forms both external (e.g. liturgical garments) but also forms (e.g time-space dimensions, etc.) the communication that spoke to the real issues and needs of the person and his society; the response made by the person in cultural and societal context under the guidance of the Holy Spirit should be done with meaning and integrity.

The idea here is 'knowing the receptors' world view and thought forms, their space-time dimensions and relationships Douglas (1975, 227) emphasizes that:

there must be a constant concern to bring our

"communication theologizing" under the judgement of the scripture, so that an effective proclamation of the gospel under the illumination of the Holy Spirit may ensue.

This study agrees with what Gehman says, that many missiologists or theologians are divided in their opinion of the term contextualization. But the New Testament shows how the apostles of Christ contextualized the Gospel after His ascension. The first Christian Council as shown in the book of Acts 15 decided to adapt the foreign cultures together with the traditional culture of Jews, but warned the Gentiles to abstain from the sacrifices offered to idols, like, blood and strangled animals, and also from sexual immorality, (Act. 15:29). However, it is realized that the gap which existed between the Jews and Gentiles was very big. Paul however, was convinced that there was no distinction before God, (Dretke 1979,146).

It is also clear that, the Bible or the message of the Gospel changes people from their cultural practices into the "Gospel Culture" the Christian way of life. Yet it is realized that even the "Gospel Culture" can be communicated to the people of a specific community by using their language, symbols and forms. This can be applied in the African context among various tribes. Mpaayei in Douglas' book suggests some important points which are as follows:

1. Aspects of African culture should be retained unless and until they are recognized to be specifically non-biblical.
2. To insist on the renouncing of local culture erects

another barrier to the Gospel (1 Cor.9:19-20) unless it is specifically non-biblical.

3. There is a need for sustained and systematic teaching on the nature of God. Vagueness on this subject leads to idolatry and tribal deities (Douglas 1975,1235-1237).

Some African people will always err by thinking that Christianity is the whiteman's religion, if they do not take the above listed opinions into consideration. Scott and Coote (1974,104) have shown that:

in many parts of the world, christianity is regarded as an ethnic religion - the whiteman's religion. The Gospel has a foreign sound, or no sound at all, in relation to many of the dreams and anxieties, problems and questions, values and customs of the people.

The two scholars further state that we should recognize the need to contextualize the Gospel. This can be done through Biblical hermeneutics in interpreting the scripture as an ongoing process in the Church.

Such an opinion should be supported because there is need to always do Biblical hermeneutics in churches, so as to arrive in the right application of the Gospel for the community in which work is done.

As said earlier, Kraft (1979,191) calls this process of theologizing the Bible in the people's context as the "Dynamic Biblical Equivalence".

The discussion now turns to some of the alternative approaches which should be necessary in the Abagusii culture from the Biblical stand point.

THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

The Abagusii people have various cultural practices, which can be contextualized, and some others that must be totally rejected. One of the cultural practices which must be totally rejected is sacrifices, which are done during various rites of passage and ceremonies.

The Bible teaches us that during the New Testament era, God altered the ministry of Temple sacrifices in the Old Testament to Jesus Christ who became the sacrificial lamb of God who takes away all sins (Jh. 1:29,36, Acts.8:32). All the people of the world can be cleansed of their sins provided that they believe in Him (Acts.4:12, 13:38-39).

This means that there is no way to approach God through animal sacrifices or any other thing, but through His son Jesus Christ, in faith alone (Heb. 10:4-8). The scripture states clearly that, the sacrifices and offerings of animals could not take away sins, but the sinners who came to worship God offered their offerings and repeated it every time and so it was impossible to completely cleanse sins. In the new covenant which is established through Christ people offer their bodies to Him as a Holy sacrifice (Rom.12:1-2). This indicates that Christ, who is the accepted sacrifice of God, is the mediator between men and God (1 Tim.2:5, Heb.12:24). The human sacrifice which is our bodies, becomes accepted before God because of Christ.

That means that a new era dawned, in which those who

believe in Christ are born of God. There is no need for any sacrifice, since Christ had become our sacrificial lamb once and for all (Heb.10:10). Therefore, all the sacrifices which are offered among some Abagusii people should be abandoned, since God is in control and protects the lives of those who trust and believe in Him.

What is needed are prayers, worship and glorifying Him through thanksgiving. The Christians have been redeemed by Christ from the bondage of the devil and the Law of Moses in offering sacrifices.

Secondly, the call for the spirit of a dead person during the naming of children must be abandoned. The Bible teaches that the Hebrew names which were given to people had specific meanings. For example the name Abraham meant the father of a multitude or Abra means the exalted father, Adam means man, Isaac means he laughs (Gen.21:6). Isaiah means Yahweh has saved, David means beloved. Jeremiah means Yahweh establishes, Hannah means grace or compassion, Ezekiel means God strengthens, Abigail means father, or cause of joy.

Jesus means Yahweh is salvation (Col.4:11, Mt.1:21), Nicodemus means victor over the people (Jh. 3:1-21), John means Yahweh has been gracious. Some of these names were given to indicate a person's character or responsibility. Simeon became Cephas, translated in Greek as Peter, which means stone or rock (Mt.16:18)

As mentioned in chapter two, most of the Abagusii names used

to have meanings, or originally had an implication of an occasion in which a child was born. These names were later given to the children born after the death of people with good reputations in the community, clan and family. The implication was that the spirit of the dead would empower the children and be demonstrated in the family and that the person will be remembered in the family by the later generations.

Although this writer believes that there is nothing wrong with the names given to children, yet the rituals of naming a child which calls for the spirit of the dead person to empower the child, are evil. This practice should be abandoned, because the Bible condemns it (Lev.20:6). This means that God is not pleased with Christians who seek help from people with mystical powers and those who do evil before Him. He warns that such people, He will cut off or remove from His people. Therefore Christians as a people of God should not practice or associate with people who are evil-doers. They should avoid doing evil, for God will judge and condemn the evil people and those who seek help from them. Instead, a team of faithful Christian women and men can be formed in every local church congregation to go and have prayers with the mother and family of the newly born child. They will pray for the Spirit of God to empower the child so that the child may be sustained even before entering Holy Baptism. In Lutheran church doctrine, holy baptism is conducted as soon as the parents of an infant are ready for it. It is recommended that even an infant of a

day old can be baptized. Therefore, baptism can replace all the naming ceremonies, because in baptism, the child is born anew in the spirit of God, and given a baptismal name for Christ's victory.

According to Hebrew culture, names were given to children after eight days, which was also the time for circumcision (Gen.17:12, 21:3-4, Lk.1:59, 2:21). God commanded Abraham to do this when he was called from his people and when God made a covenant with him, (Gen.17:9-13). This covenant was again renewed with Moses to instruct it to the people of Israel, (Lev.12:1-3). At the time of Jesus Christ this culture was still effective (Lk.2:21). The Bible stresses only the male circumcision as a covenant given to Abraham and his descendants.

Although the New Testament has the Jewish culture of naming and circumcising, the apostles had a problem to effect this culture among the Gentile believers and converts.

The first church council was called in Jerusalem in AD 48 or 49, to discuss the method which could be applied to the people who did not subscribe to the Jewish culture and who did not follow the Mosaic laws, but had accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit had been manifested in them; (Acts 15:1-32). After the discussion a decision was made to write a letter to the Gentiles (Acts 15:23-29), which made it clear that it was not necessary

for them to be forced into circumcision nor be troubled with the Jewish law.

Later in the apostle's Epistles, the issue of circumcision and the Mosaic law was dealt with extensively, (Rom.2:25-29). In this part the apostle Paul states: "Circumcision is that which is of the heart in the Spirit, not by the letter, " (NAS). The apostle Paul considers faith in God to be more important than circumcision. He gave an example of Abraham, who had faith in God before he was circumcised (Rom.4:9-12). He is the father of faith for both the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

This implies that there is a spiritual circumcision, the faith in Jesus Christ which can be demonstrated in the holy Christian baptism (Col.2:11-13). For those who are baptized in Christ, either as infants or adults, all enter into a spiritual circumcision, whether circumcised according to their cultural beliefs or the Old Testament law or even those who are uncircumcised, all are accepted into the Christian community. The apostle Paul explains that faith in Jesus Christ and entering into the Holy Christian baptism is like dying with Him because of sin and rising from death in victory over the power of satan (Rom.6:3-4).

After mentioning some cultural practices which should be rejected and those which may, and given some alternatives approaches for the sacrifices during the rite of passage, we now investigate the mystical powers.

These mystical powers, which are often regarded by the scriptures as evil, seem to dominate in some Abagusii clans and must be condemned and be rejected.

In the book of Acts, for example, there is a story of Simon the sorcerer. He boasted of being someone great and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and termed him as a man of divine power known as the Great Power (Acts 8:9-10 TEV).

As mentioned before, such people are not only seen as enemies of the community but some of them trick people into believing that they can solve their problems. Some are the source of the problems in the community, they create fear in people, and eventually death.

The Bible condemns such people and cautions that they have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

After listening to the preaching of Philip, Simon believed and was baptized (Acts 8:9-13). It can be learnt from this portion of scripture that the mystical powers which are practiced in many communities are evil in the eyes of God and must be abandoned.

The gospel should be preached to the people who are involved in such evil practices, so that they can believe in Jesus Christ. There is salvation open to them through Jesus Christ if they repent of their sins, and there is judgement for those who refuse to accept the Gospel, and do not want to repent of their sins.

Since there are good and bad cultural practices in every community, some cultures can be contextualized for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to declare here that none of the mystical powers practices such as witchcraft, sorcery and magic can be considered for contextualization. Such cultural practices can only mislead the church and create syncretism, but also they are condemned by the Holy scriptures. The Bible shows that when Aaron and Moses were called by God to lead the Israelites from Egypt, the walking stick of Aaron swallowed the sticks of the magicians who were called by the king (Ex.7:8-13), this implies that the power of God in His people is greater than satan's power working in these kind of men. Also in the laws of Moses, God cautioned the Israelites against the practice of any kind of magic, (Lev. 19:26). He further warned them against divination or looking for omens or using spells or charms and consulting the spirits and the dead people (Deut. 18:10-11). This is why God instructed the children of Israel to put into death any woman caught in this act of magic in their community (Ex. 22:18).

It is therefore important that local church leaders and missionaries identify and contextualize the cultural practices which enhance the proclamation of the Gospel e.g. respect on the basis of age-group and hospitality and avoid those which can propagate syncretism in the church e.g. witchcraft. There are many cultural aspects which are practiced among the

Abagusii people that are non-biblical, and are condemned by the Bible, which must be discarded. However, there are those aspects of culture which do not contradict the Biblical teaching and can be utilized for the sake of winning souls to Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ provided a model in mission, when He humbled Himself into the world and taught the message of salvation into human kind, (Phil.2:5-9). He lived in the human culture but maintained His holiness until He accomplished His mission and ascended into heaven where He was crowned by God the Father. This is the model applied by the apostle Paul when he was proclaiming the Gospel. He testifies that, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor.9:22 KJV). He believed that although he had to bend to people's cultural practices yet the Gospel of Christ must be kept pure. In his testimony Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16 KJV).

The duty of local pastors, missionaries, evangelists, church elders and all faithful Christians is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The responsibility is to teach the Bible systematically to those who have not believed and to the new converts. By so doing they will fulfill the command of teaching stated in the Great Commission of our Lord (Mt.28:19-20).

After discussing the contextualization approach to the Bible and culture, and also some cultural practices which can be contextualized as an alternative approach, the next chapter is the conclusion of this study, it is divided into two parts, namely; summations and recommendations.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The study has shown how the early ELCK missionaries entered in Kisii and Nyamira district and how they viewed the Abagusii cultural practices. Some missionaries viewed the culture as evil with witchcraft or magic in them, while some thought that some cultural aspects were myths.

The national and present missionaries among the Abagusii interviewed held that not all the cultural practices can be contextualized in the church for the proclamation of the Gospel. However, the scripture must be the yard-stick in screening the culture which is to be contextualized. This implies that some cultural practices which conflict with scriptural teaching must be left out.

Generally, it cannot be denied that God was acknowledged in the Abagusii culture, however, this does not correspond exactly with the Biblical God, who revealed Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Abagusii culture had no clear picture of God comparable to the Biblical teaching. They just feared Him since they could not approach Him directly but through ancestors. This is why some are engaged

in sacrifices in various rites of passage and some are still entangled in mystical powers.

It is also clear that while the Abagusii world-view was totally different from the missionaries', the Gospel was proclaimed and through the Holy Spirit, some people responded to it. Some missionaries wanted these first converts to adopt their culture, which they equated to Christianity, and abandon the Abagusii culture.

These missionaries never understood the Abagusii world-view and eventually they misinterpreted some Abagusii cultural practices as evil.

This researcher think that this is the time when the national pastors, evangelists and christians in the Abagusii community should identify the cultural practices which can be used in evangelism; in other words, those which can be contextualized for the promotion and expansion of missionary work. In the same breath, they should know cultural practices which hinder the Gospel, so that they can teach the people the dangers and evils involved, so they can be avoided.

This author's contributions in this study are recorded below as recommendations to the ELCK. If they can be followed, it is hoped that there will be church growth among the Abagusii community.

However, there can be some other ways which can be beneficial in the proclamation of Gospel. Therefore those recommended in this study are not final.

SUMMATIONS

The Abagusii culture is evil in certain practices and good in certain practices. For the good practices, ELCK can be positive to them by contextualizing and giving a Christian meaning. For the bad or evil practices in the Abagusii culture which are a great hindrance for the proclamation of the Gospel, the spiritual church growth and for the expansion of the church; they should be abandoned completely.

After obtaining the results of the research and analyzing them, it can be concluded that, knowing the Abagusii culture is not only useful in missionary work among the community but also essential in understanding the values and beliefs of the people.

As Christians there is need to know that the Biblical teaching is paramount. It is a culture which must be revered by the missionaries' and the Abagusii culture. This culture which must penetrate in every culture of people is the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. It is commissioned and empowered by the Holy Spirit.¹

Therefore, let us consider some recommendations, which this study proposes should be implemented by the ELCK, for evangelizing among the Abagusii people.

¹Some of the Scripture portions that teach the great commission are, Mt. 19-20, Mk. 16:15, Lk. 24:48, Acts 1:8, Rom. 10:17-18, Col. 1:23

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the mission societies that send missionaries to ELCK must teach the people going for missions, so that they can understand the culture as they perform their ministry. It is realized that the weakness and problems which are found in the mission fields are as a result of not putting great effort in preparing those who will go for missions.

Second, the teaching of African Traditional Religion, in Bible Schools and Colleges must be taken seriously to help pastors, who in turn will teach Christians to know the dangers of syncretism which usually encroaches into Christianity.

Third, it is suggested that missionaries in the ELCK, need to understand what is taught and learn from the people's culture in which they work. They should be prepared to learn as much as they teach, because in the people's culture, there can identified some unique dimensions of the image of God to assist missionary work. God deals with people in their own culture as they reflect and experience the power of the Gospel spoken in their context. It is not easy to identify what is valuable in the people's culture within a short time, but one needs to be a part of the community concerned for quite a length of time.

Fourth, the ELCK should arrange seminars for both the missionaries and the local pastors. This will tackle the present cultural challenges mentioned in chapter four. In such seminars they will be informed how to handle the good cultural

practices and how to reject and be aware of evil practices such as witchcraft, magic and sorcery. Also how to avoid syncretism. Concerning circumcision which is a very strong cultural practice, the writer suggests that, the ELCK should introduce youth holiday centers for ages between eight and ten. At these centers the youths will be taught how to have good Christian characters in their community and to their families. The youths can only be allowed to join such centers after their circumcision. This is because, after circumcision, the youths will realize that they are in a new stage, adulthood, and it will be important stage to learn what is good in their culture that should be maintained in their life-style, and what is evil which must be discarded in their christian life. The training will help them to become respectable people and be responsible in their families. This study recommendation is that circumcision must be done at hospital, not by traditional circumcisers. This can help avoid the contraction of diseases such as AIDS and the sacrifices that are involved.

At the centers, well trained Christian personnel who know the Abagusii culture well can be in charge. After a training of at least one month, a Christian ritual of confirmation can be done by the pastor, who should also be one of the trainers.

Fifth, there is need to differentiate between the Biblical message and other cultural messages so as to avoid confusion between cultural relativism and Biblical absolutes.

While it is realized that, culture changes very often, the Biblical message is timeless (cannot change to be in line with the cultural practices which are non-biblical), although the method of approach can be modified.

Finally, in summary to understand the relationship between culture and the Gospel, one needs to know that Gospel must be distinguished from all cultures and religions. Missionaries who have too often equated the Gospel with their own culture tend to promote cultural colonialism. They must consider that it is important to express the Gospel in the context of the people and their culture. Then the Gospel can purify the culture and accommodate the good aspects and crush all the evils which hinder the penetration and the spread of Christianity. The scripture encourages that, "for the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the hearer". (Heb. 4:12 NIV).

GLOSSARY

Abagusii. One of the ethnic groups of Bantu origin, living in Western Kenya Nyanza province. They occupy both Nyamira and Kisii Districts. The land occupied is often referred to as Gusii, and their big towns are Kisii and Nyamira which are also the district headquarters.

Abaisiko. It generally refers to the people who are outsiders or foreigners. In the text it simply means, female children who have no land inheritance rights at their parents' homes, according to Abagusii conception.

Abanka. Are people of the family or clan. The word can also be used to indicate male children. In the text it refers to the people who did not go for studies or learning at schools and refused to become Christians. Those who went and became Christians are known as "Abasomi".

Abanyabibiriria. People "who have" witchcraft in their eyes. When they look at other people or at animals like cows they could die after a short illness. Such witchcraft can be cleansed by specialists.

Abanyamariogo. Are people who know how to treat diseases by using herbal medicine. Often known as medicine-men.

Abanyibi. Are people who claim to have power to call for rain when there is need. Basically they are the rain-makers

Abaragori. These are people who claim to know the tricks of witches and the cause of sickness or death. They are often known as diviners. In the text and according to Abagusii conception it is women who are empowered with the spirit of divining. They tell the tricks of witches but do not have powers to remove the witchcraft. They recommend a man known as "Omoriori" who has powers of removing the tricks through his herbal medicine.

Abare. Are the newly or recently circumcised (while in seclusion). Both girls and boys are known by this term. Also known as Nyokeu.

Abarogi. People who practice witchcraft, both males and females.

Abasoi. People who are born with evil eyes. If they look at anything good and attractive, it gets bad, or if it is a person, he/she becomes sick for some times. This does not usually cause death for people or animals.

Amarwa. It is Abagusii traditional beer or liquor.

Barongo. A child who was born with another at the same time (twins). In plural they are "Chibarongo"

Chimbori Nyamatonge. These are goats. In the text it means the goats which are given as a part of dowry, for bringing the cooked meal to the boy's home.

Chindoswa. Dead animals or insects brought by witches to the doorway of a person targeted to be troubled or killed by them. These are supposed to cause death.

Chingobo. These are the traditional Abagusii costumes which were worn by women. In the text it means the costumes worn by the bride during the traditional wedding.

Chisonoi. They are beads which were worn by the bride.

Egesaku. A big clan or the whole tribe of people. In the text it refers to several Abagusii clans and even the tribe of Abagusii.

Egesagane. Any female who is not clitoridectomized.

Egesieri. It generally means the door. In the text it means the doors which are specifically one for the public and the other for the respected people to enter into the house of any married man among the Abagusii people.

Egetinge. It was a round ring which was worn at the ankle by the bride. It stayed there for most of her life to indicate that she was a married woman.

Ekorera. Parents-in-law on both sides, the boy's and the girl's. When they meet they call each other by the name "korera". It refers and incorporate the care and nature of children (okorera)

Ekerorano. This is when the boy who wants to marry takes his friends to the girl's family for the first time, as a form of introduction. It was an opportunity for the girl either to refuse or accept (before her parents) the marriage plans.

Engoro. The Original name for God, which means that He lives far beyond the reach of human beings, (heaven "Igoro").

Rarely mentioned, except by elderly people who can call or mention that name, during sacrifices.

Enkoro. It is the heart, but in reference to the human soul.

Enyomba. It simply means the house. In the text it refers to the house where married people live. It also indicates the clan. Sometimes this can refer to the woman who is married.

Erieta ria Oboiseke. The puberty initiation name. Refers to the adult name, the first name given to a female child.

Erieta ria Egetinge. The name given to a girl during her wedding day.

Esaiga. It simply means a hut. In the text it is a house where young, unmarried boys live.

Esigani. One who is a go between the families of the boy and the girl who are planning to get married. He/She is consulted in the event of whatever problems that could be connected to the marriage.

Mokamwana. A woman "married" by another woman for bearing male children. She is regarded to be the wife of her son.

Mosioraibu. Literally it means the person, usually a woman, who throws away ashes. In the text it means the first woman in a polygamous situation.

Nyamesanchu. Literally it means the person, usually a woman, who comes to a place when she sees that things are bright or glittering. In the text it means the youngest wife of a polygamist.

Nyasae. It is the name of God. Commonly used to address Him. This is not only used by Abagusii people but also the Luhya, Luo and Kuria tribes.

Oborogi. Witchcraft practice usually done at night.

Obasaro. Poison made out of plants, snakes, frogs, insects and other paraphernalia used by magicians and witches to kill innocent people. Sorcerers use "obosaro" too.

Ogosegesa. The act of rubbing two sticks together to produce fire.

Ototoroba. Giving something to an offended person as a request for forgiveness or to appease him. Usually done

by young people to the elderly, in a move to reconcile.

Okomana chiombe. It simply means, to select cows for dowry. In the text it refers to giving dowry for marriage. Also with the idea of discussing the number of cows which are supposed to be given as dowry.

Omoika. It is the Spirit of a person. In the text it indicates the spirit of a person when he or she is dead, that can empower the children born named after him or her. There is also bad and good spirit in this connection.

Omogesi. It simply means the person who harvests. But in the text it means a mature man who has not married.

Omoimari. The first maid to the bride.

Omoiseke. Any girl who has been clitoridectomized. It refers to respect of one who has gone through the exercise of clitoridectomy

Omoisia (Abaisia [Plural]). Any male who is not circumcised. In the text it refers to young boys who are still not circumcised. It can be used as an abuse to one who is circumcised.

Omokundekane. A traditional priest who performed weddings

Omokungu. Any adult woman who has a husband and children. In the text it also means a married woman who can take care of her family and the property that the husband has brought home.

Omomura. Any young boy who has been circumcised and he is strong to carry family responsibilities and defend his clan in times of war and other problems.

Omonene. It simply means Lord. Refers to God who is above everything.

Omong'wansi. He is the best-man to the bridegroom, in the conception of the christian wedding. But in the Abagusii traditional weddings, the word means the person who performs or witnesses any sacrifice done.

Omonyamosira (Abanyamesira [plural]). A magician, usually of the black or evil magic.

Omonyamote. It is another name for a black or evil magician. It refers to somebody with magic of trees or plants.

- Omonyuomi. This is the bridegroom. Refers to the one who is to marry during the wedding ceremony.
- Omosacha. Any adult man who has a wife and children. In the text it is the man who is responsible for his family, to meet the needs of his wife and children.
- Omoregi One who is incharge of giving instructions to the circumcised boy while in seclusion.
- Omote. It is the name given to any tree or plant. Refers to the powers magicians have to bewitch people using a tree
- Omotongi. The name of God which implies that He is the creator, sustainer and provider of all things.
- Omorendi. It refers to God as the protector
- Omorogi. The word is used to refer to a witch. In the text and according to the Abagusii conception, it is mainly women who are witches.
- Omware (Abare [Plural]). The one who is in seclusion for healing after circumcision or clitoridectomy
- Rioba. It is name given to the sun which was believed to be the eye of God.
- Rioba nderere. Usually when a woman gave birth she could say a prayer each morning to the sun to care for the baby since it was believed to be the eye through which God could see and protect the young ones.

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WITCHCRAFT IN PARLIAMENT

I can talk with God, Kinangop MP says

By Amos Onyatta

THE Member for Kinangop, Ms. Mary Wanjiru (FORD-Asili), yesterday treated the House to a light moment when she declared that she was a "propheetess" who could communicate with God.

Ms. Wanjiru, who donned an Akornjo type of headress, said in her

maiden speech that when she first came to Parliament she thought she had come in between. But she added that she was disappointed to find that there was a lot of "witchcraft" in the House.

"I had to give a lot of cast spells, both good and bad, in the House and its after casting them, I was not able to stand and talk freely in the House," she said.

Page 14 - Col. 1

Rev. J. N. Osugo was born in Gusii, Nyamira District on 10th April 1948 to Osugo Nyang'au and Nyakerario Osugo.

He attended primary school at Gianchore Primary, from 1955 to 1959. He further proceeded to Kenyoro intermediate school from 1960 to 1963.

He undertook his secondary education as a private candidate for the Kenya Junior Secondary Education, from 1968 to 1970, during which he worked at the Kisumu Cotton Mills.

From 1975 to 1979 he studied in Tanzania for pastoral training, at Makumira Lutheran Theological College, where he was awarded a general certificate in theology. In January 1980, he was ordained as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. He joined pastoral ministry in the parish and later as a teacher at Matongo Lutheran Theological College.

Between September 1983 and June 1985, he studied at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Minnesota, USA, where he was awarded a Masters in Divinity degree (M. Div). On his way back to Kenya, he travelled to Norway and Finland.

He joined the staff at Matongo College as a teacher and also as Deputy Principal. In September 1992, he joined the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology as a student in the Masters programme in Theology, (M.TH).

During his time of study in the school of theology, he was privileged to go to Israel for a mid-term study (Jan. 1994) on the historical and geographical setting of the Bible, at the Institute of Holy Land Studies.

CHRISTINE MPAKA

body referred to it as the forbidden but Gourdill the same. According to some Maori, a herbalist, an astrologer, witchcraft is not with us for as long as it has been able to think. And from the fact that man stop thinking, it will be for a long time, whatever Christine say.

Dictionary describes witchcraft as the practice of magic. The practice of magic is the use of supernatural powers not understood by the ordinary man, magic may be used for good as well as for evil.

word "witch" is derived from the old English word meaning a female magician. Other sources suggest meaning of "witchcraft" appears to be of craft of the wise as the "witch" is called with "wise". Whatever it means, it conjures up images of power for the ordinary

witchcraft has been all over the world for the Maori of New Zealand people offering a rigorous of magic and a tribe in the Hula of Southern Islands the Kurumaa, was not a power of witchcraft. and 287 - 25 we are told said went to a woman as a medicine, despite the instructions against it in 1221, and she invoked the spirit of Sango who propitiator of the Philippines' death.

witchcraft has a long history and is still a source of fear and bewilderment. Hecate who used to be a goddess and was later revered by night. The best known was Circe who turned the power to transform late beasts. In Europe it probably a survival of the pre-Christian. Pagan religion.

Is witchcraft a myth?



A group of witchdoctors demonstrate some of the paraphernalia they use to exorcise spirits and other bad forces.



Dr. Ouma Oluo Duet, "Witchcraft" is there.

rites survived the Roman invasion and in fact many of them were often practised in Roman temples in Britain and Gaul.

With the introduction of Christianity, many of these rites became associated with it. The Church tolerated this popular religion until the 14th century when it was officially established.

Then by a combination of persecution and force backed by the civil law, they tried to stamp it out. The church equated the popular pagan deities with the principal of evil, the devil and "the devil's work". In fact in England, the legal definition of a witch is, according to Lord Coke, "a person who hath conference with the devil to conspire with him or to do some-thing".

The word "devil" is from the root "div" from which we also get the word "divine" and, merely means "little god". This was the pattern where if a new religion was introduced in any country, the god or gods of the old religion became the devil of the new. The same thing happened in Africa when Christianity was introduced.

In order to stamp out this "witchcraft", the Pope Innocent VIII issued a bull against witches in 1484. But by the time a witch hunt justified by the biblical storyations "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" - Exodus 22:18 was already under way.

It is estimated that between 300,000 to two million persons, including Jews of Arc, were accused as witches. The witch hunt covered among other areas, En-

gland, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

But the obstinate persistence of the craft is shown by the fact that even in the 17th century most of the priests who had been brought up preaching the popular religion were witches.

It was not just the priests, there was even the bishop of Conventry who led a fertility dance in his backyard in 1503 and only escaped trial because he was a bishop. It is even on record that as late as 1940 a man died of witchcraft in New York.

In Africa as well, witchcraft is widespread. Recently, a local daily reported that some (Kenya) leaders from Kinakira/Kamukani party sub-branch and sympathisers had gathered for a barabara to raise money to save

countries was the making of an image, generally to be used to represent the enemy and gradually destroyed. There is a record, about 1100 BC of a trial of some women and officers of the harem of Ramesses III. Although most details were omitted, it is said they made wax images of the Pharaoh accompanied by magical incantations, probably in a bid to assassinate him.

And finally there was the familiar spirit. This is a demon believed to serve an individual material and often acts as an intermediary between him and the invisible world. It was believed that witches could make certain animals serve them as mediums to communicate with and could change themselves into animal shapes.

So how does witchcraft work? To understand how witchcraft works you have to understand polarity, says Dr. Mike Duda Polarity is about the flow of positive and negative energy in the universe.

When a person thinks positively the body radiates positively. The person who thinks positively also radiates positively and thus negatively is attracted to everything he/she comes into contact with. The concerning the effect of mental energy, a person or anything has an effect on the mental or things.

So what is characterized witchcraft worldwide? The bewitched girl was said to be suffering from severe bouts of headache, stomachache and numbness in her legs.

So what is characterized witchcraft worldwide? The bewitched girl was said to be suffering from severe bouts of headache, stomachache and numbness in her legs. The first thing you notice about the Act is that it is very short. A sign that there is not much to be dealt with. When you open the Act you realise why they don't work. The first step made was to define witchcraft, a sign that they were not quite sure what they were dealing with. They may not have known what it is but they knew it can be used to cause fear and injury to other persons. Witchcraft may be forbidden but everybody knows that there is something more exciting than forbidden mysticism.