NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

A Study on Conversion From Islam To Christianity Among
The Borana Women in Nairobi Kenya with Implication
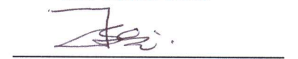for Christian Witness

BY
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A Thesis Submitted To The Graduate School in
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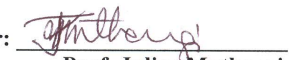Degree of Master of Theology in Mission Studies

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Student Declaration

A STUDY ON CONVERSION FROM ISLAM TO CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE BORANA WOMEN IN NAIROBI, KENYA WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

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

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

(Signed)_____
Pauline Cherop Murumba

July, 2008

ABSTRACT

The Borana MBB women are converts from Islam to Christianity. The Borana in Nairobi originated from Isiolo, Moyale and Marsabit. Some of them have lived in Nairobi all their lives though their parents migrated from the rural area. The Borana are part of the wider Oromo people group. The dominant religion among the Borana is Islam but there are also minority Christians among them. This study is an attempt to understand the conversion process of the Borana MBB women living in Nairobi. It applies Rambo's model of understanding conversion with regard to the experiences of these women. The changes resulting from the conversion are also examined.

This study employs the ethnographic research method to gain insight into the experiences of the Borana MBB women. Being a phenomenon that touches human behavior, the research has preferred this anthropological research method in order to establish what cannot be studied scientifically. For better understanding of this complex phenomenon, the study has used Kraft's worldview theory of relationships as the running theme together with Love's concepts of 'encounters'.

Through the findings of this study, it has been established that the Borana MBB women mostly came to Christ after they faced some form of crisis in their lives at the personal, social and the supernatural levels. The agent who left the greatest impact in the life of the informant is the one who came into their life at the point of crisis. Power encounter greatly contributed to conversion through healing and deliverance from evil spirits. Upon conversion, the convert came not only to Christ but also to the body of Christ, the church. This called for a smooth transition that could reduce 'culture shock' to the new convert as was often experienced.

Recommendations are made out of the findings with proposals that can be applied in ministry to the Borana Muslim women in particular and Muslims in general. There is need for better understanding of the specific needs of Muslim women in order to reach them better with the gospel of Christ. The MBB should be empowered to become an agent of the gospel of Christ in his family and community at large. This will only happen if she has proper follow up and sound discipleship that can strengthen the new convert.

To

1. Eric, my husband for his deep passion for the Muslims

2. Arthur, Arnold and Andrew, our children

3. My late parents, for preparing me to face life.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Tables

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

ACRONYMS

MBB: Muslim Background Believer

CRE: Christian Religious Education

IRE: Islamic Religious Education

ME: Muslim Evangelism

OT: New Testament

NT: New Testament

NEGST: Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Some time back when the researcher was new in Muslim Evangelism (henceforth ME), she heard a statement about conversion of Muslims to Christianity: "Muslims are converted in stages." For a long time this statement bothered her. With time she learnt that the implication of the statement was that young Muslim Background Believers (henceforth MBBs) may not have fully converted to Christ when they join the Christian community. The Christians expected a complete, radical turn about in the lives of the Muslims. This was quite challenging for the new convert facing persecution, identity crisis, trials and temptations of all kinds that threatened to snuff out their tender faith.

There were very few converts known to the researcher at that time and she had some interaction with only a few of them. An experience to remember was the researcher's close interaction with one lady who had been an MBB for more than five years and was doing quite well. She resigned from her job to engage in business but the business did not do well. In her desperate moments, she felt that Christians were not helping her enough and reverted back to Islam. This grieved the researcher so deeply, yet by then she was not in a position to do much because she had little skill to resolve the matter at hand. All she could do to this very defensive lady was to pray for her and hope that God would restore her. But the question still remained; what went wrong?

In Nairobi where the researcher has been living and working for the last eleven years, the trend of conversion has been very encouraging among various Muslim societies. Ten years ago, one could hardly hear of any converts. In the last five years, the rate of conversions has been comparatively higher in the city and the country in general even though there are no reliable statistics to prove this point. By 1999, Gaudeul already observed that "In African countries there are a few thousand each year, and a number of Christian clergy, including some bishops, come from Muslim families" (1999, 16). Many Muslim countries had by then experienced many conversions to Christianity. The trend has continued to gain momentum all over the Muslim world.

Likewise, there are conversions from Christianity to Islam in various countries. The conversions between the two world religions result in what Gaudeul terms as 'interconversion' (Gaudeul 1999, 16). There are numerous statistics to this effect but this is beyond the scope of this study; the interest here is to understand conversion to Christianity from Islam.

With more conversions taking place, it has become imperative to undertake a study to understand conversion. The church still struggles in dealing with the young MBBs because they have little understanding about them. Success has been registered in many cases in nurturing the new converts. However, it is common to find some converts going back to Islam. Unless the converts are allowed to share their experiences, the church will continue to struggle in dealing with MBBs. That is why the emic perspective is considered to be the best approach in such a study. Such a view arose through the concept that the researcher learnt in the course of study in mission about emic and etic perspectives in cross-cultural studies. The emic view studies a phenomenon from the insider's view point and attempts to explain it as

objectively as possible. With the etic perspective, the outsider's view determines the mode of interpretation. It is believed that the misconception of Muslim 'conversion in stages' resulted from the lack of understanding the Muslim and the MBB from his/her own perspective.

Having settled for the topic of study, the researcher grappled with several questions: What is conversion? What does the person experience during the entire period prior to and after their conversion? What are some of the attraction points for Muslim women towards Christianity and what keeps them going after their decision to follow Jesus? How does culture affect one's conversion process? All these questions led to the need to find out more about the conversion journey of the MBB.

Need for Research

Global freedom has led to religious conversions in many directions throughout the world between the world religions. Conversion to Christianity has therefore become a major subject of concern. Studies have been carried out on conversion from different academic angles and in different communities. So far, very little work has been done on conversion specifically among women. The studies have often been generalized among men and women with more data gathered from the men than the women. Having done extensive research on conversion, Rambo Lewis, a renowned scholar in conversion, admits in his recommendation for future research that,

> There are very few studies of women's conversion experiences to offset the assumed generic (but almost always men) research to date. Important issues need to be addressed: Do women experience conversion differently from men? If so, what are those differences? To what extent are women's experiences distorted, denigrated, or denied by any patriarchal requirements of the conversion stereotype? Such questions have scarcely even been raised in the literature to date, much less adequately addressed (1993, 174).

Rambo draws our attention to the gap in the study of conversion among women. Gillepsie echoes the same view when he proposes that "While there is really no 'one voice' of women in research of this kind, a cognizance of the uniqueness of the feminine approach provides a balance to any discussion" (1991, 52).

This research did not fully address Rambo's and Gillepsie's concerns about conversion among women. It only attempted to shed light on some areas in that regard. Conversion among African Muslim women has rarely been a focus of study; thus needing further examination. The need for a balanced view on conversion can therefore not be over-emphasized. The woman's voice must be heard in this field of study in order to stimulate more study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the conversion process of the Borana MBB women from Islam to Christianity. It established the religious state of the Borana MBB women before they came to Christ. Using Rambo's model, it also sought to unveil the various experiences these women go through in terms of pre-conversion to post-conversion stages to Christianity. The changes that the MBB has experienced since conversion were examined. The research aimed to provide knowledge that will enable Christians to develop effective strategies for evangelism and discipleship among the Borana MBB women and other African MBB women in general.

Significance of the Study

The study will be helpful in the following ways:

1. To the researcher

At personal level, it will help the researcher to better understand Muslim women's conversion experiences. Helping Muslim women before and after conversion is very important to the researcher because its success can result in the development of either committed converts or nominal and weak converts. It is hoped that this study will be an eye-opener towards means that can improve and develop proper discipleship strategies and avoid the pitfalls of the past in dealing with Muslim women and MBB women.

2. To missionaries, pastors, evangelists to Muslims in Nairobi

It will help missionaries, pastors and Christians in general who interact with Muslim women not only in Nairobi but also in Kenya and Africa to realize some of the challenges that MBB women encounter as they come to Christ. Hiebert notes that anthropology is very important in that it enables missionaries to understand "the processes of conversion, including the social change that occurs when people become Christians" (1985, 15).

Such an understanding will enable them to come up with appropriate evangelism and discipleship models to Muslim women within their different contexts in a respectful manner. Some of the agents' pitfalls will be pointed out with the intention of using the opportunity better in future.

3. To missiology

The study will contribute to the development of studies on conversion among women. Even though much has been done on women in Islam, extensive study on conversion among African women from Islam to Christianity has not been done, particularly from an anthropological perspective. This study will aim at addressing such a needy field in missiology. It is hoped that this will provoke the need for more studies in the area among missiologists; particularly among women from different

African societies that are predominantly Islamic. Further to that, the study is a contribution to intercultural studies in the aspect of worldview and worldview change because conversion involves change in worldview.

4. Application of Rambo's model of conversion

Since the study will apply Rambo's stage model on conversion, it is hoped that it will serve as a demonstration of its applicability within the context in question. Consequently, necessary modifications will be done to tailor the model to the Borana MBB women's context.

Research Questions

The research aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What was the religious state of the Borana MBB women before their conversion to Christianity?

2. How does Rambo's model apply to the conversion process from Islam to Christianity among the Borana MBB women in Nairobi?

3. What changes have resulted from the conversion of the Borana MBB women from Islam to Christianity in the following areas: personal, social and cultural?

Limitations

The researcher is not a native Borana and has not lived very closely among them. She could therefore not fully understand the Borana culture. Moreover, the language barrier sometimes necessitated the use of interpreters. All the same, the study aimed as much as possible at getting emic data.

The time limit for the research was also a hindrance towards doing a thorough ethnographic research. Due to unavoidable circumstances, the interviews were done

within an interrupted period of ten months with the highest intensity in the last two months.

Due to social factors, the researcher did not live among the informants but made frequent visits to the sites chosen to do the research on the ground as often as possible. Moreover, the recent post-election violence experienced in Kenya affected some of the selected areas of study and interfered with this study in two ways. First, some of the targeted key informants fled their areas of residence and were not available for the interviews when required. Secondly, some of the areas were inaccessible to the researcher for the better part of January and February. For purposes of meeting the required population, the research incorporated two informants from outside these places. Despite such efforts, the intended number of fifteen women was not reached. In the end, only twelve out of the intended fifteen women were interviewed.

Delimitations

As a result of the expanse of the Borana in Kenya today, the nature of the research could not permit a survey of all the groups in Kenya. It based its observations in Nairobi. There are many MBBs in Nairobi from different communities. However, the research focused on the Borana people for three reasons:

- It is among the African people groups in Nairobi city that are predominantly Islamic.
- It has a heavy presence in the city settled in specific areas.
- It has had numerous conversions from Islam to Christianity over the last twenty five years.

Urban Muslims were also preferred to rural Muslims because the researcher

has been involved in urban ministry among Muslims for the last eleven years. Therefore the findings would be more relevant when based on the urban context.

This research involved Borana women from Moyale, Marsabit and Isiolo without making distinctions among them. It incorporated a few Burji women because they live together with the Borana and share similar cultures having migrated from the same rural locality.

Some of the information given in the study was deemed to be sensitive since the study dealt with converts from Islam. For the safety of these individuals, pseudonyms were used throughout this research. The exact location of the informants was also kept anonymous. For ethical reasons, the study only divulged information that the converts allowed.

Operational Definitions

1. Islam

Islam refers to "Resignation to the will of God" (Hughes 1994, 220). A Muslim is therefore "One who has received Islam" (1994, 423). Submission to Allah is the most basic belief in Islam. Kim observes that there are diverse aspects of Islamic experiences (2004, 55). There is "Official Islam" (also formal, orthodox or high Islam) that basically denotes the ideological Islamic aspect with focus on Qur'an theology and Muhammad's teachings. On the other hand, "popular Islam" (also folk or low Islam) refers to Muslim beliefs and practices that are not part of the official aspect of Islam. It is what the ordinary Muslims practice within their local context to meet and address their daily worries, and dissatisfactions.

2. Muslim Background Believer (MBB)

This is a term that has been coined by Christians working among Muslims to

refer to a Muslim who has left Islam for Christianity. In other words this is "Somebody who has converted from Islam to Christ" (Pietzsch 2004, 128). Sometimes they may be referred to as a convert in this research.

3. Christianity

This is a common term that means "The religion that traces its origin to Jesus of Nazareth, whom it affirms to be the chosen one (Christ) of God" (Doniger 1999, 203). A Christian is therefore one who follows Christ and abides by the teachings of Bible.

4. Culture

A people's way of life that they acquire as a group is known as culture. Kraft's defines culture as "A society's complex, integrated coping mechanism, consisting of learned, patterned concept and behavior, plus their underlying perspectives (worldview) and resulting artifacts (material culture)" (1996, 38).

5. Worldview

In this study, worldview will be viewed as the deeper level of a people's culture. Kraft's definition sums up the concept of worldview: "At the core of culture and therefore, at the very heart of all human life, lies the structuring of the basic assumptions, values, and allegiances in terms of which people interpret and behave" (1996, 11). It is the way people interpret life; the lenses through which they see reality.

6. Encounter

The term will be used with two distinct meanings. In Rambo's model, it will refer to the fourth stage when "An advocate and a potential convert come together and begin to engage in processes that will result, for some people, in conversion" (1993, 66).

It also refers to the central dimensions of change in the conversion process. The gospel of the kingdom of God must challenge these dimensions upon conversion. These include truth encounter, power encounter, allegiance encounter (Kraft 1981, 453; Love 2000, 90) moral encounter, and cultural encounter (Love 2000, 90). The commitment stage in Rambo's model can be understood as encounter in Kraft's and Love's understanding.

7. Agent

For the purpose of this study,

An agent of transformation is one who brings the good news of the gospel to members of a community and who brokers that message in such a way that those who accept it become the disciples of Jesus Christ and learn to live spiritually transformed lives within the context of their community and culture (Lingenfelter 1996, 9).

Rambo and Kraft prefer to use the term advocate (Rambo 1993, 66; Kraft 1996, 398). The term 'agent' is hereby preferred because it is appropriate for the theme of relationships. The person who brokers the message serves as a link person to Christ by becoming a catalyst in leading the person to Christ.

8. Borana

The term will be employed in this study as a cover term for the two communities in question: Borana and Burji. This is because the dominant culture between them is the Borana culture; more details will be given in the literature review on the Borana.

9. *Madrasa*

The term refers to "An institution where the Islamic sciences are studied" (Gibb and Kramers 1991, 300). The original intention was to teach Islam at different levels to all age groups. The Borana Muslims understand *madrasa* as Islamic religious instruction mainly organized for children.

10. *Umma*

The sense of community among Muslims that defines Islamic identity and loyalty

is called the *umma.* All Muslims regardless of their nationality or tribe belong to the

umma (Voll 1994, 152).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of the study aimed at examining the available and accessible

substantive and methodological literature related to the topic of research. The aim of

the chapter was twofold. In the first section, it reviewed previous works done on the

topic in order to understand major issues that need to be addressed in the study. In the

second section, it examined possible methods of research suitable to the nature of

study at hand and explained why the chosen method was preferred.

Substantive Literature

This section of the paper aimed at examining literature that has been

documented on the different aspects of the study. A brief religious and cultural

background of the Borana and Muslim women was provided. The Biblical view and

basis of conversion was examined. Studies on conversion from Islam to Christianity

were reviewed before establishing different approaches to understanding conversion

in the social sciences.

Brief Religious and Cultural Background of the Borana of Kenya

General Religious Overview

The Borana people group of Kenya is part of the wider Oromo group that

originated from Ethiopia. They are found in Marsabit, Moyale and Isiolo. In her study

on religious change, Aguilar (1995) focuses on the Waso Borana from Isiolo who have a common culture with the rest of the Borana. She observes that peace of Borana *Nagaa Boorana* is central to the thinking of Borana in that in whatever they do, they seek peace within the community, with the supernatural world and with God *(Waqqa)* irrespective of age and gender.

Trimingham's assessment of the Borana reveals that "they are fringe Muslims in the sense that they remain pagan in outlook and customs" (1980, 51). This may sound harsh, but it bears a lot of truth as the study below will reveal. Islam is a veneer under which are traditional practices that the Borana continue to uphold. To date, most *ayaana* practitioners are women. Wang'ombe (2007) acknowledges this fact too when she points out that Borana and Munyoyaya women practice possession cults to a great extent. In her study on spirit possession among the dominantly Islamic Munyoyaya people group, she observes that the Borana women profess Islam yet they are deeply involved in folk practices. They engage in spirit possession cults that are both Islamic and ancestral. The cultural ancestral *ayaana* spirit only possesses Muslims but not Christian and is prevalent among the Borana community. The *jinn* and *ruhani* spirits are Muslim in religion while *ayaana* is non Muslim (2007, 90, 87).

Waqo discusses the origins, religious, cultural and social systems of the Borana that are crucial for this research (2000, 55). She accounts for the entry of Islam to the Borana community through trade, marriage and employment in the military field coupled with the influence of the Somali neighbors. She observes that Christianity has attempted to penetrate into Borana community with little success. Consequently, the Borana remain among the unreached people groups of Kenya. The Catholic and Methodist churches have played a major role in spreading Christianity among the Borana particularly through food relief and education. Some of the people

in this category have never been Muslims because their parents embraced Christianity quite early. On the other hand, many men were killed during the *shifta* war of 1963-69 leading to an increase in the number of widows with the result that many households had to be led by women. Many of these women turned to the *ayaana* cult in a renewed zeal for traditional religion among the Waso Borana (2000, 55).

The religious hierarchy among the Borana can be summarized in the table below. As in many traditional African societies, God is unreachable so there must be supernatural beings and spirits through whom one can reach Him. These spirits can only be accessed through experts in the community. They have different names in various societies. The worldview of the Borana can also be understood in these terms as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Religious hierarchy of the Borana

God *(Waqqa)*
Supernatural beings and Spirits of the dead e.g. *ayaana*
Spiritual leaders: • *Qallu;* priest, • *Raga* and *Yuba;* prophets, • *Huchu;* a soothsayer, • *Ebiftu;* those with blessing power • *Wayu;* a holy person or holy place
Ordinary Person

The Borana and Burji communities are very close in culture and language. It is difficult for an outsider to distinguish between them especially in the city where they live side by side. The dominant culture however appears to be the Borana culture which other communities like the Sakuye and the Munyoyaya subscribe to; all of which trace their roots to the Oromo people group.

Wang'ombe confirms this by saying that people from the Oromo groups which

include Gabra, Boorana, Sakuye, Garre, Ajuraan, Orma, Munyoyaya and Waata "are able to communicate with each other in spite of slight differences in the dialects" (2007, 2). As for the Burji, historical facts show that a few people from the Burji community came from Yavelo province Ethiopia. They had been invited by the then Commissioner of Marsabit District, a colonial official, in early twentieth century. The intention, according to Boru, was to "encourage farming in his administrative area and feed the colonists and inhabitants -the Borana, Rendille and Gabra- who were predominantly pastoralists" (Boru, 2004). The mission of the Burji was to extend their farming and entrepreneurial skills to Marsabit locals to supplement livestock as their sole source of livelihood. With time, the community grew in population and settled in Marsabit and has unfortunately become a minority group in the area. Even though they were originally outsiders, they ended up being influenced by the local Borana culture through interaction and intermarriage.

Borana in Nairobi

Most Borana in Nairobi live together in Kibera, Mukuru, Kariobangi, Huruma, Eastleigh and Bulbul. The rest live elsewhere in the city depending on their economic status and places of work. They migrated to look for employment in response to modern changes in society as traditional modes of survival through livestock farming became challenging. In the city they engage in different forms of employment. This calls for the need for an understanding of urban dynamics. Since such dynamics generally cut across the globe and because of limited access to literature on urban Borana, the study will briefly turn to the perception of Nock and Conn about migration to the city and its sociocultural effect on the migrant.

Urban life can affect a migrant from the rural area in different ways. In relation to conversion, Nock admits that in regard to migration to cities,

We find in big cities and elsewhere groups of expatriated folk living in alien surroundings. Such groups retain their religious as well as their other cultural traditions, often indeed with changes due to intermarriage and various contacts; and those among whom they find themselves are equally exposed to this blending of strains (1933, 6).

This is an important observation because certainly that the Borana Muslims have also been affected by their context in the city either to solidify their religious belief or to open up to available options.

On the same issue, Conn observes that migrants to the city do not necessarily lose their sociocultural connections to their places of origin. Whereas the rural folk tend to be more conservative and to engage on folk practices, the city dwellers are still able to come together with renewed understanding of issues. He underlines the fact that "Networking, political, social and cultural, "ruralizes' the city and "urbanizes" the village" (1990, 67).

Once migrants are in the city they regroup in order to maintain connection to their roots. Such connection shapes their sense of identity and worth. It must therefore be noted that "The cities are not melting pots. Migrants' ethnic and sociocultural groupings remain strong within the urban setting" (1990, 66). Conn further observes that "It is not unusual to find migrants from similar geographical areas and ethnic groupings to stick together in the city, occupying the same districts, even finding similar occupations" (1990, 73). With regard to Orthodox Islam and urban life, Islam is easier to practice with the easy access to water for ablution. Mosques are permanent structures that serve as symbols of togetherness through communal prayers. It is common to find Borana people living together in the city. This may not be unique to them alone; because in Nairobi alone, people tend to settle in specific places depending on their places of origin. In the case of the Borana, this poses challenges and opportunities with regard to conversion owing to the culture in the city.

Women in Islam

Having examined the background of the Borana people it is important to understand the world that the Borana MBB came from before they became Christians. This can only be done by examining the life of the Muslim woman in the light of her religion; the rights, privileges and restrictions it accords her. Both emic and etic perspectives will be considered due to lack of enough emic sources of information.

With a few exceptions, the Muslim woman is generally quite conspicuous because of her unique dressing: the veil. This is her symbol of Islamic identity. The question that begs for an answer here is who is this woman behind the veil? The subject of women in Islam is a contentious issue in the modern world owing to the changing times. It is therefore important to understand that different societies interpret and apply the Islamic laws in diverse ways, including women affairs. Stowasser's description of the different perspectives generally falls under the following categories:

- Modernists: They represent the liberal voice of Islam which supports the reinterpretation of Islam to allow for liberation of women from male oppression.

- Conservatives or traditionists: They are defensive against modernity and prefer the stable structures of past tradition.

- Fundamentalists: They are activists, viewing themselves as purifiers of Islam (Stowasser 1994, 5, 6).

All the above groups base their interpretations on the Qur'an and the Hadith. From the liberal feminist's view point, Mernissi Fatima argues that Islam has failed to interpret properly the veil that serves to regulate female and male space, keeping the woman away from the public sphere. For her, the Muslim's time-mirror must change from looking to the past to interpret the future to using the present instead (1991,

194). She uses examples of Umm Salama, A'isha and Sukayna to prove that women during Muhammad's time participated in the public sphere in a world where Muslims have clear definitions of these domains. To her therefore, the low position of women in Islam is due to a misunderstanding of the basic Islamic teachings on women.

The conservative Islamic *fatawa* (decree) regarding women is an attempt to compile all possible issues regarding women in Islam including the above mentioned in order to regulate their lives (Al-Musnad 1996, 4). Islam has tried to codify rules to guide women. The proactive fundamentalists will apply the same rules with a more radical approach to propagate Islam and to punish offenders.

The above interpretations formed the background towards understanding the Muslim woman in this section. Glaser and John (1998) will provide the framework through which the study shall examine these phases of life. They acknowledge that there are many Muslim women from different countries, with different cultures, dressing styles, levels of education, personalities and experiences of life (1998, xi). However, the Qur'an and Hadith form the basis by which the contemporary Muslim woman's position is understood from the cradle to the grave.

Birth

At birth, the *aqiqa* ceremony is celebrated for boys only where an animal is sacrificed to thank God for the boy child (Al-Bukhari n.d. 7:275). No celebration is done for the girls. The boy child seems to be favored over the girl child. Dagher reckons that Islam improved the status of the girl child in that in Pre-Islamic Arabia, baby girls were buried alive (1995, 10). On the other hand, the birth of the girl child during the Qur'anic era was viewed to be shameful (Surah 16: 48, 59). Whereas this study cautions against generalizations, Dagher observes that the same attitude prevails to date in many Muslim societies (1995, 10).

In her examination on the position of women in Islam from the traditional perspective, Dagher discusses the circumcision of girls. She notes that this practice has no Qur'anic basis yet it has become an obligation in many Muslim societies. The main reason is to restrain the girl's lust or sex drive. The girls also accept the practice as a symbol of honor to their husbands (1995, 124). Stowasser observes that the practice is said to have begun with Hagar, the wife of Abraham thus becoming religiously legitimized (1994, 147).

Religious Duties

Even though the modernists argue that Muslim women are equal to men with regard to religious affairs, there are notable differences in their religious practices. Both men and women must perform the obligatory prayers five times a day. However, Glaser and John observe that a woman's freedom is not only limited by the tradition of Muhammad, but also by her husband. During her menses, she is exempted from prayer, fasting, reading the Qur'an and going to the mosque. Different views emerge from this issue. Some argue that this is a privilege; others see it as a form of discrimination. The Hadith calls it a deficiency in religion (Al-Bukhari n.d. 1:181-182).

As for zakat (almsgiving), even though the trend is changing today and Muslim women are increasingly earning an income, it has been the tradition to give only from what the man gives her because she did not go out to work. In the Hadith, the woman must only give what the husband permits or else she receives half blessings as explained: "Abu Huraira reported the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) as saying when a woman gives something her husband has earned without being commanded by him to do so, she has half his reward" (Glaser and John 1998, 86 quoting Sunan Abu Dawud, Kitab al Zakat, Vol. 2:.443). On the other hand, she

must be a good steward of her husband's property even when giving charity. The Hadith further points out that "If a lady gives meals (in charity) from her husband's house without spoiling her husband's property, she will get a reward and her husband likewise. The husband will get a reward because of his earnings and the woman because of her spending" (Al-Bukhari n.d. 2: 297-298).

With regard to hajj (pilgrimage), the woman's freedom is still limited given that she can only go for hajj when accompanied by a man among those that the law prohibits her to marry (Glaser and John 1998, 87). Hajj enables an individual to gain a high standing before Allah and before the umma. Forgiveness of sins is also assured through the rituals performed at Mecca (1998, 87).

Despite the fact that the five pillars of Islam are meritorious for both men and women, the men seem to have an advantage over women when it comes to the actual implementation because of the restriction directed to the women. Right from the inception of Islam the trend shows that men and women are treated differently. The liberals have reinterpreted this to mean role division and favor from Allah as seen above.

Marriage

It is expected that each Muslim girl should get married some day. To date, the choice of the spouse to begin with is generally not the prerogative of the girl. However, in some societies or families, she has the liberty of choice. According to the Hadith the woman's consent is very important (Al-Bukhari n.d. 7: 51-52). Besides, a marriage is invalid if the girl does not give her consent.

Early marriages are common for Muslim girls. In fact, there is nothing wrong with marrying off a girl to an old man in Islam. She does not have to be the first wife or the only wife. A'isha the favorite wife of Prophet Muhammad was betrothed to him

when she was six years old after which they consummated the marriage when she was nine and lived together for nine years before Muhammad died (Al-Bukhari n.d. 7: 50). Her father was Abu Bakr, one of the closest companions to Muhammad. The marriage cemented this friendship. Aisha proved to be the favorite wife to Muhammad. She was resourceful in theological and juridical subjects (Gibb and Kramers 1991, 25, 26).

In the marriage relationship, the Islamic shari'a law which has been developed in line with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith contain the following basic provisions:

- A man may marry up to four wives (based on Surah 4:3).
- The husband must pay dowry to his wife at the time of the wedding. The first part consists of jewelry or cash to be spent on the bride's trousseau or household furnishings. The second part is payable in cash or kind in case of divorce.
- The testimony of two women is equivalent to the testimony of one man.
- Temporary marriage *(mut`a)* was marriage for a limited period (few days to many years) with some little payment of dowry. Shi`i Muslims continued to practice it especially in Persia though later opinion considers it a form of legalized prostitution.
- Women can own property. They can earn or inherit property, but their inheritance is half that of their male relatives.
- A Muslim man should marry a Muslim woman, or in some cases a Jewish or Christian woman. A Muslim woman, however, is not allowed to marry a non-Muslim man.
- Divorce *(talaq)* is allowed due to incompatibility, cruelty, injustice, prolonged absence, adultery, insanity and incurable or contagious diseases. In the past,

women were not allowed to initiate divorce but now they can in some contexts (based on Surah 65: 1; 2:230).

- Abortion is strictly forbidden, although in Tunisia it is legally possible and is also practiced secretly in many countries.

(Adopted from Chapman 2003, 165-166).

In Surah 4: 34, the man is allowed to beat his wife in case she disobeys him. In some Muslim societies, this practice is allowed while in others it is discouraged. The above facts offer a glimpse of the place of a Muslim woman in marriage.

Life after Death

Prophet Muhammad is said to have told some women "O women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women)" (Al-Bukhari n.d.1: 181). The reason he gave to account for a low female population in paradise was that women:

1. Cursed their husbands frequently and were ungrateful to them
2. They were deficient in intelligence and religion because
   - In intelligence, two women's witness was equivalent to one man's.
   - In religion, they could neither fast nor pray during their menses.

Even though the Islamic paradise is blissful, it seems to be designed for men. There will be gardens, wine and virgins (Surah 9:72; 44:51-54) all for men. Some texts like Surah 33:35 show that men and women will receive an equal reward but over all the lean towards the first view is heavier.

The study has surveyed the traditional perspectives of women in Islam in order to shed light on the sources of modern debate in the matters of women in Islam. The aim of such a discussion in a study of this nature is to provide a background of the religion from which the informants came before they became Christians. Part of their

worldview has been shaped by Islam and it is only fair that the Borana MBB woman be understood first as Borana, then as a Muslim and finally as an MBB. The next step in our study will be to find out what conversion is.

Definition of Conversion

This section is an attempt to arrive at a definition that will create a better understanding of conversion from Islam to Christianity. It is quite a laborious task to come up with a concise definition of conversion. Gillepsie notes that "Religious conversion has many definitions and throughout history the meanings have shifted as the need to explore yet another dimension of the process of change is felt" (1991, 60). Many scholars have therefore attempted to define the concept of conversion from different points of view depending on their emphases. This study will not engage in a pursuit to harmonize the different opinions for that would be an impossible venture, but to have a working definition for this particular study. Nock defines conversion as

> The orientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right. It is seen at its fullest in the positive response of a man to the choice set before him by the prophetic religion (1933, 7).

The above definition accurately assumes that conversion is a form of change with a turning point, in response to prophetic religion. Nevertheless, it is not an adequate definition for this research. It does not discuss anything about culture or the divine aspect of conversion.

Karsdolf has also made a great contribution towards this discussion on conversion by describing conversion as

> The religious and ethical processes of man's spiritual transformation in terms of his values, relationships, attitudes to God, himself, and others within the matrix of his own culture and social structure. It is always within the

sociocultural and religious-ethical framework that humans operate and confront change (1980, 20).

The above definition is preferable for the study because it goes beyond the personal decision that has often been assumed on many occasions in explaining conversion. Religious matters in the West are perceived to be very private and personal. In the African context, and specifically among the Borana, decision making is deemed to be a communal affair, even if it is individual.

Apart from being a complex decision, conversion has serious consequences on all the spheres of the person's life. The more consequential a decision is the more it ceases to be personal. This definition clearly reckons that conversion is change with various dimensions: personal, spiritual, social and cultural. When one leaves Islam he/she undergoes change in religion and in culture.

In the same definition, conversion is also viewed as spiritual transformation. In this case, spiritual means it emanates from the inside of the person and changes his outlook to life. It is also a transformation process, not an event. The transformation is not the end; rather it is the beginning of a new phase of life just as a new born comes into the world after maturity in the womb to begin a new phase of life on earth.

The only limitation of this definition is that Christ is not the center of the conversion process. When dealing with conversion from Islam to Christianity, it is important to note that Muslims also believe in God and that there is conversion to Islam as well. A clear distinction must therefore be made between Christian conversion and any other type of religious conversion. Without Christ, conversion into Christianity cannot be complete.

From the theological perspective, Wells proposes that conversion is a "Process whereby we turn from our sin in repentance and turn to God through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross for us… the cross is the basis for God's offer

of mercy and forgiveness" (1989, 28). Since the subject at hand here is conversion from Islam to Christianity, Christ and His redemptive work must be at the center of the discussion. A new relationship with God begins as the person also joins the community of believers. Asland explains that "A person who is truly converted has moved from being under the law, a slave of sin to a state dominated by the gospel, in Christ and set free from the law. He is found by God and put into a new relationship with Him and fellow believers" (2005, 54). He observes that the theological definitions do not take into account the sociological or psychological issues regarding conversion. The crucial thing is the content and the result of turning. That is why other disciplines like psychology, sociology and anthropology must be considered in order to fully understand the subject. Man is spiritual but these areas are also an integral part of him/her. This calls for a holistic approach to the matter.

Eliade emphasizes that three dimensions should be incorporated in order to define and understand conversion: tradition, transformation and transcendence. He argues that most studies tend to focus on only one aspect, yet each dimension is crucial. Tradition will cover "The social and cultural matrix that includes symbols, myths, rituals, worldviews, and institutions" (1987, 73). The people are linked with the past through tradition that shapes their present lives and determine their response to change, including religious change. Sociologists and anthropologists consider this dimension to be of utmost significance. Transformation is "The process of change manifested through alteration in people's thoughts, feelings and actions" (1987, 74). Eliade explains that psychologists tend to limit themselves to this aspect of conversion. Transcendence on the other hand is "The domain of the sacred- the encounter with the holy that, according to many religions, constitute the source and goal of conversion" (1987, 74). In essence, there is divine action within the human

situation that draws the person into a relationship with the divine; a process that brings in "a new sense of meaning and purpose" (1987, 74) in life.

For purposes of this study, conversion can therefore be defined as a transformation process that involves turning away from sin and Satan towards God through Christ by repentance and faith. Change takes place in core values and relationship with God, himself/herself and others. It occurs within the social and cultural environment. The person also becomes a member of the community of believers in Christ. Theologically, this can be summed up in the mission statement of Paul to the Gentiles from Christ in Acts 26:17b-18 "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."

Having developed a definition of conversion for study, the Biblical basis for conversion must first be understood because the Bible is the manuscript by which to interpret Christian matters. The next discussion will therefore embark on the subject of conversion in the Bible.

Conversion in the Bible

The Biblical perspective provides the theological basis for conversion without which conversion would not be Christian. The subject of conversion in the Bible runs right from Genesis to Revelation and from creation to the end of time. This paper will be limited to a brief discussion on the common terms that denote conversion in the Bible, various elements of conversion in the Bible and some examples of conversions of women in the Bible.

The Bible does not explicitly address the subject of conversion but it is clear that the theme is discussed and addressed throughout the Bible. As much as God always gives man a chance to come back to him, man is not always obedient to this call and so God time and again sends messengers to remind man of his need for God.

Key Terms on Conversion

VanGemeren (1997, 55-59) observes that in the OT, the idea is most commonly expressed through the term *shub* (*swb*). It occurs 1050 times in the OT, out of which 111 are in Jeremiah and means turn around, return, bring back, and restore. It is generally used with the sense of changed life in terms of behavior and good standing with the living God as there were many other gods in the time (idols). As the central word for repentance in OT, it emphasizes the idea of turning to Yahweh and admitting and confessing sin to achieve a restored relationship with God. At times individual conversions take place, other times there is a turn of an entire nation. The prophets are the agents of change for they appeal to the people to repent and turn back to God who will forgive them after they acknowledge their wrongdoing (2 Kgs 17:13; Hos. 14:1, 2).

At times reference is made to God turning or not turning from His anger. Thus He turns away punishment (2 Kgs 23:26). Even though the other key term used in the OT is *naham,* (translated 35 times in the Septuagint as *metanoeo* or *metamelomai*), VanGemeren notes that more often than not the term is used in relation to God rather than man (1997, 57). God is said to repent. This could mean that God rejects man for his disobedience as in 1 Sam. 15:11, 35. He is grieved for having made Saul King of Israel. In Gen. 6:6, He also repents that He made man. Yet at the same time God can in His mercy and grace turn again to men and forgive them (Jdg. 2:18; 1Chron. 21:15). He changes His mind in gracious response to human behavior. When people

repent, He forgives them and changes His earlier intention towards them. But on the other hand, God does not change his mind concerning what he has said will happen, so he does not repent. He is dependable in relation to what He says. There is tension between God's mercy and His judgment in His character in His dealing with human beings.

In the NT, Brown points out that repentance, penitence and conversion are closely related. The key terms that refer to conversion include: Ἐπιστρέφω (epistrepho), μετάνοέω (metanoeo) and μετάμελομαι (metamelomai) (1986, 353). The first two terms basically mean to turn, turn around, turn back; be converted usually under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Ἐπιστρέφω has the element of faith in God as necessary for the change in the individual. μετάμελομαι refers to "The feeling of repentance for error, debt, failure and sin" (1986, 354). This feeling may not necessarily lead one to God.

The idea of conversion in the NT is therefore primarily concerned not so much with turning away from the old life as with turning to Christ, and to God through Christ, a process that culminates in a new life. John the Baptist preaches a message of repentance He called people to repent in preparation for the coming kingdom of God. Jesus also follows the same thought line in that he emphasizes repentance in the light of the coming kingdom when God's rule would be established. God turns to man and man is expected to respond by turning to God. No wonder there is great joy when a sinner repents. It is only in Johan nine writings and Paul's letters that the terms do not appear frequently but the idea of repentance is expressed so vividly as a necessary ingredient towards conversion. Thus terminology may not limit us to the idea in the NT because the concept is widely established therein.

Elements of Conversion in the Bible

In his discussion on systematic theology, Thiessen brings out two main elements of conversion in the Bible that seem to stand out most frequently: repentance and faith (1979, 269). There are three different aspects of repentance. First, the intellectual aspect involves change of view in regard to sin, God and self. Sin is defined as personal guilt that causes one to awkwardly stand against God's demand for righteousness. The self is defiled and quite helpless in saving the person. Secondly, the emotional aspect involves change of feeling where there is sorrow for sin and desire for pardon (2 Cor. 7:9ff). The third aspect is volition; change of will, disposition and purpose. It involves inward turning from sin, change of disposition to seek pardon and cleansing. Faith simply means returning of the soul to God. It is more than an intellectual exercise. It also has three aspects to it: intellectual, emotional and voluntary. The intellectual aspect involves belief in the revelation of God in nature, in Scripture and doctrine, redemption in Christ, conditions for salvation and all blessings promised to God's children. Emotionally, the soul must be involved in realizing the personal applicability of the redemption provided in Christ. The person must recognize that Jesus is Lord and the Christ. On the other hand, conversion is voluntary. The heart must be surrendered to God and the provision of Christ as the Savior willingly, without being forced or coerced. Faith has both the human side and the divine side. In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is said to be the Author and Perfector of faith. Faith is a gift of God too (Rom. 12:3; 2 Pet. 1:1). On the other hand, faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). In Acts, many who heard the message believed (4:4). Conversion is therefore not fully achieved if faith is incomplete where the person has not heard the message or where faith does not point to Christ. There are few exceptions where mystical experiences occur without prior knowledge of the

Word. This message is good news, divinely given, a message of life, peace and grace. There is no one fixed way of presenting the message whether through Scripture, philosophy or through natural religion (Thiessen 1979, 33).

Grudem compares repentance and faith with two sides of the same coin. There is no way one can first repent and then have faith. He explains that "The person who genuinely turns to Christ for salvation must at the same time release the sin to which he or she has been clinging and turn away from that sin in order to turn to Christ. The two acts, repentance and faith, take place simultaneously but not consecutively in the person" (1994, 717). Barclay sums it up quite well by saying "A turn involves two things: it involves a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem.* It involves a turning from something and a turning towards something" (1963, 26). More so, he stresses the role of the message, the converting message in the conversion process.

Sudden versus Gradual Conversion

In his book on Conversion in the NT, Peace has done extensive work on the idea of conversion as a process and as an event. From the experiences of the disciples and that of Paul, he proves to us that conversion is both a process and an event; thus gradual and sudden. Whichever way, Peace gives three general stages: insight, turning and transformation (1999, 56). Insight may come from a single question or experience. Then there will be an encounter with Christ that causes one to turn from the old life and turn to Jesus. This is followed by a new life marked sometimes accompanied by great or insignificant change. Whether Paul was called or converted, or both are still an on-going debate owing to the fact that he was a Jew who served the Living God already. Those who understand conversion as turning away from sin consider Paul's experience as conversion, not just a call to service (Freedman 2000, 277).

Peace's contribution is crucial to this research in that it summarizes the necessary ingredients for conversion to take place. He also observes that one must get to a point of understanding before he can turn. Insight brings understanding to the person so that he/she can make an informed choice to accept or reject the message of the gospel. To understand who God is, and why Christ came and the need for a Savior is very important. Peace confirms this with reference to Paul when he says "In Paul's case, the key insight had to do with his persecution of the church" (1999, 38). The question from Jesus "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" is a culmination of a series of the preceding events. He explains that this single question gave Paul a new view of reality in that what he once valued highly became real worthless upon his encounter with Christ (1999, 52). He received new light on his situation that he has never experienced. For the disciples the understanding process was much slower. They spent plenty of time with Jesus before understanding him as God.

Kraft acknowledges that there is no single prescribed pattern of conversion in the Bible (1981, 333). He agrees with Peace in that he cites Paul and the Ethiopian Eunuch as dramatic examples and the disciples as an example of conversion as a continuous process.

Grudem admits that repentance and faith do not end at conversion. He says "Faith and repentance are not confined to the beginning of the Christian life. They are rather attitudes that continue throughout our lives as Christians" (1994, 717). He argues that these are attitudes that only begin at conversion, which he calls 'initial faith' and 'initial repentance.' Conversion is therefore a life-long process; it is not an instant experience that ends in a moment.

Wells also points out that "True conversion is not an isolated experience but one that is related to a life of discipleship. Prior to conversion, there is often a whole

complex scenario that Wells also observes that "The process involves thinking and rethinking, doubting and overcoming doubts, soul searching and self-admonition, struggle against feelings of guilt and shame, and concern as to what a realistic following of Christ might mean, whether or not it culminates in a personal crisis that will afterward be remembered as 'the hour I first believed'" (Wells 1989, 63). After that hour, the journey would only have begun. No wonder the NT is full of symbols of the new life with reference to death/life and re-birth because there should be change in the person as he crosses over into the new realm of life upon conversion.

Individual and Group Conversions

Much as the call to conversion is often to the individual, it is observed that the community would be called to repentance in different contexts of the Bible. God calls Israel His people many times to come to Him as a group. The messages of the prophets are a proof of this e.g. Hosea 14:1 "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God."

Jonah is sent to the Ninevites to proclaim the Word of God to the group and when they repent, they do so as a block. Joshua declares in Joshua 24:15 that he and his house will serve God. In the NT too, there are examples of individual as well as household conversions. Lydia and her house (Acts 16:15), Cornelius and his people (Acts 10) and the jailer and his family (Acts 16:31-33) are typical examples of such a scenario. Individual examples include those cited in this paper like Naaman and Ruth in the OT and Paul (Acts 9) and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8: 26-40) in the NT. Both men and women are converted in all situations.

Conversion of Women

The Bible gives us a few examples in both the Old and the NT of conversion of women. This study will not examine all the examples given but will concentrate on the following: Rahab and Ruth from the OT. In the NT, the study will focus on Mary

Magdalene, the sinful woman, the Samaritan woman and Lydia. Some household conversions will also be highlighted in order to represent women in households.

Rahab the prostitute

The story of Rahab is found in Josh. 2:1 ff, Mt. 1:5, Heb. 11:31 and Jas. 2:25. According to Lockyer, the name Rahab is derived from the name *Ra,* an Egyptian god (1958, 131). It means insolence, fierceness, spaciousness. She belonged to the Amorite community, an idolatrous people. Rahab's crucial role in the OT was her act of hiding Joshua's two spies in her house. She hid them on her roof and saved their lives by negotiating with the attackers who had noticed strangers in their city. She noticed their uniqueness as men of God by God's intuition. Lockyer explains that she noticed that these people were "men of God, the forerunners of his people who were to execute His will, and that to take sides with them was to take sides with God" (1958, 132). In return, the spies promised that at the destruction of Jericho, she and her family would be spared. In deed, the spies ensured the promise was kept. For her bold step, she is among the few women listed in the genealogy of Jesus. She is also in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11, and in James she is considered one who was justified by her works. It can be concluded that she was converted when she acknowledged that the God the spies were serving, whose mighty acts of delivering Israel from Egypt was "God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Jos. 2:11). That acknowledgement was accompanied by the risky step she took that put her in great ranks. Apart from Matthew, all the other texts refer to Rahab as the prostitute. Why was such an evil title retained? Lockyer notes that "She still carried the evil, distinguishing shame, thus declaring the peculiar grace of the transforming power of God" (1958, 131). A non Israelite is justified before God!

Ruth the loyal one

The book of Ruth is about Ruth the Moabitess, daughter in law to Naomi. She came from a heathen background that did not acknowledge the Living God. However, she may have been influenced by the husband's worship of Yahweh and later the testimony of her mother in law. This made her cling to her in a moment of crisis. She was willing to obey Yahweh and to be true to His people. Some transformation had taken place in her life. Woodberry suggests that "The story suggests that Ruth acts out of loyalty to Naomi, and her choice of Naomi's God follows from the first loyalty, making Ruth's conversion an alternation" (1992, 44). If this is the case, then Naomi was a friend whose role to Ruth was to lead her to Yahweh, the Living God. Thus she adopted Naomi's nation and her God (Marshall, et al 1996, 1029) a serious commitment that could only be broken by death. With Boaz, she also lands herself in the ranks of those few women in Jesus' genealogy. God did not turn her away for not being an Israelite.

Mary Magdalene the faithful one

During the time of Jesus, a number of women were converted. Mary Magdalene is a typical example who was delivered from demon possession. She is described as "Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out" (Luke 8:2). Marshall et al argue that "It is not possible, at least from the biblical evidence, to limit the illness from which Mary was healed to one sphere alone, the physical, the mental or the moral" (1996, 737). For this reason, it cannot be assumed that she is the 'sinful woman' whose name is not mentioned in Luke 7: 36-50. Even if she was, the change in her life is evidence of Jesus' intervention in her life. She became on of the female companions of Christ and his disciples in their preaching endeavors and supported them "out of their own means" (verse 3). She was present at

the crucifixion (Mk 15: 40) and at the resurrection (Mk 16: 1) was among the first to visit the empty tomb. Having been transformed and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God, she lived out her life serving Jesus and the disciples.

The sinful woman

Each of the gospels contains a story of the anointing of Jesus by a woman. However, the discussion here will focus on Luke's account and will not attempt to resolves the accounts for that would be beyond the scope of this study. With regard to the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 the story clearly describes a scenario where a woman comes in sinful and leaves forgiven unlike the other accounts. Her entry point is that though she had lived a sinful life, and when she heard Jesus was around she went, washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them and perfumed them. To the Pharisees, this was ridiculous to the Pharisees but Jesus had a lesson for them through her experience. The sinner receives her cleansing when she comes into contact with Jesus yet if she had come into contact with the Pharisees she could have defiled them! Jesus describes her as one who loved much because her many sins were forgiven. Green observes that the sinful woman was possibly a prostitute and was seen as an intruder in the home of a Pharisee where holiness and purity were of high importance. Against such odds, Jesus not only forgives her but also assures her of her forgiven state, sending her away in peace (1997, 313).

Moratalla-Mendez uses this story to prove that it was part of Jesus' ministry statement 'to call sinners to repentance' that was being realized in an individual, this time a woman. Jesus did not discriminate against women. This account falls just after the mention of the role of converted women in supporting the ministry of Jesus as his followers (2004, 129).

The Samaritan woman

In the case of the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42, her first shock is that a Jew who is not supposed to talk to a Samaritan can break such a barrier. This is a clear example of cross cultural ministry. When Jesus, a stranger, was so specific about her personal details, this shocked her greatly. This man was strange! He shared the truth of God's word with regard to the living water and subsequently true worship, all this culminating in faith and understanding. Then she believed in Him and instantly began to witness to her neighbors about this great man she had met, leading to many conversions in the town. Ngewa argues that Jesus draws her attention first to the need for living water. She begins to perceive things from a spiritual level. Secondly, he sends her to bring her husband. This makes her reckon that Jesus is a prophet. Jesus confirms that he is more than a prophet, he is the Messiah (2003, 70). Such awareness formed the basis for understanding who Christ truly was and her subsequent witness to fellow Samaritans.

Lydia the hospitable one

In Acts 16: 12-15, 40, the story of Lydia is mentioned. There is no description of her family background. She was a woman of Thyatira in Lydia seemingly a prominent businesswoman. Marshall et al explain that she was "Paul's first European convert and gave him hospitality, with Silas and Luke" (1996, 707). Having listened to Paul's message by the river, she accepted Christ and was baptized together with her household. Her transformation led to her desire to host Paul and his team as they preached the gospel in different places. From the feminist approach, Reimer argues that Lydia was a God fearer, in the early church the Jews and the Proselytes considered them to be unclean. There were many proselyte females but they are only mentioned in passing by scholars. God fearers were Gentiles attracted to Judaism, but

unconverted, not having been circumcised (1995, 93).

<u>Women as part of household converts</u>

There are many household conversion stories that may include women though it is not mentioned. Cornelius the Gentile God fearer who used to give alms and pray in Acts 10:1ff believed the message of Peter and was baptized together with his household. Peter had his own reservations about Gentiles but God had to work on him. Bruce points out "As things were, God had plainly accepted them, and Peter had no option but to accept what God had done" (1988, 218). The jailor also believed in the Lord Jesus together with his house (Acts 16: 29-34). The jailor's change of attitude is immediately noticeable. His house was full of rejoicing as he and his household received the message of Paul and Silas. His prisoners became his guests. Bruce, quoting Homiletus, observes that ""He washed and was washed," says Chrysostom: "he washed them from the stripes, and was himself washed from his sins"" (1988, 318). Since the man is the head of the household, it is assumed that the wife would probably be among the converts.

Conversion as a Supernatural Process

On the other hand, conversion is a supernatural process. No human being can transform another. Even though conversion is a type of human behavior that involves deep and complex psychological and social changes, it is a divine act. Concerning the divine side of conversion, Wells states that "Without God's saving action in Christ, conversion would not be possible. Without the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, conversion would not be desirable. Without the function of the Scriptures conversion would not be Christian" (1989, 21). Conversion is not uniquely Christian but Christian conversion is unique and uniquely true. The center of difference may not be in behavior change but in the fact of Christ being experienced. The focus is on Christ

and His work rather than the person's experience. Wells explains "Christianity without conversion is no longer Christian, because conversion means turning to God" (1989, 27). How can one become a Christian without turning to God?

In their brief explanation of conversion, Douglas and Tenney place conversion as the first step in the transition from sin to God within the process of salvation. It differs from justification and regeneration that are purely divine acts, yet it is an act of the Holy Spirit operating on the human mind and will to bring change in one's life (1987, 232).

Consequently, it is observed that even though man is a key player in his decision in conversion, he is in need of divine help in order to realize inward change that is manifested outwardly. Conversion is a 'joint effort' between man and God with both taking active roles to arrive at a new relationship.

Islamic View of Conversion from Islam to Christianity

There is limited literature on conversion to and from Islam, yet it is necessary that we understand what conversion means in Islam as we try to explain Christian conversion. Islam is quite active in seeking conversions just as Christianity is and so conversions do take place to Islam from Christianity and other religions. In his discussion, Woodberry explains that "Traditional Islamic thought has not had a general word for the concept of conversion" (1992, 22). Conversion in Islam is therefore described in terms like *Islam*, *iman* (faith in God) and *ihtida* (following right guidance). The confession of the *shahada* marks the initiation into Islam in the presence of two witnesses followed by great ablution (*ghusl*- all body wash) and then observation of the five pillars of Islam. He then becomes part of *umma*, the Muslim community. Woodberry also explains the concept of conversion from Islam to

Christianity: "Conversely, what non-Muslims would call 'Conversion from the Muslim faith' Muslims call *irtidad* (apostasy)" (1992, 22).

Conversion from Islam to Christianity can be termed as tradition transition "The movement of an individual or a group from one major religious tradition to another. Moving from one worldview, ritual system, symbolic universe, and lifestyle to another is a complex process that often takes place in a context of cross-cultural contact and conflict" (Eliade 1987, 74). According to the Muslims, when a person converts to Christianity, he becomes an apostate. Apostasy is defined here as "The repudiation of a religious tradition or its beliefs by previous members. This change does not involve acceptance of a new religious perspective but often indicates adoption of a non-religious system of values" (1987, 74). In other words, apostasy is considered to be deconversion, where the person no longer belongs to any religious system, he has lost faith because he left the group of faith he belonged to.

According to Gibb and Kramers, "Apostasy is called *irtidad* or *ridda*: it may be committed verbally by denying a principle of belief or by an action, e.g. treating the Qur'an with disrespect" (1991, 413). Consequently, an apostate is referred to as *murtadd,* meaning one who turns back. Gibb and Kramers go on to point out that when one leaves Islam, he has committed an unforgivable sin will be punished in the life to come unless he returns to Islam though this is not very clear (e.g. Surah 16: 106-109; 3: 86-90). It is in the Hadith that we find prescribed punishment in the present earthly life. These include the death penalty (Al-Bukhari n.d. 9: 42-43).

Musk notes that the proprietors of the punishment for apostasy in this life mainly appeal to Surah 5:36 (2003, 238). The contexts and reason for revelation given for certain verses suggest that killing was the best punishment for apostates. The tone in the Hadith sounds quite different from that in the Qur'an. The laws are applied

differently depending on the different schools of law in Islam with some being stricter than others.

Hughes summarizes the eventualities of apostasy to a marriage to include the divorce of spouse without necessarily having a sentence of divorce; he wife gets back the whole dowry; if both apostatize, the marriage is allowed; if one reverts back to Islam, marriage dissolved though the liberalists allow it (1994, 161). Musk states that, "To change faith means to turn one's back on family, clan, nation, and the only valid way of living" (2003, 239). Islam is not a personal-faith option. It is a community affair. Seemingly, punishment for apostasy was meant to be a protective measure over the early Muslim community. On the other hand, such punishment seems to serve a particular purpose. Friedmann observes that "The idea that conversion to Islam ought to be irreversible developed as a result of the desires to protect the integrity of the early Muslim community" (2003, 124). He goes on to explain that the dangers and instability Islam encountered during the onset of Islam meant that though there were many followers who joined Islam, the level of fall outs was also bound to be high unless serious measures were taken.

The community had to find ways of surviving to avoid extinction. He also explains that the requirements for repentance shall include: *Shahada* (Confession) like one who has never been a Muslim. Then follows reaffirming commitment to the broken commandment e.g. denying prophet, a Qur'anic verse on angels, etc. One must make up for all missed prayers, alms and fasting days. *(Shafi'i)* go for *Hajj* again *(Hanbal).* For the one who secretly leaves Islam, it is even more serious because he lives as a hypocrite. When he is discovered he will face severe punishment. Moucarry observes that "The severity of Islamic law appears to have a dual purpose; preventing Muslims from abandoning Islam and deterring non Muslims from converting to Islam

without serious considerations the full implications of their decision" (2004, 273). A serious alarm is sounded for prospective Islam that once they enter Islam, and it is easy to do so, they will not be permitted to come out.

Some liberal voices have also been heard in the modern world in relation to this matter. Kurzman notes that some aspects of the Shari`a law have become outdated (1998, 236). His liberal view is that Islam needs to adapt to changes in the modern world. This includes freedom of choice with regard to religion. He claims that some Muslims e.g. Sufis were killed for apostasy just because they hold a divergent Islamic view. Some Islamic scholars have also suffered for expressing their opinion on the religion and are in the list of apostates. Surah 2:256 clearly states that there is no compulsion in religion. Many Muslims will use this verse to prove that Islam observes human rights. However the use is often limited to conversion from any other religion to Islam but not leaving Islam especially to become a Christian.

Understanding Conversion in the Sciences

Psychological Approach

Many psychologists have attempted to explain conversion. James William, who did a classic work, was among the first psychologists to do so. James explains that "The process, gradual or sudden, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes divided, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities" (1982, 104). There are two types of experiences. The volitional and gradual happens in a piece by piece manner till the person assumes new moral and spiritual habits. The sudden self-surrender happens instantly as is the cases of Paul the apostle, Socrates, Ignatius Loyola and St. Francis, etc. A sudden change occurs; a turnabout of life with complete contrast to the

former life lived. Within the process of conversion, there will be peak experiences that are characterized by long and difficult conflict that the person wrestles with in his inner self. For some people, this process can last for years before a turning point is reached. James has been heavily criticized by many scholars for assuming that most conversions occur at adolescence as the person undergoes crisis and transition in life. He also views conversion as a process that results from sickness of the soul, which may not always be true. Conversion is not a medical condition and cannot be measured clinically.

Mavis also attempts to explain the phenomenon of conversion as a process that results from the pursuit for self-renewal in order to attain self-actualization, the ultimate objective of every human being. "Man has a natural disposition that moves him toward self-fulfillment; he has deep motives to actualize his capacities" (1969, 11). Self examination precedes a sense of guilt and openness to God's remedy that leads to conversion. The end result is that man finds meaning in life because he has undergone inward renewal. His search only comes to an end when he is renewed from the inside. Before then he undergoes a time of anxiety and restlessness that draws him to repentance as he realizes that he is sinful. The Holy Spirit uses this opportunity to point out to the person his need for saving faith in Jesus Christ. This explanation assumes that the convert is always active in the process as the pursuer of renewal. In real sense, some people are more active than others; others cannot even be termed as active.

Examining conversion from a psychological cum philosophical angle, Conn emphasizes the importance of conscience in relation to conversion. To him, conversion is "A developmental interpretation of Christian conscience as the radical personal drive for self transcendence realized in creative understanding, critical

judging, responsible deciding, and generous loving" (1986, 1). This perspective is crucial for this paper because it underlines the role of the individual in the conversion process and gives clue to what the person may be going through in the pre-conversion and post-conversion stages. However, this view assumes the active role of the convert and also reduces conversion to a matter of conscience. There are other factors that lead to conversion apart from the inner conscience especially in the African context where decisions are rarely personal. Another contribution from Conn is that conversion is not confined to Christianity. It only becomes Christian when it occurs in a Christian context. It has four dimensions: moral, affective, cognitive/critical moral and religious dimensions. The person undergoes change in his fundamental orientation, social outlook, inward self, mental judgment and spiritual self that allows God rather than self to be at the center of life. Conversion therefore becomes a total surrender to a higher power with human autonomy becoming relative.

Krailsheimer, having examined twelve cases of conversion, concludes that indeed, emotional disturbance yields a moment of crisis and therefore decision to break off from the past, a process that is quite personal. He notes that "It is commonplace that conversion, of whatever kind, follows a period of emotional confusion and disturbance, often, but not always, accompanied by intellectual doubts" (1980, 154). More so, "The defeat, and surrender, of their pride and self-will was the outcome of a direct transaction between each of them and God." He seems to agree with Conn and Mavis that conversion is a psychological phenomenon. Something interesting he notes is that repentance implies total change of priorities but the components of life and personality remain the same. At times we expect a total change in all aspects of life but there are areas of continuity both at personal and sociocultural level if we may extend this phenomenon. Actually, at conversion, these

personalities find a fuller and more satisfying expression than ever before. He therefore cautions against elevating some peoples' experiences above others because at times some of the more radical do not last long. He also underlines the fat that God is behind Christian conversion; it is not just individual effort.

Leone approaches the issue of conversion from the semiotic dimension. Semiotics is the discipline that studies signs and their systems (2004, 1). He explains that "One's system of religious (irreligious) ideas is shaken by the encounter with a spiritual message which speaks a different language." The first step that leads to conversion is 'destabilization of self.' He cites the example of unsuccessful mission of the Jesuits to Muslims in Asia in the sixteenth century; the Muslims wanted tangible proof of God's power, not mere dogma. They desired miracles because dogma was not sufficient in causing instability of the self. Secondly, there will be crisis of the self. This step is quite crucial as it can either lead to conversion or treason in the form of heresy, schism or apostasy. In such moments, personal and social identity is at stake. Thirdly, there is re-stabilization of the self. After the person has solved the crisis in his life, he begins to adjust to the new environment. Often, this is the beginning of new life. Leone's view is important because it shows that when an alternative way is introduced to the person, it shakes the foundation he is used to. As long as there is no alternative, the person has no crisis. In this research, this is important because to the Muslim, the Christian message becomes the alternative that may cast doubt on the usual Islamic teaching.

Gillespie considers conversion as change; transformation in the person which takes place in various contexts: emotional, experiential, developmental, psychological social and identity. In other words, the search for identity results in a rediscovered

identity in terms of self, others and God. Women would have a somewhat different experience from men because they are more relational than men (1991, 52).

It has become clear that conversion is accompanied by emotional change that may make the person rather unsettled for a while before they normalize their life again. Having examined the psychological perspective of conversion, we now turn to the sociological dimension.

Sociological Approach

Even though Kasdorf discusses conversion in general, he argues that as much as the psychologist is concerned about what happens to the individual at conversion, the social anthropologist "Tends to look beyond the small world of his own culture in order to understand people as people within the framework of their total way of life" (1980, 115). His concern is that mission should be to bring all peoples to Christ: families, groups and tribes just as the Bible has narratives of such conversions. In the African context, this should be the ideal and more so in Islamic communities where *umma* (community) is a way of life.

Sociologists have tried to explain the phenomenon of conversion. According to Bainbridge there are two main theories in sociology that have been fronted to explain conversion: strain theory and social influence theory (1992, 179). In strain theory, conversion is understood to be a response to deprivation in a person, which can be from poverty or unfulfilled hopes and dreams, just to name a few. Deprivation can be absolute in that one lacks something in life that he objectively needs. Relative deprivation comes in when one lacks something that a person from a different status possesses. As a solution, the person will seek affiliation to religion because it offers what he lacks. In Christianity, all people are ideally equal irrespective of status. Bainbridge explains that "Through it, the fortunate can learn honest sympathy for the

less fortunate, and the deprived can appreciate the humanness of those who possess what they lack" (1992, 181).

On the other hand, there are two schools of thought under the social influence theory. The control theory states that "Individuals will act in a conventional way, so long as they possess a powerful bond to the conventional social order" (1992, 182). When the person experiences disruption e.g. the newly-weds/divorced, change of jobs may lead to loss of strong bonds and therefore openness or lack of it to new relationships. The subculture theory on the other hand claims that a group of like-minded people will tend to establish a distinctive way of thinking and acting. People will go where they can easily bond with others as they find a sense of belonging. In essence, both theories have worked in different ways separately or both combined. When a person experiences a frustration, he begins to seek for an alternative after which he develops attachment to the new group. The attachment meets his need and results in affiliation to the group. Finally, it becomes easy to accept the belief systems of the new group. That way, one is converted and socialized into a new group, a process that was stirred up by need for alternative and affiliation.

In both of the above theories, we find that there is a trigger factor of dissatisfaction and a reaction towards affiliation in order to fill the gap so created by the dissatisfying group. However, these theories really suppress the position of individual decision without familiarity to a particular group. They emphasize the idea of belonging before becoming a group member yet there are cases where one first becomes a group member before learning the tradition of the group. Some conversions have happened before the person joined a group of believers in the new faith. Conversion is more than joining a social group even though in the long run this

should happen. In the African context, the individual must be understood in the context of the group.

It can therefore be noted that "Conversion is personal, but not individualistic; it is experienced by individuals, but it affects the community, it is expressed in a vertical relationship, but not without horizontal dimensions" (Karsdolf 1980, 105). In the non-Western world, we cannot examine conversion in isolation because of the strong sense of community that prevails therein. Karsdolf further argues that conversion is not an occurrence that happens in isolation. It can be traced back to the sociocultural context of the converts. Conversion always takes place within the experiencer's ethnic milieu" This 'multi-personal' dimension takes care of the communal decision-making element that characterizes many non-Western communities. A study of conversion in such a context can therefore never be complete unless it incorporates the sociocultural context.

Anthropological Approach

In anthropological research, worldview is becoming an increasingly important tool for cross-cultural study in order to understand people. On the worldview scale, conversion is viewed as a form of worldview change. The individual undergoes a change in his core values through the transformation process that results in conversion.

In his extensive studies of African Traditional Religion, Mbiti underscores the essence of worldview in conversion. He observes that

Since traditional religions occupy the whole person and the whole of his life, conversion to new religions like Christianity and Islam must embrace his language, thought patterns, fears, social relationships, attitudes and philosophical disposition if that conversion is to make a lasting impact upon the individual and his community (1969, 3).

Mbiti therefore brings out those aspects he deems to be of utmost significance to understanding African Traditional Religion in terms of ontology. He argues that the ontology is anthropocentric. Man happens to be relating to God, spirits, fellow man, living things and inanimate objects. He tries to be in control over these spheres and to access the supernatural through the natural environment. Such an understanding provides reasons why conversion must affect the total person and not just the mental dimension.

In understanding worldview, the central question should be: What is core to the worldview of this cultural group? The center of worldview differs in different societies in the world. Kraft simply summarizes two major worldviews and contrasted them to the Biblical worldview (1989, 199). In Western societies, the spirit sphere is so small. Humans are generally in control of nature. In order to be specific to the African Muslim, the 2/3 world is modified. In this category, people are very conscious of the spirit sphere. God is not the main focus, because He is too far. The spirits are accessible and so closer to man and are a means to reach God. Nature is meant to help man to reach the spirit world. The lines between the spheres are fuzzy, so it is difficult to disengage the spheres. In the first column are the Biblical societies who look to God as the primary focus. Christ is the center of this category. Spirits are lesser beings than God, for God rules over them. Nature is meant to be subdued but in accordance to God's sovereign rule.

The aim of worldview change through conversion to Christ is to bring the person to a point where he develops the Biblical worldview. This is what Kraft terms as Christian conversion (1981, 339-340). Hesselgrave and Rommen point out that if the non-Christian worldview is not exchanged for a Christian one, those truths and

subsequent experiences will be interpreted from a non-Christian perspective (1989, 212-213). The table below sums up these worldviews:

Table 2: Contrasting worldviews (Adopted from Kraft 1989, 199)

BIBLICAL SOCIETIES	AFRICAN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES	WESTERN SOCIETIES
Spirit Sphere God through Christ the primary focus. Spirits a lesser focus.	**Spirit Sphere** Allah Supreme but lesser focus. Spirits the primary focus.	**Spirit/God Sphere**
		Human Sphere
Human Sphere	**Human Sphere**	**Nature Sphere**
Nature Sphere	**Nature Sphere**	

Worldview affects the conversion process of the person in diverse ways. The deeper the person is immersed in their culture, the more complicated his/her journey will be towards change. Kraft explains that "It is the distance between where people are behaviorally and where they need to be in order to demonstrate their new heart allegiance that properly determines the specula ness or lack of it that should accompany the reorientation" (1981, 334). He views conversion as a reorientation of one's life towards a new direction through changed allegiance.

Worldview study is essential in conversion studies because as Kraft points out "It is a person or group's worldview that is at stake whenever an appeal for conversion (whether to Christianity or any other ideology) is made" (1981, 334). The gospel makes certain demands on the individual. The core of these demands is culture. The gospel message confronts the culture of the person because not everything in that culture is Biblical. An appeal to conversion is therefore a demand

for change in one's total way of interpreting the world.

Even though Kraft does not discuss the topic of conversion in depth, he brings out certain crucial points that will be helpful to this research. He reckons that the Biblical description of conversion implies a conscious allegiance (faith commitment) to God. His contribution here is that the divine and the human aspects of conversion work together to cause change in the person within his community. Thereafter the person becomes a member of a new community and matures towards perfection.

According to Kraft "The direction in which human beings develop is strongly affected by the type and quality of interpersonal relationships that they enter into" (1981, 338). The quality of the new community is so crucial because "It is in the context of relationships with other people of God that the initial allegiance is to be fed until it becomes the central point of reference in terms of which believers make all decisions and around which they reorient all living" (1981, 338).

Another observation from Kraft is that change and development must conform to what is appropriate within the culture of the convert, not that of another group. The ultimate goal should be Christian conversion, not cultural conversion. He explains that cultural conversion "Is the error of imposing upon one subculture the forms of Christianity appropriate to another subculture (the one in power) but not that of the group in question" (1981, 338). In missions, missionaries make the mistake of trying to convert the witness to his own culture, especially denominational or Western culture. This can easily lead to superficial conversion, an 'indirect' conversion to Christ. Kraft explains that this results in 'horizontal' cultural conversion where the person is converted to a culture but not to God which leads to widespread nominalism and superficial conversions. The main reason for making such mistakes is the lack of understanding of worldviews. Kraft shows is a comparison of the causality in the

worldview scale with different emphasis in different societies. Understanding these differences helps the agent of change to know where he/she is, where the target person is and where the Bible recommends we should be in our understanding.

Conversion can therefore be viewed in anthropological terms as a form of culture change in the person or community. Studies on such change within a group must be aware of possible anthropological problems. Tippet indicates that these problems include advocacy; with the possibility of either acceptance or rejection by the group. The problem of meaning must be addressed (to what is the group converted? Is it necessarily converted to the precise idea advocated or does it assign its own meaning to the new faith?) Next is problem of incorporation, the process of moving out of something into something (1992, 194). Awareness about these possible challenges prepares those who study culture change to do it better.

Ethnotheology

This research is interested in incorporating anthropology and theology because Christian conversion is both religious and theological. The approach proposed by Karsdolf is ethno theology. Ethno theology "seeks to integrate the scientific studies of theology, sociocultural anthropology, history, and psychology with a biblical view of God, humankind and culture" (Karsdolf 1980, 20). He argues that "We cannot understand conversion purely on theological or anthropological terms" (1980, 20). The reason is that theology restricts itself to man and God, while anthropology focuses on man and culture. Ethnotheology, he argues, reckons that God reaches man within his culture and that culture is not free of evil, it has both good and bad concepts after being marred by sin. Man operates within a culture and all that happens to him will happen within a culture. Karsdolf highlights the importance of ethnotheology as:

1. To understand more adequately humanity as God's creation and the Imago Dei, the abiding contract in each person;
2. To become cognizant of the human cultural milieu and the complexities of human's alienation from its Creator;
3. To bring about a more balanced understanding of human life ways, attitudes, and relationships shaped not only by sin, but also by culture;
4. To discover more effective ways and means to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ as the message of the supra-cultural God to culture-bound humanity so that persons might respond and be reconciled to their Creator and Redeemer (Karsdolf 1980, 20).

In effect, conversion is necessitated by the existence of sin in the world. Alienation from God, a broken relationship with Him and man's deviation from the way of God are all effects of sin. Sin is expressed differently in different societies depending on their culture as Karsdolf explains "The effect sin has on people depends largely on their cultural orientation. In one society it will be a haunting guilt feeling; in another it may be perpetual fear; agonizing shame may be the phenomenon of a third" (1980, 40) Whatever the expression may be, the underlying theme is that man loses the original course of direction that God intended him to take. So where does conversion come in? Karsdolf captures it well "Sin is the underlying cause which estranges persons from their Maker; the conversion experience is the healing factor that unites and reconciles individuals with their Maker" (1980, 20).

The focus of this study is the phenomenon of conversion among the Borana. The healing experience they have undergone in order to be restored to the right relationship with God is important. The approach employed in this study has attempted as much as possible to incorporate theology with socio-cultural aspects of the Borana in order to understand their conversion process. This study cannot boast to have been able to fully integrate these components for this is an immense task, but it is believed that this will generate more scholarly discussion towards approaches for studying conversion of the African Muslim woman to Christ.

Conversion in the Non-Western World

In the non-Western world, conversion to the major world religions is common but different from conversion in the Western world. Islamic societies are generally non-Western. In this section, the first aim is to understand conversion of women from Islam to Christianity. Secondly, studies on conversion in the non-Western world will be examined in order to raise pertinent issues regarding the phenomenon.

Conversion of Women from Islam to Christianity

It is very important to appreciate the conversion of women from Islam to Christianity. Several authors have attempted to help us understand the experiences of MBB women in their acceptance of Christ.

The subject at hand must be understood with the background of Folk Islam in mind. Folk Islam is widely practiced among Muslim women. Love Rick notes that as many as 95% of Muslim women practice an animistic form of Islam. He observes that they often feel helpless and are fearful, a situation that forces them to frequently turn to magic and holy men for help (2000, 23). Not only are there holy men, but also there are power places, power objects, power places, power times and power rituals. The objective is to access powers that enable people to control others or nature. Women often turn to such to find solutions and solace in times of need irrespective of their level of education and status in the society. It is for this reason that Love summarizes his thesis by saying that "The gospel of the Kingdom breaks into a people in four ways: through truth encounter, power encounter, moral encounter and cultural encounter" (2000, 90). Even though Love is not addressing conversion per se, his idea is relevant towards this subject because unless the gospel affects these aspects of the person and community, transformation is incomplete. The core ingredients of individual and group conversions include the Word of God, God's demonstration of

His power over Satan, character transformation and development of Biblically relevant and culturally appropriate rituals. Musk (2003, 217-223) affirms the need for power encounter in ME.

Various testimonies from Muslim women have been documented. They are insightful in providing an understanding of the issues that MBBs face as they come to Christ. In his compilation on *Ten Muslims Meet Christ* based on Iranian Christian's experiences, Miller acknowledges that "If it is difficult for a man to become a Christian in Muslim lands and follow Christ faithfully, it is usually yet more difficult for a woman" (1969, 96). He cites that women face unique challenges because they are under the care of the men. Often, they face rejection, mistreatment and even divorce.

In the above experience, mystical experience e.g. dreams and visions form part of the pre-conversion process. She found a loving, caring Father in God the almighty, something beyond imagination in Islam. God does not begat nor is He begotten, so it is blasphemous for Him to become a father. These testimonies provide an emic view of the convert's experience of conversion.

There are various challenges that Muslim women face that missionaries should always bear in mind. Love and Eckhart emphasize that such challenges should be viewed in the wider context of women in the world rather than isolating the Muslim women. Three points are worth noting that regard women's emotional issues and needs:

- A sense of powerlessness in the face of male control, or larger forces and political currents surging around them.
- A strong undercurrent of fear: of gossip, slander, evil spirits, and the evil eye, of shame and dishonor, even death at the hand of a family member.

- Identity: generally based on culture and religion, not her essential uniquely beautiful self as created by God. (Adopted from Love and Eckhart 2000, 27).

Muslim women are attracted to Christ through different experiences that are unique to each of her (2000, 18-19). From their experience, they observe that the recurring themes with regard to factors that lead to conversion can be summarized to include:

- Scripture
- Spiritual power encounters
- The love of Christians
- Sex and beauty issues
- Social justice issues.

Gaudeul in his book *Called from Islam to Christ* explains the various attraction points that draw Muslims to Christ. They range from intellectual to social and spiritual matters. His approach is generated from testimonies of MBBs from Africa and Asia. He reckons that religious conversion has become more common in the modern times because of the high mobility rates all over the world and the influence of mass media. He explains that ideally, a society that allows people to choose a religious alternative indicates a healthy society because it respects the personal search for truth (1999, 18).

Concerning the need to care for converts from Islam, Pietzsch acknowledges that first it is important to understand where they are coming from before we can disciple them. The environment in which they grew up, the teachings of Classical Islam that they have acquired and the traditions and Islamic practices that blend with their local culture which may include Folk Islam (2004, 19). These factors will affect their growth as Christians and how they respond to the discipleship program. When

Christians understand their hurts, fears and concerns, they will be able to stand with them, pray for them and mentor them.

Studies on Conversion

We now turn to studies on conversion. Not much has been done on the African scene in view of the subject, so the study will examine what is available. Have studies on conversion in Africa and from Islam to Christianity incorporated worldview? Do they recommend such an approach?

From the Indonesian scene in Asia, Conley employs cultural themes as a lens to understand the Kenyah people of Kalimantan. His themes include supernaturalism, communalism, status and rank, children, rice agriculture, and riverine orientation. To relate these themes to conversion, he says "The conversion process is not only an act of rejection of something, and an act of accepting of something new, but it is an act of evaluation, whereby one determines what to retain from the values of the past" (1976, 360).

MBBs in America have been a focus of study. Most of them originated from Asia. In her research on *Christian Conversion and Development Experiences of Muslims,* Raman employs the theological perspective to understand conversion, a good approach for understanding conversion in Biblical terms. However, there are various sociological and psychological issues that she mentions in the process as it is difficult to restrict oneself to purely theological position in a matter that affects the person culturally, socially and psychologically. Deep cultural issues rarely emerge in her study, leaving out a very important component of conversion. Nonetheless, her comparison of experiences of men and women is quite interesting. She notes that they are similar to a certain extent but there are several points of departure. Many women for instance reported that they had little freedom to read their Bibles at home because

they were being watched unlike the men who seemingly had more freedom in that regard. Such an observation is very important because the aim of this research is to bring out those experiences that may be unique to the women. She also articulates quite well the conversion experiences of women as including moments of secret Bible Study, teachings on Christ and invitation to church. In the end, she recommends further study on traditions, social systems, culture and theology of the Muslim world (1993, 148).

Okorocha has done extensive studies conversion among the Igbo of Nigeria. In his approach, he observes that in the encounter between Igbo religion and Christianity in Igboland, sociocultural issues must be attended to. However, he strongly emphasizes that the theological issues should also be examined with regard to what the people view to be salvation, with the aim of providing the hermeneutical key to their conversion and religious behavior (1987, 35). Among the issues he examines include salvation as warding off of sin and a search for power in the Igbo religion. He points out that past methods of doing religious studies were not effective because they sought to unearth things of the past rather than describe things as they really are. Through extensive work among the Igbo of Nigeria, he recommends that "inherent world-view and religious beliefs of a people are *the* determinant factors in their response to a new religious system or change-agent" (1987, xi). Such an understanding will promote cross-cultural witness by promoting the self identity of the target group. He further argues that the sociocultural aspect in the study of conversion should not be over-emphasized at the expense of the theological dimension because the basis of Christian conversion is the good news of the gospel.

Jules-Rosette undertook a study on conversion in the church of John Maranke in the South Eastern Zaire and Zambia through participant observation in their rituals.

Her interest was aroused by the incorporation of African religion to Christian practice. She begun as a passive participant but ended up as an active participant when she converted into the church. She learnt a new code of behavior and undergo the baptism ritual not just as a scholar but as a real convert. She appreciates that as an insider the symbols she had labeled before assumed new meanings when she engaged in a pursuit of spiritual purpose (1975, 249). The situation of Jules-Rosette is quite unique in conversion studies but it can be treated as personal choice.

In comparing two neighboring communities, Gausset examines factors that attracted the Wawa to Islam and the Kwanja of Cameroon to Christianity (1999, 257). To him, the Wawa were more receptive to the Fulbe who brought Islam to the region and embraced their religion. The Muslim preachers appealed to the village elders who commanded authority. They did not eradicate ancestral cults that were at the heart of the Wawa culture; something that greatly appealed to the locals. On the other hand, the hostile Kwanja became predominantly Christian despite the demand from the new faith to break off from the past. Hamer's findings from the Sidama of North East Africa also show that the incorporation of customary practices to Islam was a major factor in the conversion of the Sidama. The alternative choice that moved the locals out of their 'closed systems' did not disrupt their life (2002, 598).

Wolfgang Gabbert, in his discussion *Social and cultural conditions of religious conversion in colonial South West Tanzania for the period between 1891 and 1939* observes that most converts to Christianity were women (2001, 291). The reason for this could be that the men found the demands of Christianity too dear especially monogamy and stoppage of wife inheritance. However, women found a religion with "a liberation to approach God through prayer irrespective of age or sex" (2001, 302) in contrast with the male dominated culture.

Kunhiyop in his study of conversion among the Bajju of Nigeria demonstrates in his second chapter that the people's cultural and religious beliefs are crucial towards understanding the processes involved in their conversion experiences. In other words, worldview is a backbone towards understanding any people group. Unless one's worldview is transformed upon conversion, conversion has not fully taken place in the person. Conversion should be reflected in what one believes; his values and most of all allegiance to the new religion. Moreover, he observes that "there is need for fresh biblical/theological analysis of Christian conversion, especially as it relates to Christianity in Africa. Previous studies have focused on the economic, social and political motivations. This has led to the partial or total neglect of the theological significance of conversion" (2005, 5). These observations are crucial for this study which aims at a balance in understanding conversion from the cultural as well as the theological perspectives.

Mudamba conducted a study on the role of miracles in conversion from Islam to Christianity in Voi, Kenya. He observes that miracles play a great role in conversion to Christianity. He also cautions that not all who experience miracles do come to Christ for fear of persecution and rejection from the Muslim community (2007, 36). He also applied anthropological research method through interviews to collect information.

Asland also shows the importance of worldview in understanding conversion among any people group. He focuses on the Digo on the East African Coast, bringing out their conversion experiences and relating them to missiological studies. He employed Rambo's model to understand the conversion process of the community in focus (2005, 105-166). The stages seem to bring out the hidden experiences of the MBBs, showing that Rambo's model was quite effective.

Review of Literature on Methodology

Rationale for Qualitative Research Method

In beginning to carry out research, the choice of an appropriate key to obtaining desired results. Mugenda and Mugenda explain that research is a method of obtaining knowledge with the intention to describe, to predict, to control and to explain. There are three basic types of methods in research: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. In certain circumstances, they recommend the qualitative research method in certain situations over the quantitative method because "It permits the researcher to go beyond the statistical results usually reported in quantitative research" (1999, 155). They further argue that "By using the qualitative method, researchers are able to collect data and explain phenomena more deeply and exhaustively" (1999, 197).

With reference to the study of human behavior, Mugenda and Mugenda recommend the qualitative method. They point out that "Human behavior that cannot be investigated by direct observation such as attitudes and other emotions are best studied using the qualitative method" (1999, 156). In short, they recommend the qualitative research method for in-depth study and particularly for research on human behavior. Creswell also recommends qualitative research in some situations particularly where little research has been done on a topic, where a topic may never have been addressed within a certain sample or group of people, or where existing theories are not applicable to the particular sample chosen for study (2003, 22). Such a method is quite appropriate for this study for three reasons:

1. It is a kind of human behavior.

2. There is very little that has been done and documented about the conversion of Borana to Christianity whether from Traditional Religion or from Islam.

3. The method will facilitate exhaustive study of the matter at hand.

Having decided on the particular approach for the study, the next step is to decide which type of qualitative research method to employ for the study. There are various strategies of inquiry including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory studies, or case studies. For the purpose of this study, the ethnographic strategy will be employed as explained below.

Ethnographic Research

Spradley describes ethnography simply as "The work of describing culture. The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view" (1979, 3). In doing this, Spradley argues, we do not study people; rather, we learn from people. Such an approach is quite appropriate for cross cultural studies because it provides the researcher with tools for understanding the people as if he/she were one of them. The aim of this study as much as possible is to get the story from the informant as raw as it is, as though one was one of them. Spradley gives a clear guideline on how to conduct ethnographic interviews in order to come up with detailed, authentic, reliable information. This research will incorporate some of these steps because the whole procedure as required by Spradley requires ample time to be on the ground with the people which may not be possible in this case. Spradley calls the procedure the 'Developmental Research Sequence' (1979, 224-226). The twelve steps can be summed up as follows:

- Finding key person(s),
- Asking the right questions,

- Keeping a record of the data gathered and
- Analyzing the data in understandable terms.

Geertz contribution is also crucial. He emphasizes that the best method of interpreting culture is the thick description (1973, 6). Thick description refers to going beyond surface level observations to finding the message behind the overt signals. He argues that whereas one action may be done by different people, the underlying meaning may be quite different in each case. Thick description helps us to understand the underlying meaning of the action observed. The researcher's task is therefore incomplete before he digs deep into the deeper meaning. Each society has its own assigned meanings to behavior. One act can have very different meanings to two different groups of people.

Geertz also admits that "Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And worse than that, the more deeply it goes, the less complete it is" (1973, 29). Anthropological study therefore raises more questions than answers as it goes deeper, but it is those questions that make it into what it is. Out of each study, there is room for more study. There can never be an exhaustive study in research. Recommendations for further inquiry help the researcher and other interested parties to build on the study at hand to generate more information.

We cannot underestimate the role of ethnography in gathering detailed information and analyzing it into understandable forms. "Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity" (1973, 14). Ethnography tries to see things from the actor's point of view (emic perspective) rather that the researcher's viewpoint that is etic (Kraft 1996, 76). Geertz (1973, 20) points out that ethnography is both interpretive and microscopic. The

researcher not only gathers information but also tries to makes sense of the gathered information. He interprets things in as much detail as possible the way a microscope enlarges an object.

Having said all that, it is quite clear that it is difficult to observe the conversion process of any individual since there is no easy way to determine who will finally convert. The study therefore gathered information from the MBBs' experiences that they themselves narrated. The study can be understood to be

1. Case studies where the focus is a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals. The cases are bounded by time and activity where a variety of data collection procedures are employed over an extended period of study.

2. Phenomenological because it is a type of lived human experience concerning a phenomenon as described by the participants studied over a prolonged period of time. The researcher will collect open-ended, emerging data with the primary aim of developing themes from the data.

3. Ethnography; in which the research examines an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily observational data.

In the first part of this chapter it strongly emerged from previous studies that anthropological research method is most appropriate in understanding culture. Among the above approaches to inquiry, ethnography focuses on a particular cultural group. This study can be understood as an ethnographic inquiry into case studies among some Borana MBB women on the phenomenon of conversion. The theological perspective was incorporated in the study as previously explained. The interviews were conducted in the natural environment of the convert in order for the research to incorporate observable cultural behavior into the research.

It is only through interaction with the people on the ground that one can establish their life processes, problems and challenges without biased assumptions. Sometimes it gives the respondents the chance to participate in the problem solving process in their community. Having explained the rationale for qualitative and specifically the ethnographic method of research, the next section deals with models that can be used for studying conversion.

Models for Understanding Conversion

1. Tippet's model

Tippet has developed a model for understanding conversion as a process of culture change. He explains that in anthropology, conversion falls under the study of acceptance or rejection of new ideas. In this process, the communicator is a co-worker of God towards winning the person to Christ. There are three points in the process: awareness, decision-making and incorporation. There are also two definite points in the process: realization (R) and encounter (E). The model is aimed at enabling the missionary to identify areas with gaps that should be filled in the process of co-working with God (1987, 76). The figure is shown below:
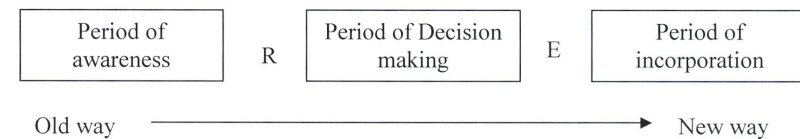

Figure 1. Tippet's model on conversion process (Adopted from Tippet 1987, 76)

Kraft modifies the above model to show that there is a multitude of small decisions that human beings make in their interaction with God that lead to the major decisions (1989, 335-336). In other words, the process does not have definite points of

change as shown above. Both arguments are valid in that conversion is a one-time decision accompanied by more decisions that facilitate growth in knowing God.

2. Green's model

As mentioned earlier, ethnotheology reckons that conversion is a process that involves God's action and human action. The person responds to God's changing work in faith as God reaches out to him/her within their culture. Kraft developed a model to prove this point where God and the person cooperate to arrive at the change in the person. Green modifies the model of Kraft with the same principle that Kraft used to modify Tippet's previous model. He argues that each 'D' represents a decision for or against commitment to Christ. The point of actual conversion is known only to God (Green 1989, 237). Whereas this may be true for some cases, it is important to note that the point where the person makes a conscious decision to follow Christ should guide our understanding of conversion.

Without such an understanding it is possible to enter the debate on whether or not conversion actually took place in the person. Admittedly, it is humanly impossible to make such judgments. Ideally, the process shows movement from a point of no allegiance to Christ to full allegiance to Him. The model is shown below.
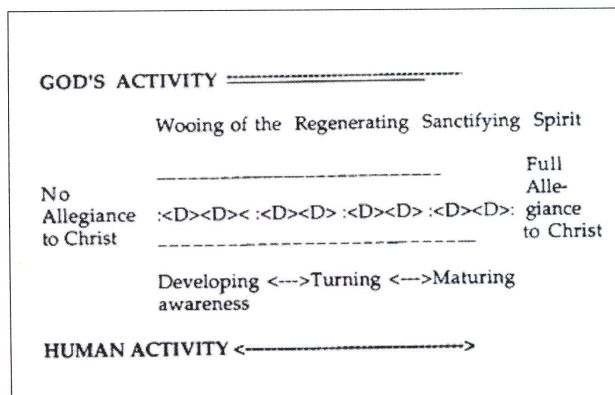
Figure 2. Green's conversion model (Adopted from Green 1989, 237)

The model is a good guideline for the study of conversion too. However, if we have to understand what happens in each period, we need a more detailed model. We therefore turn to Lewis Rambo, an expert in matters of conversion. Although his model is biased towards the psychological perspective it was modified during the study to fit into the Borana MBB context. The model was employed both in data collection and in the analysis. It will therefore be described in detail in chapter three.

Summary

Much has been written on the subject of conversion from different perspectives. For conversion to Christianity, the Biblical view remains the guideline towards a better understanding of conversion because it provides the theological angle. The sciences help us to gain some lenses through which one can attempt to understand such a complex phenomenon. In this research, the qualitative research method was employed, using Rambo's seven stage model as the theoretical framework of operation. However, this model was modified to suit the context of the Borana MBB women. Not every detail mentioned by Rambo was included. On the whole, the ideas of the following were crucial:

- Rick Love on Muslim perception of themselves
- Glaser and John on women in Islam
- Kraft on worldview change
- Kraft and Love on encounters: allegiance, truth, power, moral and cultural
- Peace on the conversion process
- Mugenda and Mugenda, Creswell and Spradley on research methodology

The next chapter will reveal how the actual research was carried out in the field.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

In chapter two, the study focused on literature related to the area of study and methods to be employed in the research process. In this chapter, the focus shifts to the procedure used in carrying out the study. It will cover the entry to the group, data collection, and data analysis.

Method and Procedures

Entry

The entry point to the Borana MBB women in Nairobi was fourfold:

- Some of the informants were already acquainted to the researcher so the researcher simply booked appointments with them for interviews.

- The known informants enabled the researcher to reach more women. Those who were willing were interviewed thereafter.

- Where necessary, permission was sought using the gatekeepers because some women were in different discipleship programs.

- One informant was reached through a friend who knew her home in Machakos.

The interviews were carried out in the informants' homes except for two cases where the interviews were done at the project premise and in a hall in the nearby shopping centre. These adjustments were necessitated by unavoidable circumstances.

The aim of having such venues was to understand the person within her context. Each interview lasted for an average of two hours.

Data Collection Procedure

The main tool that was employed in the research was ethnographic interviews. Several questions were asked with the aim of gaining an emic view of the subject at hand. It is important to find out the reasons and meaning for certain behavior. Therefore, list of guiding questions was prepared to direct the study (see Appendix 1 for guiding questions).

The researcher observed the behavior of the women in their homes, e.g. the way they treated their husbands and children. Observation helped in understanding their view of time through the activities they engaged in like doing household chores, business activities, etc. Sometimes the interviews were interrupted to attend to the husband, children or guests; thereafter the interview was resumed or rescheduled. The researcher spent time in the community before and after the interview to enable her to gain more insight about the real life of the informant. The aim was to give credence to their own testimony that there has been solid conversion and change of character. During such times, she attended to emerging issues like visiting the sick and counseling with daughters to informants. The researcher also had some informal sessions with the local evangelist. After pilot tests, the rest of the interviews were carried out, between 19th November 2007 and 6th March 2008.

Data Recording Procedure

Creswell recommends the interview and observation protocols as useful methods for recording information (2003, 188-190). This simply means recording observations made and responses to questions that are gathered. The researcher took different kinds of notes using the interview protocol. These included personal

information about the informant and responses to interview questions. Points for further inquiry were noted together with possible issues for reflection.

The observational protocol was useful in recording. Demographic information showing the place and date of the interviews was taken to indicate the context within which the research process took place.

Pilot Test

In order to establish the effectiveness of the interview questions, the researcher interviewed two Borana MBB women before the actual research. The aim was to apply what Borg and Gall recommend in saying, "Pilot-test the interview in order to improve questions, identify kinds of probes needed, and develop a sequence that makes sense and maintains interest" (1989, 400). Thereafter, the questions were refined for the actual research. The initial pilot studies were done on 7th and 9th May 2007 with one subsequent visit on 16th May 2007; the data collected was included as part of the findings.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the research was quite voluminous and diverse. Auerbach and Silverstein argue that there are three phases in developing theoretical constructs from raw data. These include:

- Making the text manageable. This step "is a filtering process, in which you choose which parts of your text you will include in your analysis, and which parts you will discard" (2003, 42). The research questions help in the sorting process.
- Hearing what they said. The researcher organizes the relevant text into repeating ideas and organizing those ideas into more general themes.

- Using the emerging themes to develop theory (2003, 43).

This study aimed at observing the first and the second steps because it was necessary to come up with emerging themes and categorize them into understandable information. For the first and third research questions, a theme was developed after the data was collected. For the second research question, the framework for collecting and codifying data was already set in terms of process coding by use of Rambo's model. The responses to the second question formed the bulk of the data collected. In the end, an overall theme was developed by combining the pre-assigned process coding and relationship and social structure codes.

Concerning the use of theory in qualitative research, Creswell points out that qualitative research may "Use a theoretical lens or perspective to guide their study and raise the questions of gender, class and race (or some combination) they would like to address" (2003, 131). The lens provides the researcher with a starting point from which to gather or analyze data.

The theory may be stated at the beginning or the end of the study. Some researchers do not apply any particular explicit theory. Creswell cautions that the lens should be a guide but not "the container into which the data must be poured" in order to take care of individual differences in the cases in the field. Such differences include age, personality and status. The aim is to get the emic data that Creswell calls "First order concepts, such as local language, concepts, and ways of expression used by members in a cultural-sharing group" (2002, 491).

Having discussed the need for a theoretical framework in the previous chapter, a brief overview of the different stages of Rambo's model will be provided. Such a

process code is crucial towards understanding the process of conversion in the given group of people.

Rambo's Model

As discussed in the previous chapter, many scholars have come up with systematic explanations that can help us examine the complex process. For the purpose of this research paper, the model laid out by Rambo is most suitable because of its comprehensiveness in incorporating personal, spiritual, social and cultural dimensions that are of paramount importance to this study. Even though these steps vary in order from one case to the other, they are laid out as follows:

1. Context

Rambo begins his stage model with 'context'. The importance of this stage is noted by other authors, e.g. Eliade states that this is "The total social, cultural, religious, and personal environment" (1987, 75). The macro context refers to the cultural and social context of the larger environment, that is, "Political systems, religious organizations, relevant ecological considerations, transnational corporations, and economic systems" (Rambo 1993, 22). These factors can either facilitate or impede conversion. The micro context is equally important, i.e. "The more immediate world of a person's family, friends, ethnic group, religious community and neighborhood" (1993, 22). It determines the individual's identity and self-worth thus forming a basis for his thoughts, feelings and actions. At the point of conversion context is very crucial because it can either facilitate or impede the entire process.

2. Crisis

In this aspect of Rambo's model, Eliade has also noted that "Virtually all students of conversion agree that some kind of crisis precedes conversion. The crisis may be religious, political, psychological, cultural, or it may be a life situation that

opens people to new options" (1987, 75). The crisis may manifest in one or more of the named aspects. During such turbulent times, the normal life explanations of situations fail to provide answers to the crisis at hand as the person. Eliade notes that psycho pathologists understand conversion to be a coping mechanism in response to the disturbance faced. Whether this is true or false is not a fact to be concluded here though this claim needs further study. For Rambo, crisis may range from being mild or severe, brief or prolonged, limited or extensive, internal or external. They come in the form of near death experiences, mystical experiences, or sickness and healing experiences. On the other hand, such a state may be viewed as the desire for transcendence, a search for meaning and purpose in life. In some cases, there is usually no mark able crisis that leads to conversion.

3. Quest

Rambo states that "Human beings continually engage in the process of world construction and reconstruction in order to generate meaning and purpose, to maintain psychic equilibrium, and to assure continuity" (1993, 56). This is the underlying theme in the quest stage. The search for meaning and purpose in life, Rambo explains further, is an on-going process in life but seems to intensify during times of crisis.

Arguably, most people are normally actively involved in the conversion process; a few are at the passive end of the response-style continuum. Some people are also more receptive to new options than others, while others are easily influenced by external influences.

There are several factors that account for the manner of response the person is likely to assume e.g., family, friends, religious background, etc. Rambo observes that even though power and transcendence are rarely discussed, they play a major role in

motivating many seekers towards conversion; it may be power to heal, succeed in life, and power over death.

4. Encounter

At this point, the advocate becomes very important. What he/she represents before the seeker is very important. His strategies, the demands made on the convert Rambo's perspective, encounter is the stage when "An advocate and a potential convert come together and begin to engage in processes that will result, for some people, in conversion" (1993, 66).

However, the term has a different meaning elsewhere in relation to conversion. Gaudeul argues that true conversion is an encounter, first with God and then this translates to encounter with the other, which is expressed in an effort to serve one's neighbor's real need (1999, 286). Such an encounter is mentioned by Kraft (1981, 453) and Love (2000, 90) as explained earlier in this paper in terms of power encounter, truth encounter, moral encounter and cultural encounter.

5. Interaction

This is a learning phase as the person pursues his interest in the new religious option. He will learn more about the expectations from the group, their teachings, lifestyle, etc through both formal and informal means. It takes the initiative of either the potential convert or the advocate with the duration varying from person to person or even group to group. New relationships, rituals, language and roles become an integral part of the learning process. Personal relationships have been proved to be quite effective in helping the seeker.

6. Commitment

This is the turning point or decision making phase in the stage model. Rituals of rejection, transition and incorporation often take place as the person often makes a

public demonstration of his choice depending on what the particular group demands. This is a time of new rituals, surrender and conflict resolution and stepping out in faith to the 'unknown'. The person now has a testimony of what has happened to him. Motives vary and change in the course of time much as surrender is to be sustained throughout the new phase of life. Seemingly, this is the encounter stage that Gaudeul and Love discuss as stated above because it is the turning point, the point where the person surrenders to the new faith.

7. Consequences

After commitment, change will have varied implications on the person i.e. personal, sociocultural, historical and theological. Some may be short lived while others may last over a long period of time. The key factor will be "The nature, intensity, and duration of the conversion and the response to conversion in a person's or a group's context" (1993, 144). Rambo stresses that conversion is only effective if one's life is transformed. That transformation is not a static but a dynamic process. One should not dwell so much on that one point in time when they made the commitment to the new way of life; transformation is an on-going process throughout life. He observes that "Change is persistent and important and continuous, and most religious traditions expect and foster change by providing ideology and techniques for the ongoing development and maturation of their members" (1993, 163). The summary of Rambo's model is provided in Appendix 2.

Kraft's Worldview Classification

Being ethnography, the study required a framework of analysis that would show the flowing theme through the process. As discussed earlier, conversion in anthropological terms is a process of change in worldview. In worldview, the person or group perceive reality by making certain assumptions. The universals include

categories, causality, time/event, space and relationships. The aim is to derive meaning from the reality perceived.

From the data, the major emerging themes include relationship to the social environment and relationship to the supernatural environment. The other relationships to time and to space are only applied where necessary to support the initial two kinds of relationship. A study of this nature cannot allow for such an extensive study to include all the relationships. Moreover, the worldview of the Borana is basically power oriented so the study will concentrate on the two aspects of relationship. Conversion is also a rescue operation from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. For better understanding, the relationship theme reveals previous allegiances. It helps to show how those allegiances are challenged and how the person finally gives in to new allegiance. The table below demonstrates how the relationship theme was applied to the Borana MBB women's context.

Table 3: Relationships in worldview universals (Adopted from Kraft (2000, 9-17)

Person/Group	Relating to	Social environment (Person/Group) • Family • Neighbors • *Umma* • Spiritual leaders • Outsiders e.g. Christians
		Supernatural environment • Allah, • Angels • *Jinn*, spirits, *ayaana*

Love's Identity-Practice Analysis and Encounters

For research question one, Rick Love's ideas on high-low practice and high-low identity among Muslims was useful for thematic coding. This perspective provided the basis for categorizing the various aspects of the Muslim life. There are three common themes:

- High identity-High practice
- High identity-low practice
- Low identity-low practice

Love observes that low identity-high practice is a rare occurrence (2000, 193). The three themes are therefore useful in explaining the religious state of the Borana MBB women before they converted to Christ.

The theological dimension of conversion necessitated that there should be a theme that will reveal the working of God and man together in the conversion process. During the coding process, it emerged that the whole process of conversion led to encounter. Rambo's sixth stage is therefore understood in terms of power and truth encounter (Love 2000, 90).

Commitment is therefore marked by a confrontation between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Kraft sums up the three important encounters:

- Power encounter leads to freedom in Jesus Christ due to release from satanic activity.
- Allegiance encounter results in rescue of people from wrong allegiances and to bring them into relationship to Jesus Christ
- Truth encounter results in countering error and/or ignorance to bring people to correct understandings. (Adopted from Kraft 1996, 453).

After conversion, the change process was also explained in terms of further encounter: moral and cultural (Love 2000, 90). Responses to research question three are therefore codified within the framework of encounters. Since these encounters will be further explained in the next chapter, it is sufficient to mention them in brief.

Validation and Verification

In determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the reader of an account is crucial to qualitative research (Creswell 2003, 196). The following strategies were employed in validating the information gathered in this study:

1. Triangulation: In three cases, the spouses of the informants acted as the alternative source of information.

2. Using rich, thick description by explaining in details the findings, particularly the cultural elements.

3. Working closely with the supervisor in charge of the study and regularly reporting findings to him.

4. Checking for communicability by explaining analyzed data to other researchers in NEGST.

5. In some cases, repeated visits helped to clarify concepts that had not been understood; at times such visits allowed for cross checking with the spouse(s).

6. The researcher's bias was noted earlier in limitations of the study in that the researcher is not an insider to the culture; neither does she understand the Borana language.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The focus of this chapter is to present the research findings from the MBB Borana women living in and around Nairobi. The aim is to describe, interpret and analyze the data collected from the informants. In doing so, each research question will be treated separately to provide a detailed study of the conversion process of the Borana women. Before that, a personal background of the informants will facilitate an understanding of these women.

Background of the Informants

In this research, part of the background of the informants will be reflected in Rambo's stage model. Only a general overview of each informant's background is therefore given here in order to give a starting point to the research process.

In total, twelve women were interviewed, eight being Borana and four Burji. The years of conversion range from as early as 1982 to as recent as 2007; a span of twenty five years. This means that conversion in the communities is an active, on-going process among these people. God is in the process of saving the Borana and Burji women in and out of Nairobi.

On the other hand, the number of years one has been a Christian will affect their perspective of conversion and also determine the short term and long term impacts of conversion in their lives. More recent converts are still adapting to Christian life and are quite excited to be Christians. They are more zealous in bringing

others to Christ than those who converted about five or more years ago. These older converts no longer struggle with basic Christian teachings. They are now like any other Christian who did not necessarily come from a Muslim background although this depends on the kind of discipleship program they got from the beginning. Recent converts also enjoy the privilege of converting in an era when awareness on ME and conversion from Islam is much higher in Nairobi than the situation was over five years.

These women are of different marital status. Some are married, others divorced, separated or widowed. Factors surrounding their marital lives have sometimes played a major role in their conversion journey as will be examined in the data in this study. For example, those who preceded their husbands in coming to Christ faced more challenges in the family compared with those whose husband preceded them. For the latter group, the husband set the stage for their conversion. Economically, most of the married women look to their husbands for provision whereas the single mothers are the sole providers in their families. The latter are therefore forced to go out of the home in search of income for sustenance.

All the informants were circumcised at the age of ten to twelve years back in their rural homes except Batula (2007) who underwent the rite in Nairobi. The Borana still hold on to this practice even in the face of modernity just like many other Muslim societies. The reason, Batula and Maimuna (2007) explain, is to inhibit sexual pleasure in the woman and decrease chances of engaging in fornication. Culturally, the virginity of a girl brings great honor not just to the girl but also to her family.

The ages range from twenty two to forty six years. Some are young mothers recently married while others are already grandmothers. They therefore represent different stages of life and accompanying challenges and prospects. For example, the

young mothers are adjusting to marriage and children, the grandmothers (who incidentally are only forty four and forty six years of age) are adjusting to daughters and sons in law.

The education levels of the Borana MBB women also vary in that some are illiterate while others are semi-literate. The most educated in the category only managed to complete the Kenyan primary school level of education at Standard Eight. They could not pursue their education because of lack of funds in the family or because the family invested more in the boy child's education at the expense of the girl child's. Their levels of understanding and perception of issues will vary significantly. During the interviews, some could not speak very good Swahili and therefore at times this called for the need for an interpreter; especially if the informants had not been in the city for long. The more literate women are able to read the Bible for themselves while others depend purely on oral communication to gain Biblical knowledge or any other information.

The Borana MBB women are also involved in different activities to earn a living. Those who leave their houses to go and work will have different experiences from those who stay at home as housewives. The latter tend to be more exposed socially because they meet more people and engage their minds in varying degrees of challenges while the latter are confined and restricted in their movements and interactions. Generally, the Borana woman is expected stay at home and care for the family. However, due to the financial demands of urban and modern life, they are often forced to work in order to supplement the husband's income.

Each informant also got married at around age sixteen soon after school for those who were able to go to school. The cultural practice generally demands that girls should get married early. Sometimes she is allowed to choose the man she should

marry. In some cases as will be shown in the study, some girls have refused to marry the chosen person because they felt they were too old or they just did not like them. In a way, they were considered defiant to tradition for seeking to choose their suitable spouses. After circumcision, the girl is basically ready for marriage. A summary of the described details on the informants' backgrounds is given in appendix 3.

Religious State before Conversion

The Borana MBB women were not *tabula rasa* (empty slates) before they came to Christ. As human beings, they were within a cultural and religious system that shaped their self perception as Muslims. The main interest here is to examine the women's view of Islam before they came to Christ and how committed they were in observing its practices. These concepts are borrowed from Love (2000, 193) who he uses the identity-practice comparison relevant for determining the perception of Folk Muslims about their own religion. As he admits, perception is quite difficult to accurately document; a true fact in this study because of the bias that may arise from the fact that the person has crossed over from Islam and now has an etic perspective.

Folk Practices

Before embarking on the practice-identity theme, it is important to highlight some of the interactions these informants had with the spirit world before conversion. As mentioned earlier, folk practices among Muslims are rampant in all contexts including the urban context. Even among the most devout Orthodox Muslims, there is a tendency to pursue folk practices. The intention of this section is not to examine all the practices that these women engaged in as Muslims since that would derail our scope of study. The focus will be limited to relationship to power persons and power rituals. These are some of the avenues of accessing supernatural power.

Women can participate in folk rituals as practitioners. They become power persons and experts through whom people access the spirit world. Yasmin (2008) was a practitioner in the *ayaana* ritual which she learnt from her step mother. Even though her step mother was possessed by *ruhani,* Yasmin did not inherit the spirit. Her house was a power place where she conducted *ayaana* rituals every Wednesday. She would invite Muslim women from the neighborhood for prayer. The ritual is intended to excite and remove boredom from the person. The ritual involved

1. Burning *udi* (incense) to produce *itan* (smoke).

2. A reading from the Qur'an, verse recitation and singing.

3. A feast on popcorn, coffee and *miraa* (particular leaves that are commonly used among the Kenyan Cushitic groups to stimulate the mind).

Another form of interaction with spirits is through being patients. Normally, the spirits need to be appeased so that the person can experience some peace. This can only happen through a power person. When Hamidah (2008) was young, she was sick for seven years. The venue of the practice was in the bush, away from interference from villagers. The grandfather who was a diviner and prophet presided over the ritual with the assistance of Hamidah's elder brother, his trainee. The ritual involved

1. Swinging a red cock over her head, put it over her stomach and doing somersaults with the cock for about twenty minutes.

2. Songs to all spirits *(ayaana, ruhani* and *jinn)* with special drums as accompaniment.

3. A reading from the Qur'an and instructions from the spirits.

4. Slaughtering the cock; the blood was believed to wash away the patient's problem.

5. The carcass would then be thrown into an anthill to ensure that no one ever

retrieved it.

After the ritual, the patient would get better since the spirits had been appeased. If the person is not a patient, she may be escorting a patient. This happens especially in moments of crisis when a problem cannot be solved through conventional avenues. In consulting the power persons, Salma (2007) went to a *sheikh* when her child was very sick. The *sheikh* read Qur'anic verses as he prescribed to her a solution. However, she later realized it was not necessary as she had wasted her money (Kenya Shillings 500/-) and time because the child did not get better.

Attacks from spirits are not strange to some Borana women. When a person is attacked by spirits, he/she may not necessarily attend the power rituals to appease the spirits. Instead, this creates a crisis in the life of the person and forces them to seek help from elsewhere. The *sheikh* or *mganga* demands payment which the person may not be able to afford. In the city, the alternatives become more appealing as were the cases of Salma (2007), Saumu (2008) and Halimah (2008). They decided to turn to Christians for help when they were threatened by spirits.

Folk practice was also experienced indirectly. Some informants observed and heard about rituals and spirits through their close relatives. Dansa (2007) never practiced spirit rituals but her grandmother had a *ruhani* spirit which she believes has tormented her daughter to date. Hamidah (2008) also reports that to date, her own brother is a practitioner in the *ayaana* cult. Every Friday evening they burn *udi* (incense) at home where he leads prayer the Islamic way. The prayers end as *udi* gets finished.

Not all informants had an involvement in ritual practices. The urban context, to some extent, hinders extensive ritual practice. Apart from those mentioned above, the rest of the informants had neither been to a *sheikh* nor practiced rituals connected

to spirits. Since the ancestral spirits were not in their families as per their knowledge, they did not participate in perpetrating the interests of such spirits.
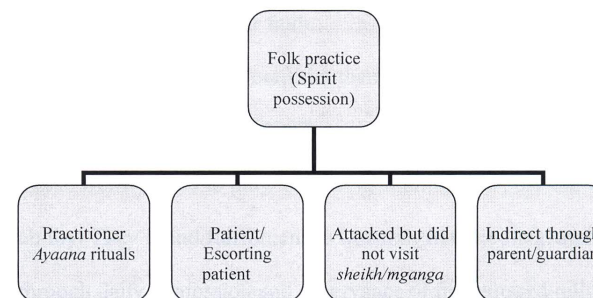
Figure 3. Folk practices among the Borana women

After the discussion on folk practices, it is important to examine the level of identity and practice of the informants in Islam before conversion to Christ.

Identity and Practice in Islam

<u>High identity, high practice</u>

In every religion there are certain standards expected of the person in order to be considered to be a devout or a nominal person in the religion. In Islam, the person who observes the five pillars of Islam is considered to be a true Muslim. Great emphasis is put on prayer and fasting as these are the overt and obvious marks of a Muslim. Besides, every day the *shahada* (confession) must be recited as an affirmation of one's faith and allegiance to Allah. The first loyalty of every Muslim is to Allah. Allah shapes the worldview of the Muslim, including the Muslim woman. *Shahada* is recited many times each day without even thinking about it. The study assumes that this was a part of daily life and so it does not determine how religious one was.

As for *zakat* (almsgiving) and *hajj* (pilgrimage), many informants would wish

to participate but they are challenged economically. In this study therefore, the main focus was on these three basic practices that women zealously participate in to show their commitment to their faith.

Most informants consider themselves to have been very serious in their practice of Islam. Dansa (2007) could go to the mosque as early as 4 am to pray. These women used to pray and fast as faithfully as possible within a Muslim woman's ability. They found fulfillment as Muslims in their allegiance to Allah manifested through daily confession and observance of the required religious standards.

With regard to identity, some people are more proud to be associated with their religion than others. The above informants were happy to be identified as Muslims and were content that way particularly during their early years of life. They were also so protective of their religion that they could not stand any attacks from an outsider. Among outsiders were the Christians who were known for attempts to attack Islam. Aziza (2008) used to engage in serious debates with her Christian teachers and fellow kids to defend Islam. She always made sure she won in the debate. Dansa (2007) hated her Christian brother for attempting to mislead her from the right way.

Exposure and crisis in adult life affected their level of identity of the women. In Islam, anyone born to Muslims automatically becomes a Muslim. Leaving Islam means leaving the *dini ya jadi* (ancestral religion) that enables the person to be part of the *umma.* Farida (2008) was proud to be associated with her family and community's religion. She never envisioned herself ever being an outsider to the religion in which she was born and brought up. After all, who was she to go against her community's wish?

Perception of an opposing view in religious allegiance must be quite appealing in order to attract a person to shift allegiance. If the perception is not

positive, it takes longer to come to terms with the new offer. How did the Borana MBB women perceive Christianity as Muslims? To Aziza (2008), Christians were dirty people who ate pigs and worshipped Jesus, a mere human being. Not only that, but they were also loudmouthed, preaching with a lot of noise. To her it was shameful to be a Christian. Dansa (2007) hated Christianity, the religion of the *kafir* (unbelievers), that no Muslim was supposed to imagine joining, not even for a moment. By all means Christians were outsiders with whom one was not to associate. Contra wise, Islam was the right and only way to live right with God.

High identity, low practice

There are cases of nominalism in all religions including Islam. Low commitment to prayer and fasting is a strong indicator of nominalism. The price of obeying 'too many' rules and regulations can be quite high. The result is a feeling of inadequacy in meeting God's standards that appears to be unattainable. Batula (2007), Saumu (2007), Salma (2007), and Hamidah (2008) admit that they neither prayed nor fasted faithfully as Muslims. Despite all these, they depended on their religion as their source of identity.

External influence can interfere with one's level of commitment and ultimately identity. Close association with Christians e.g. may result in weakened attachment to Islam. The situation can be aggravated by a context dominated by Christians. Naturally, no one wants to stay in isolation. Everyone needs friends, especially women. This is what led Hamidah (2008) to begin behaving like a Christian. This did not mean she had converted as yet; in fact it took a very long time before she finally became a Christian.

Low commitment to practices of Islam is not necessarily an indicator of low identity with the religion. This can be attributed to the fact that Islam represents a

sense of belonging to the *umma* community into which the person was born. Islam is a symbol of identity, self-worth and belonging. For the sake of peace within their families and the wider community, one chooses to remain in her *dini ya jadi.*

Low identity, low practice

The level of identity-practice varied at different stages and circumstances of life. The early years of life are marked with limited exposure and low freedom of choice due to parental influence. Enculturation in the community is also very effective in instilling a sense of pride in Islam and shielding the child from external influence. At no point in their childhood do any of the informants remember ever questioning Islam. Even with little dissatisfactions about the religion, it was still the religion they were born into. In adulthood, identity and practice can be interrupted by:

1. Crisis situations.

Crisis situations play a vital role in casting doubt on one's usual state of steadiness. First, at such points, the victim requires a faith that works because whatever they are used to does not seem to work. In their moments of crisis, Batula (2007) and Maimuna (2007) were dissatisfied with Islam because the more they prayed the more God seemed to be so far and unconcerned. Secondly, in moments of vulnerability, there is need for a caring friend to turn to for support. If no one in the usual community seems concerned, the temptation to find alternative help elsewhere becomes high. In her moments of bereavement and financial stress, Salma (2007) found herself struggling alone. The *umma* she had depended on was least concerned with her. Christian friends gave her immense support, drawing her closer to them and away from Islam.

2. Inadequate role models in the normal environment.

People often look to those who are more experienced in a certain field for help

either through their walk and their talk, that is, lifestyle. Looking to Catholicism, the Orthodox Church and Islam Saumu (2007) did not find much to emulate. According to her, each of these religious institutions stressed the need for rituals at the expense of lifestyle change.

3. Limitations posed by Islam to Muslim women.

Muslim women are not allowed to preach or teach men. Hamidah (2008) always wanted to express her preaching and teaching talents but could not. As mentioned earlier, they can neither pray nor fast during their menses. Hamidah (2008) and Batula (2007) found it very difficult to come to terms with these limitations. She wanted a God she could access in whatever state she was in, even during her menses.

The issue of polygamy also causes dissatisfaction to many Muslim women who do not want to share their husbands with someone else. Farida (2008), Faiza (2008), and Halimah (2008) did not support polygamy; they desired to be in monogamous marriages like most Christians. They feared to live in insecurity in polygamous marriages having been brought up in such families.

4. Extended friendship with Christians.

Even where the family is all Muslim, when they feel accepted and loved in Christian circles, their identity in Islam may decrease. The more and closer Christian friends Hamidah (2008) had, the more her identity in Islam became low. The only thing that kept her in Islam as a child was fear of her parents. With time, the older and more exposed she became, the weaker the bond became too.

It is therefore evident that there are some aspects of high and low identity in different individuals. Even though some informants were at first happy with their religion, they found themselves in doubt at a moment of need. Some had a few doubts

right from the beginning but they had accepted the religion the way it was and had no desire to change to any alternative religion.

Table 4 Identity and Practice in Islam at different stages of life

Early childhood	Adulthood	Crisis stage
High Identity-High Practice	H-H***	H-H
	H-L**	H-L
		L-L
High Identity-Low Practice	H-L	H-L
		L-L
	L-L*	L-L
		H-L
Low Identity-Low practice	L-L	L-L

Key: ***   H-H: High identity, High practice
   **   H-L: High identity, Low practice
   *   L-L: Low identity, Low practice

Having set a background of the religious lives of the informants in Islam, the next section will consider the second research question.

Application of Rambo's Model

In response to the second research question in this section the study used Rambo's stage model to understand the conversion of the Borana MBB women. Since the model is a guideline, not all cases follow the steps as stated. As mentioned earlier, the main theme employed to understand this process is that of relationships based on the world view analysis of Kraft. Specifically, relationship to the social and the supernatural environments guided the study.

Stage One: Context

In Rambo's model, the context can be compared to a stage in drama, where different scenes are acted. Context therefore runs through all the stages that follow because it provides the background where events take place. The wider stage is termed as the macro context; the localized stage is the micro context.

At macro context level, Kenya as a country has enjoyed freedom of worship in that no one is forced to belong to a particular religion. The Kenyan constitution allows freedom of worship as one of the rights of its citizens. If anyone changes their religious allegiance whether alone or in a group, it is not considered a crime at all, for it is within the constitution of the land. The Kenyan constitution states in Chapter 5 Article 78,

> Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, and for the purposes of this section that freedom includes freedom of thought and of religion, freedom to change his religion, or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

From the above observations, it is clear that freedom to spread one's religion is allowed in Kenya, which allows both Christians and Muslims to have maximum opportunity to extend their religious beliefs beyond their local borders. Under the umbrella of such a constitution, mass media like radio, television, newspapers and magazines have been widely used to preach the different beliefs to Kenyans.

However, this freedom is not defined as to how far it can be exercised in the different communities in the country. Among the Muslims in Kenya, just as any other Islamic society in the world and Africa in particular, this freedom is not always guaranteed. The predominantly Islamic communities of the North Eastern and Coastal regions consider it a serious offense for one to leave Islam. Apostates are punished by either being disowned, being served with death threats or even being killed. The Kenyan constitution has played a major role in protecting those who leave Islam to become Christians. This explains why even though some of them do suffer; the prevalence is low as compared with that of countries under Islamic rule such as those in the North African region. Persecution for apostasy mostly happens at the family or community level in the Kenyan context. In the predominantly Islamic regions, it is

almost impossible to have public Christian meetings or to openly witness to a Muslim.

In Nairobi city and other parts of the country that have lower Muslim populations, the trend is slightly different because Muslims from rural areas have generally settled in most major towns to do business. In this environment therefore, the person is allowed to interact more freely with people from other communities and religions to a greater extent. Moreover, since Christianity penetrated into Borana land as earlier mentioned, the Borana tend to be more sympathetic in their view to Christianity especially when compared with their Somali counterparts who are quite conservative. However, where there is heavy presence of the *umma,* there is bound to be more restriction with regard to religious change.

On the other hand, the micro context has contributed to the conversion of the Borana MBB women in significant ways. Therefore, the study will examine the factors in childhood and the factors in adulthood that have played a crucial role in setting the stage for religious change in the lives of the informants. Most informants had their formal education in the rural home and so their childhood was spent in the ancestral home. Only Hamidah (2008) and Batula (2007)) have spent most of their lives in the urban context.

A child naturally looks to the persons in positions of authority; that is, the adults who matter to him/her most at home, in the neighborhood and at school. During this period of life, there is little interaction with the spirit world. The child undergoes the enculturation process as he/she acquires cultural norms and values that equip them for survival in the world. The foundation for later life is laid within the social environment.

The rural context

This phase of life will be limited to the formative years up to the age of sixteen, when most informants got married. Traditionally, according to Habiba (2008), at that age, a girl is considered to be an adult. She can be married off even if she is not yet through with her education.

The center for decision making and nurture during the early years of life was the family. The parent or the guardian had a big say in what choices the person would make in all spheres of life especially with regard to religion. None of the informants converted during their childhood when all effort was made to instruct them and indoctrinate them into Islam and to protect them from outside forces that appeared to threaten their Islamic standpoints. The school, neighborhood and *madrasa* were also foundational in their lives through the interactions they had in these places.

1. The family

The most influential persons at home are the parent or the guardian and in the rural home the extended family members, particularly the clan members. They shape the life of the child and determine what religion the child should belong to. There are informants who have been brought up in families that were strictly Islamic. However, most informants grew up not knowing any Christian within their families.

The fact that one has been born in a cosmopolitan context does not necessarily mean they can convert easily. Since the clan dictates how people live, what to believe in and even who to marry, it is not easy for many to just abandon Islam. To leave Islam means having no identity because of the cut-off from the *umma.*

Christian presence in a family, whether nuclear or extended, can be directly or indirectly influential in helping the person to understand Christianity. Salma (2007) and Yasmin (2008) had a cousin and brothers respectively who were Christians. Yasmin's brothers sometimes tried to convince her to become a Christian but they had too little knowledge to convince her. Besides, they were nominal and so she did not

find a good example to emulate from them. For Salma (2007), her cousins had been adopted by a Christian priest and consequently became Christians. Hearing about the Christian concern made her realize that Christians were kind even though she did not interact with her cousins. On the other hand, it is not obvious that Christian influence will take place simply because of having Christian relatives. The level of interaction between the person and the Christian may be quite low especially with regard to religious affairs. For Faiza (2008) and Farida (2008), their mother's family members had very little influence on them despite being Christians.

The death of a parent or guardian in early childhood also creates vulnerability in the child. For example, Salma (2007) never really knew her mother who died when she was a few weeks old. Traditionally, a man may choose to remarry, or simply maintain the other wife or wives if he was polygamous. This has diverse effects on the children. For example, Salma (2007) attributes her not going to school to the fact that there was no one who cared enough to ensure that it happened. She grew up under the care of her grandmother who was very loving and caring but could not afford to educate her. For Faiza (2008), Farida (2008) and Hamidah (2008), their biological fathers died while they were quite young. In Borana custom, the woman is inherited by the brother or cousin to her late husband. Hamidah (2008) felt that the step father who inherited her mother did not care much about them. He was more concerned about his own children than about her. Thus she grew up feeling insecure.

In Borana culture, the older people can choose to adopt their grandchildren to live with them for security, company and assistance in doing basic chores. Saumu's (2007) mother handed her over to the maternal grandmother at a tender age. The grandmother was an Orthodox Christian but she had little say over her because the rest of the family was strictly Islamic. Her own mother used to practice *ruhani* which

she was meant to inherit.

2. The school: Formal authority and nurture

Religious instruction is not part of the written job description of teachers in regular government schools. Teachers are trained to concentrate on academic performance. In predominantly Muslim areas, the Christian teachers who are a minority may find it quite challenging to integrate religious issues to their teaching. On the part of the child, they observe that the Christian teachers are fearful to tell them about their faith because of community influence. The only initiatives noticed from teachers were seen in Aziza (2008) and Hamidah's (2008) cases. For Aziza, a Christian teacher tried to show them how the Islamic practice of consulting *sheikhs* when in problems was mere deception. Aziza and her fellow Muslim kids could not stand it. They condemned her for pointing out a weakness in their perfect religion.

The education level also helps the person to be more open to discussion on religious issues even if they do not change their position. Early in school, Aziza (2008) confesses that she had religious debates with Christian peers at school. The educated person is able to read the Qur'an and possibly the Bible for themselves as Farida (2008), Batula (2007) and Maimuna (2007) could. They do not have to depend on oral or audio-visual assistance to learn. In secret and in silence, one can read whatever material they choose to at their own pace. This promotes the ability to understand and question the content of the book being read.

Peer influence is often quite strong in school contexts. There is little suspicion over children spending time together. Through such informal interactions, strong friendships are built to the extent that religious ideas can be shared. With regard to her childhood friend, Hamidah reports that "This Christian boy used to give me Bible Correspondence course materials. I would respond to their questions and he would

secretly post them for me lest my parents learnt about it. He helped me to learn about Christianity" (Hamidah 2008). The boy's effort bore fruit much later in her life as it laid a good foundation in enabling her to understand the basics of Christianity.

Peer influence has got certain limitations because the *umma* keeps a check on their own even through children. They are supposed to report any deviant behavior for disciplinary action at home. With such awareness, it becomes difficult to engage in meaningful religious discussion with non-Muslims. The Christian peers also fear putting their friends and themselves in trouble. For those who grew up in North Eastern, the Christian peers generally kept off their paths in religious matters. They did not engage in any religious discussions.

3. The neighborhood

In the neighborhood, there is an interesting scenario. The Muslim *umma* and Christians each have their own imaginary but clearly defined space. From the perception of the informants, it emerges that the Christian neighbors often kept away from the Muslims. They really feared them and had their church functions separately. Habiba reports that a neighbor used to hold church meetings in his house. The Muslim fraternity mocked them a lot but they did not give up; yet they did not preach to the Muslims.

Despite such delineations of space, children have a tendency to be curious about what is happening in their surrounding. Faiza (2008) was attracted to Christian meetings which she would attend because of two things: songs and accompanying instruments. She attended meetings early just to watch Christians from afar setting up instruments before their meetings and to listen to their songs.

At times, the Muslims also keep away from the Christians and prefer to conduct their affairs without interference. This means that even though they belong to

the same ethnic group, the boundaries were very clear and no one was allowed to intrude into the other group's space. Religious interaction was hardly encouraged much as some social aspects of life would be shared e.g. attending each other's ceremonies like weddings and burials.

4. *Madrasa*: Religious education

Most Muslim families highly value Islamic education for children. Children are either sent to Islamic schools for all their education or to a place where they get religious instruction. Since most informants attended regular schools, they went for *madrasa* in the evening after school. They learnt the Qur'an and Arabic and socialized with other Muslim children.

Motivation for attending *madrasa* varies with different children. Some go because parents insist that they should as is the case for Hamidah (2008), Batula (2007) and Farida (2008). Beyond obedience to parents, those who highly identify with Islam find it a place for being grounded in their religion and to find good company. Aziza (2008) was quite comfortable with *madrasa* instruction since it deepened her knowledge of Islam.

The style of teaching in *madrasa* is quite autocratic. Failure to master the Qur'anic portion of the day is a serious offense that attracts severe punishment. To keep up with such a system is quite challenging. Some informants give up along the way as they grow up. Batula (2007) gave up and stopped attending these classes by the time she was about fourteen years old. Instead, she enjoyed and worked harder in Christian Religious Education which was part of the school curriculum; the only accessible mode of instruction in Christian teaching. She felt that Christianity offered her love that was not in the Islamic context.

Attendance to *madrasa* is very important. Missing sessions is a punishable

offense especially if the reason is not acceptable. Farida's (2008) experience is a clear illustration of such a situation. At the age of twelve, one day she and her sister were meant to go for *madrasa*. Along the way, their mission aborted as they sneaked to the nearby *manyatta* (village) to watch the Jesus' film in the local Borana language. First of all, when they reported their experience to their mother, she was so angry that she denied them supper. Secondly, the next day when the peers reported them to the teacher during the *madrasa* session, they received more beatings from the teacher. Because of such extreme and unpleasant punishment, Faiza (2008) found herself struggling. She made up her mind to continue to faithfully practice Islam but vowed never to attend *madrasa*. At first, this did not augur well with her at home but to her relief, the mother did not force her to go back.

Madrasa is not always compulsory for all Muslim children. The family may not insist that the children should attend. Without strong impetus from the family, the child may not see the seriousness of attending the classes as was the case for Yasmin (2008). Furthermore, in a context with few Muslims, *madrasa* may not be available or it may not be easily accessible due to distance. For Hamidah (2008), *madrasa* had been enjoyable all along in Isiolo. Once they moved to Kitale, *madrasa* became challenging to attend. She found herself still in need of religious instruction and strayed slowly into the church even without the consent or awareness of the parents. The songs and Bible stories narrated in Sunday school were so interesting that she kept going to hear more.

The urban context

Life outside the rural home that coincides with adulthood appears to be a more eventful phase for most informants. These informants have been away from their rural homes for a varied length of years ranging from four to thirty four years. Depending

on where they relocated to, they have been exposed to a variety of experiences as will be discussed in this study which either impeded or facilitated their conversion process.

1. A place of religious freedom

Urban life is marked with some social freedom, at least from one's nuclear family and clan. Because of distance, they cannot monitor everything that one does. It may therefore become easier to consider new religious options. Hamidah (2008) explains that whereas in Isiolo one was expected to strictly adhere to Islam, Kitale was a different case. She found herself in an environment that opened her up to opportunities to learn more about the Christian faith.

Despite the social freedom in urban contexts, not everyone adopts a new religion. The older people tend to be more conservative and wary of new ways of life. Hamidah's (2008) parents remained devout to Islam. The rest of her siblings also did, due to strong parental domination. Batula's (2007) and Maimuna's (2007) chose to become Christians despite such domination. The parents were conservative even though Batula (2007) was not only born and brought up in the city but also most of her family members are within the city.

The family context is quite dynamic in relation to life stages. Rural home represents singleness where the person is accountable to the parental family. In marriage, the Borana woman should submit to the authority of the husband since she has left her father's home. His religion becomes her religion. If he changes to a different religion that she does not desire, she finds herself in an awkward position. On the other hand, if she desires to change all by herself, she will still be in deep problems. The situations of Aziza (2008), Faiza (2008), Farida (2008), and Batula (2007) attest to this fact. This matter will further be discussed in the following stages.

Generally among Borana Muslims, everyone is known within the community, and their religious affiliation is not a secret. More so, communication between the rural and the urban people has been greatly improved by the coming of the mobile phone. Within a short time and with very little money spent, the rural and the urban people can communicate. On one hand, this is a great advantage in that when any party is in need, they can easily connect without traveling to the other side. On the other hand, in relation to conversion, it means that once the community in the city learns about one's conversion, they pass on the information as soon as possible to the rural people. Sometimes this has had devastating effects on the new convert and deterred seekers because it leads to conflict within the family as the convert faces rejection, ridicule or even death.

2. A place of exposure

Urban areas offer people the opportunity to find variety of goods and services. There is a massive choice of alternatives in the religious, social and economic markets. The notion that one is not fully accountable to the family back home can be a good reason to try out new alternatives.

The urban context and particularly the slums have exposed the women to missionary influence. The projects that Yasmin (2008), Batula (2007) and Maimuna (2007) have joined are church based. They focus on improving the lives of Muslim women economically. The long term aim is sharing the gospel with these women. Perhaps if they lived elsewhere they would not benefit from such initiatives from the missionaries and other Christians.

Christian presence among the Borana has been very helpful in providing support to seekers and converts from Islam. In one area dominated by the Borana people, some Borana have come out openly and joined the church. There is a blend of

former Muslims, former Traditional Religion adherents and those who have always been Christian among them. Christian presence among their own people has played a great role in drawing many to Christianity. They face opposition together and give each other strength to remain Christians. This unique trend could have been challenging in the restrictive rural context.

Exposure sometimes solidifies one's religious position. In the predominantly Borana locations in Nairobi, there are many mosques for worship. There are also several tribal elders *(Jarti gosa)* and women's leader *(Jarti abon)* for each Borana Muslim group in the city: Kibera, Bulbul, Kayaba, Eastleigh, Kariobangi and Mathare. Their role is to ensure that certain traditional practices are maintained among the Borana even in Nairobi. They work closely with the folk practitioners mentioned in the previous section.

3. Community bond

The Borana are generally a close-knit community. In their migration to the city, they inhabit particular places where they can carry out common activities. They develop common trades ranging from importing and selling goats from North Eastern and running butcheries that sell the meat to sale of clothes. Migration to the city does not lead to a break off from the rural people. The Borana in the city have wide networks with the rural folk especially in economic matters.

The dense population of the Borana in specific places in Nairobi certainly affects the religious choices of both the Muslims and the Christians among them. This is because even though the Muslim *umma* and Christian spaces are defined, the line is so thin that sometimes there is conflict between them. The Borana cultural bond seems to transcend the religious bonds to a great extent.

The figure below contrasts the rural and urban contexts that have been

discussed. The rural context is characterized by limited interaction with Christians and strict Islamic upbringing while the urban context gives relative freedom in the context of strong community bond.
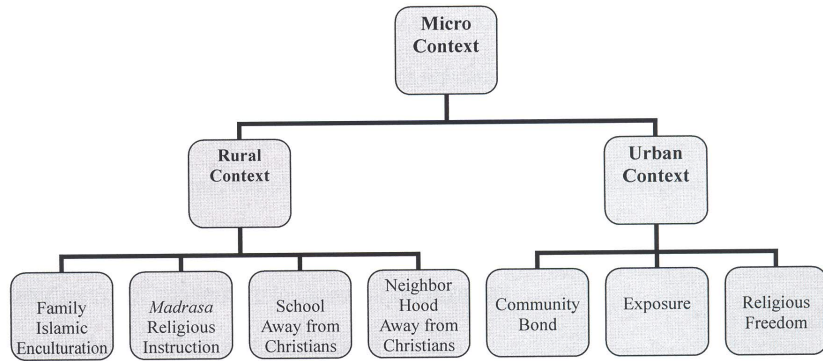

Figure 4. Rural and urban context contrasted

Stage Two: Crisis

Having examined the context that the informants have lived in, the study now moves on to the second stage of Rambo's model: crisis. This is normally a time of emergency through trauma, strange mystical experience, search for meaning etc. All these lead to a critical point in life where a radical decision has to be made that will determine the course of one's life from then on. In this section therefore, the thrust will be to establish the nature of crisis that occurred in the life of the person and the struggles they went through as they faced the unexpected challenge in their lives. Rambo states that crisis "May be religious, political, psychological, or cultural in origin" (1993, 44). Some cases are more dramatic than others; some are short-lived while others lasted for long. Sometimes one crisis leads to another and develops into a deeper crisis in the life of the person. Some crises are a compound mixture of different types of crises happening all at the same time in the sufferer's life. Rambo observes that "there are two basic types of crises that are important to the conversion

process: crises that call to question one's fundamental orientation to life, and crises that in and of themselves are rather mild but are the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back" (1993, 46).

It is also observed that this stage at times comes after the encounter and interaction stages where the agent becomes the catalyst of the crisis. As mentioned earlier, everything happens within a context and the crisis stage is not an exception. In the relationship theme, this phase may be viewed in terms of interference of relationships from a steady state to a turbulent time.

Interference of relationship to the social environment

1. Death of close relative or friend

Loss of a close relative or friend can be a very traumatizing experience. At an early age even though one may not understand, they suffer the consequences of the loss, sometimes for a lifetime. Such consequences include emotional, economic or social challenges. Salma (2007) reckons that she missed maternal care after the demise of her mother. She also missed school as mentioned earlier. The same applies to Hamidah (2008), Faiza (2008) and Farida (2008) who lost their fathers early in life and had to grow up under the care of step-fathers. They always missed the fatherly love that only their biological fathers could provide.

Crisis can build up on previous experiences and crises. Childhood crises can serve as trigger factors to deepen the crises they later in life. Most informants had a series of crises in their lives. Taking Salma's (2007) situation as a case example, the crisis that finally led to her conversion was the death of her spouse in the year 2000. He was brutally murdered while on duty as a guard. She was left in a desperate state: a housewife, with five children to fend for and pregnant. Salma's life changed completely as she faced financial stress without a job. She ended up in a levirate

marriage to her late husband's cousin. With him, she got one more child. Later he did not show much concern for her children which heightened her stress levels when she fell very sick. During her difficult moment, she wished her mother was alive and wondered if life could have been different if she had lived to bring her up. Many informants had similar experiences; the example above is an illustration of how the crises built up over time.

A deep sense of realization of the meaninglessness and temporariness of life can result from unexpected death of a familiar but not necessarily close person. The loss of a friend's child through a road accident caused Maimuna's (2007) to realize that everyone was old enough to die. In retrospect, she got concerned about her own destiny if she were to die.

One's reaction to crisis can determine how deeply it affects them and destabilizes them. In the case of Habiba (2008), she lost two children within a very short time. According to her, this did not devastate her because she felt that if God had given her these children and had chosen to take them away, then He was able to give her other children as she was still young. For her, God knows the reasons why He took those children away at such a tender age. Somehow she was able to pull through the situation without breaking down. She was grateful to God that she still had one child alive.

2. Broken marital relationship

Many women desire a stable marriage relationship irrespective of their background. Muslim women greatly desire to have a stable home. When things do not work out as expected, a crisis situation results. It leads to a deep sense of loss and destabilizes the person's life. Socially, a separated or divorced woman in Islam and among the Borana is not respectable.

Various factors lead to broken marriages among the informants. First, it may be an abusive relationship. Habiba (2008) narrates that her husband became a heavy drunkard and begun beating her regularly. As the situation worsened, he physically hurt her. She then opted out of the marriage as she feared for her life.

Secondly, rejection from the spouse also affects a marriage. Batula (2007) explains that when her husband abandoned her with a three month old infant, she pitied herself. As she tried to pursue him, he did not want to see her. Back home she was not welcome as her step-mother had no room for her, more so because Batula had married a man they had not recommended. They saw it as an opportunity for revenge for her disobedience rather than show her love. Not only had she suffered loss over her marriage, but also the only home where she grew up was no longer the same old place of solace.

Thirdly, introduction of a second wife into a marriage can cause instability in the relationship. Even though Islam allows polygamy up to four wives at a time, this can create tension in marriage especially to the wives. Very few Muslim women desire to have co-wives. It is not easy to share a husband with another woman. This is made worse if the arrangement is done in secret. Maimuna (2007) found herself struggling in her marriage when she discovered her husband had married a second wife without her knowledge. She suffered a deep sense of loss as her marriage finally broke up.

The greatest impact of a broken home for the Borana woman is identity crisis. Since she the culture dictates that must be under male protection the entire time, single hood is undesirable. Despite changing times, it is still shameful among the Borana to be a single mother. However, some women have been forced to accept the shame and live on their own.

3. Conversion of spouse to Christianity

The position of a husband in a Borana family is very critical. He is the final authority in family decisions. His decision to convert to Christianity will certainly affect his entire family. The situation is worsened by the fact that once she is handed over to her husband the culture demands that she should fully obey him. The following experiences of three informants serve as an illustration of these facts.

"I felt that the worst misfortune in life had befallen me. I could not imagine, of all things, my husband choosing Christianity" (Aziza, 2008). Having heard the Christian message for six months through the local pastor and Aziza's brother, he finally went to church and became a Christian. Just before that, at a Christian neighbor's place, he read the Bible and found the words: "I am alpha and omega… the way, the truth and the life." He then went home with the Bible which Aziza refused to handle. One night he woke her up to declare his intention to attend church the following Sunday. That was the memorable Sunday that he became a Christian. At first, she did not take him seriously. A month later, he decided to visit the rural home briefly. In his farewell prayer with her, he said "God reveal yourself to my wife the way you did to me before I come back from my trip." This made Aziza (2008) even madder but deeply troubled.

Farida (2008) explains that her husband's conversion happened after his mother was healed miraculously. In her desperation, the mother sent for Christians to pray for her, and truly, she got healed instantly. She decided to become a Christian from then on. Her son, Farida's husband, had been with her throughout her sickness and had witnessed the healing power of God. He soon became a Christian after Christ revealed Himself to him in dreams that pointed Him to Christ and the church.

When Faiza (2008) landed in Nairobi soon after the wedding, the first thing

she met when she entered her new marital house was a board with the words "My fashion is not property or beautiful, but my fashion is Jesus Christ who is today and forever." On this board the husband kept writing weekly verses from the Bible and thoughts; some kind of journal that became a constant reminder of the thought or verse. There were also photographs with Bible verses on the wall. What a tragedy for Faiza (2008)! She could not understand. She got confused and felt cheated. Even though she had liked Christianity as a kid, she had not wished to be a Christian. That evening when she asked him what all the writings meant, he confessed he was a Christian. After a period of researching, he later became fully convinced to become Christian.

Interference in relationship to the material world

Certain changes in women's lives can lead to financial crisis. Loss of a spouse who had been the sole breadwinner makes it difficult to adjust to the new changes in life. When Salma (2007) lost her spouse, she had to find a way of taking care of her children. In this crisis, she found herself troubled and struggling to make ends meet. She struggled for seven years and got tired of the unending problems with no one to help.

Loss of one's job can also lead to financial crisis in the family. Halimah's (2008) husband lost his job in 1990. The lifestyle at home had to change and Halimah (2008) found herself in dire need for finances. She kept praying and hoping it would be well. Habiba and Maimuna (2007) had to survive on their meager finances to make ends meet as they looked for longer lasting solutions. During this time as they lived on the bare minimum so to speak, they found themselves quite stretched in their financial sphere.

Interference in relationship to the supernatural world

1. Attacks from *jinn* and spirits

Attacks from *jinn* are not foreign among the Borana women. Yet when they occur they can be quite disturbing because they are not only strange but also they are frightening. They render the person powerless and helpless apart from instilling fear in them. Salma (2008) explains that *she could not sleep in her house for fear of attacks from spirits at night. Whenever it was dark in the house, they came and attempted to strangle her.*

Family history can contribute to attacks from spirits. Saumu (2007) mentions that she faced attacks from *ruhani* (Muslim) spirits that she was supposed to inherit from the mother. Soon after the mother died, they tormented her for a whole year until she could no longer bear it. Having been brought up by a Christian grandmother she did not realize the implications of her mother's relationship with spirits on her until when the spirits disturbed her.

2. Incurable sickness

Sickness can create crisis in the life of the person especially if there is no medical solution to the problem. When health is threatened, it triggers a sense of loss of control and fear of incapacitation or even death. Salma (2008) and Farida (2008) tried all they could and spent a lot of money to regain their health but it was all in vain.

3. Dreams and visions

Borana Muslims take dreams quite seriously. They believe that life answers can be found in dreams because dreams are an encounter with the supernatural world. God has used dreams and visions to work in particular situations in the lives of the MBBs. Some seem to have resulted from tragedies, others from interactions with

Christians. Others cannot necessarily be attributed to any event in the person's life, or it may be a build up from a long term situation. In some cases, the dreams and visions happen in the middle of a crisis and lead the person out of the situation. Others precede the crisis or even lead to the crisis.

Dreams about death or near-death experiences can cause one to think more seriously about their life. This can be destabilizing as the person undergoes unexpected change in her life. It creates a sense of vulnerability, confusion and loss of control. A crisis ensues. Sometimes the dreams are followed by a series of events. Dansa (2007) had such an experience. She explains

> It was shocking to have the same strange dream a few times where I found myself very sick in Kenyatta National Hospital. Then everything above me could turn white. Later I would recover and go home. I thought God was warning me that I was about to die. Later I had a dream where a voice told me 'Leave this house, it has no value.' I understood this to mean I should move out of the house where I was staying. I obeyed though I was in shock about all these strange things that were happening in my life.

Dreams and visions can also come as a result of a crisis situation. To the person, it appears to clarify issues and offer solutions to crisis. In some dreams, Christ sometimes appears to the Muslim woman to confirm to her that He is the right way to follow. When her spouse became a Christian, Faiza (2008) decided she would not follow him blindly. Yet one day, she had a vision which she describes

> I saw myself walking with many people towards a broad way and a narrow way. My husband and the other people went to the narrow way but I faced the broad way. They were able to pass a crossroad towards the narrow way but I was left alone because I could not follow them. At a distance, they found a hill with someone dressed in white on top of it. They bowed to him and worshipped him. I wished to get to the man but I could not. I struggled till I managed to get to the foot of the hill. The man in white bent over and took me by the hand. I found myself telling the man "You are Christ, save me!"

Dreams and visions do not necessarily leave the person convinced about the decisions they should take. In fact, they may create more confusion so that further guidance is required. Faiza woke up disturbed and startled. The same vision occurred

to her two days later but she refused to become a Christian. After the second vision, she decided to share with her husband who then prayed for her. Still, she did not accept Christ then; neither did she fully agree with everything the husband mentioned in prayer. All she wanted then was to understand the dreams and for them to stop for she was not about to become a Christian. Then she had a third dream. She was kneeling, praying seriously, crying "Save me Jesus!" Then Jesus held her by the hand and lifted her up. He was dressed in white and was too bright to look at.

Stage Three: Quest

Generally, when a person faces crisis, he/she is bound to react in different ways. At childhood, it depends on the age. For the younger ones, they may not even be aware of what is going on and some adults must step in to assist in the re-adjustment process. It is natural for a human being to look for help when in need. This search is what Rambo terms as quest. He says, "A crisis, from whatever quarter it springs, will more than likely stimulate activity to relieve discomfort, resolve the discord and remove the sense of tension. For many, this activity can be identified as quest" (1993, 55). Some people will tend to look inward for solutions by staying away from people. Others will seek outward solutions and draw their strength from friends and other concerned persons. To some, the religion they follow should offer solutions. Others will tend to try out new options that are readily available. However, there are those who will just give up and become hopeless. Through all these mediums, God will work to help the person to draw close to Him and finally respond to His invitation to change and transformation.

Again, this stage happens within a context and is not exclusive of the context. At times, interaction has also taken place before the quest stage and this only marks the continuity of the process. The reaction of the person to the crisis is very important

in this phase because it is a moment of finding an answer and meaning to the crisis. Some people are usually more active than others in their quest for answers.

In this study, the approach will be from the perspective of a pursuit for relationship that was interfered with during the turbulent crisis stage. The study will examine the search for relationship within the social environment and within the supernatural world. For some, it was a desire to deal with the troubled relationship with the supernatural: power over evil spirits, sickness, to overcome life's challenges, and even power to understand strange dreams. Others were looking for social relationship; they needed fellowship, acceptance, and a sense of belonging in an environment where they could be understood. In some cases, it was a combination of both power and social relationship though one factor was more dominant over the other.

<u>Search for relationship in the social environment</u>

1. Peace and security

Crisis can cause physical displacement from one's place of residence. Typically, one must find a new place to live in away from the threatening situation and to an environment where they can find comfort, security and peace. For the sake of her children, a mother may first have to find an immediate source of income to feed and educate them. Maimuna (2007) and Habiba (2008) had to make immediate arrangements to resettle their children and to work as they sought more permanent solutions to their crisis. Dansa (2007) obeyed the dream she had and moved out of the Muslim dominated plot to a Christian dominated plot. Even though her new place had no water or electricity like her former place, she felt at ease within for the step of obedience she took. However, she continued to lead her normal Islamic life.

Seeking refuge from one's family also helps a woman whose marriage is

unstable. However, things do not always work as expected. The structures one has been used to can become shaky when one is in crisis. Batula (2007) went to her parents but they were not helpful because they felt the problem was her own making since she got married without their consent. This further deepened her crisis.

Alternatively, quitting from the relationship which appears to be the cause of the stressful situation becomes an option. One decides to take the 'flight' alternative if they cannot 'fight'. It appears better to leave and be safe than hang on and stay in danger from the stronger and harmful person. For Yasmin (2008), Faiza (2008) and Farida (2008), *the best thing to do was to leave the husband and go back to her maternal home.*

2. Care and concern

During crisis, a woman needs a friend, one who understands and cares about her as the saying goes, 'A friend in need is a friend in deed.' Women have been known to find solace in friends when in trouble unlike men who tend to 'bottle up' issues. Sharing with a friend brings great relief even if an immediate solution is not in sight. This fact is attested to by some of the experiences that the informants shared. Saumu (2007), Yasmin (2008) and Salma (2008) shared their experiences with Christian friends who they trusted. They could not share with their Muslim friends for fear of gossip.

3. Access to power

Beyond the care and concern shown by family or friends, there is need for access to power through those people who represent supernatural power. Salma (2008) and Saumu (2007) believed that God answered the prayers of their Christian friends. They therefore turned to them in their most difficult moments in order to find relief in their situation by reaching God.

The above situations show that the disappointments and struggles of life can make the person vulnerable in need of love, encouragement and support. The search may take place in the family, *umma* or outside the *umma*.

Search for relationship in the supernatural world

1. Need for hope

When a sense of powerlessness sets in during crisis, the person may feel helpless and look inward for solutions. In order to end their crisis, they may resort to harming themselves and those who are dependent on them. When Batula (2007) thought her problem was taking its toll on her she got fed up decided to take her life and that of her child. She thought that was the best thing to do to end the crisis. Her deeper need was power to deal with her situation.

At times insulation from outside forces seems to serve the purpose in dealing with the crisis. Any opposing views are refuted. One devotes herself more into her faith in defiance to possible religious change. Dansa (2007) became more serious in her faith in response to the strange dreams she had experienced. She could even pray early at four in the morning.

Power persons are a figure of hope among Muslims. They can be consulted when one is needy. At times they do not help as expected of them. As a jobless widow, Salma (2008) went to ask for financial help from Muslim leaders. When they failed, she walked out on them with the words "Since you have failed to help me I will become a Christian because Christians have been better than you in helping me." They told her she would be cursed if she became a *kafir* but she had made up her mind and could not be intimidated.

2. Healing power

Causality is an integral part of the worldview of the Borana women. When a

cure is not easily found to sickness, they may end up consulting the specialists in matters of the spirit world. There is always a reason for any kind of sickness, more so those that do not respond to medication. For some strange reason, the woman feels an urge to find healing through Christian friends. Salma (2008) and Farida (2008) observe that in their desperate moments they looked to Christians could pray for them to be healed from the persistent sicknesses.

3. Freedom from spirits

As mentioned in the background of the Borana people, the spirits and *jinn* are an integral part of worldview. They are there to be controlled. The ordinary person has no way of appeasing them so the expert must be sought. In desperation for anything that can work, the person decides to consult Christians and even to go to church. A good example is Saumu (2007). When her friend advised her to go to church, she did not hesitate. All she needed was a solution to the problem of spirits she was experiencing.

4. Guidance in Holy Scripture

Understanding spiritual truths is very important when one is in crisis. The crisis can become a catalyst for searching for answers in the Scriptures, i.e. both Christian and Islamic Scripture. Despite their level of literacy, a few informants could read the Bible and the Qur'an in their moment of crisis. Some benefited from regular oral Bible Study

Regular Bible Study created a base for the search for answers on the Bible. During the challenging moment, the learnt word acted as a reservoir from which Batula (2007) and Maimuna (2007) could draw from. Batula could even think of attending Bible Study before carrying out her mission to take her life and that of her child. As Maimuna searched for answers in the word, she got closer to her missionary

friend even though she also went to the mosque.

Previous teachings at *madrasa* also came to mind during the quest period. While Faiza (2008) was considering becoming a Christian, her dilemma was heightened by something she learnt from *madrasa*. They were told that on the last day, the Day of Judgment, all Christians were going to be put in a pipe, and then one end would be closed. Out of the other end, they would all be poured into hell. With this in mind, she could not allow herself to entertain the thought of becoming a Christian. If all Christians were going to hell, then why become one?

The words shared by Christians may also surface during the searching period. The person sharing may not even realize the impact it leaves on the person. For Dansa (2007), the words of her brother really bothered her. She had been very resistant to Christian teaching. One day her brother had told her: "If I die today, we cannot meet in heaven but if you accept Christ we will meet." This single statement from her brother had a great impact on her. She asked herself if she would make it to heaven the way she was. However, she tried as much as possible to dismiss such 'wicked' thoughts from the devil.

5. Yearning for transcendence

Beyond the need for social help, crisis can create a desire for an experience with God. This is done in the way that is most familiar to the person. In the midst of her trouble, Maimuna (2007), Dansa (2007) and Habiba (2008) decided to be more serious with Islam. They did their best to attend to private and public prayers at the mosque.

Certain manifestations represent an inner sense of loss of control and identity crisis due to the prevailing situation. In some situations, the quick reaction to crisis is to attack the person who represents the crisis. Aziza (2008) mistreated her husband by

denying him food and refusing to share the bed with him. She even invited strict Muslim adherents to talk to him. At one point, she attempted to stab him but was unsuccessful. Dansa (2007) also narrates that whenever her Christian brother put any Christian teaching on radio, she would switch to Islamic Qur'anic teachings instead. She even forbade her children from visiting her brother's house and one day when they did, she broke a plate in anger! Despite all these, the two informants deepened their prayers in search for something better than what they already knew.

The figure below shows the relationship between the crisis and quest stages. Crisis at social or supernatural levels can lead to quest in either the social or the supernatural environments. It does not follow that a crisis at social level will lead to a quest at the same level because individuals react to situations in diverse ways.
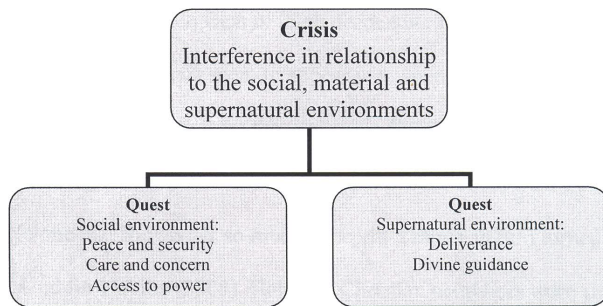

Figure 5. Crisis and quest stages

Stage Four: Encounter

This stage captures the entry of the person(s) who, in the opinion of the informant, played the greatest role in leading them on the road to Christ. In most cases, the person(s), who is hereby referred to as agent(s) came into the informant's life in very natural circumstances through ordinary daily interactions. They therefore range from immediate family members to outsiders to the community. There is also diversity in the manner of encounter in that for some individuals it meant several

people were involved, in others just a few. It must be noted that this and the next stage are so inter-related that there are likely to be overlaps in the process. Since the next stage marks the interaction between the informant and the advocate, this stage will only describe the person(s) who was most crucial in the stages towards the conversion of the informant.

Agent of intervention in the social environment

1. Friends

Most women find friends to be the contributing factor to their change process. Old friends can turn out to be the most helpful persons during crisis and quest periods. Batula (2007) and Maimuna (2007) found friendship in their missionary friend and the women at the sewing project. They had known the missionary all along but she was also there when each of them needed her the most.

Some friends seem to appear just when they are needed. They are 'God sent' to rescue the person from the tension or discomfort they are in. Yasmin (2008) found her newly discovered relatives to be people she could trust and share problems with. No one had shown her so much concern. Yasmin in turn turned out to be the needed friend for Habiba (2008). Habiba's Christian neighbors were also so friendly to her she could not help noticing. Her employer was also there for her when she needed help the most.

2. Persons of authority

Among the Borana, the elders, parents and husband have authority over a woman. They represent authority and have a big say in the decisions the woman makes. The first person that Farida (2008) and Faiza (2008) consulted when they learnt about their husbands' conversions was their mother. As mentioned previously, these two women are sisters. However, their conversions happened at different times.

At the marriage level, the husband is the leader of the family and has a say in the life of the wife. The husband is to be obeyed; and for a Borana woman this is not optional. Most of the informants' spouses are much older than them, so they represent authority and love at the same time. Aziza (2008), Farida (2008), Faiza (2008) struggled when their husbands decided to become Christians. These same husbands played a pivotal role in helping them as young Christian converts.

During the decision making process, the spouse's stand can also pose a challenge to the potential convert. If he does not agree with the opinion of the woman, the result may be a broken marriage. Once Yasmin (2008) had been convinced to become a Christian, she had to wait for her husband to convert with her which he fortunately did. For Batula (2007), she has been a secret believer for ten years now.

At the school, the teacher is the role model and the leader. Children look up to teachers for guidance and direction. Common is the saying: 'The teacher is always right.' However, in only two cases, the teacher at least made an attempt to touch on the religious aspect of life apart from normal teaching. This was true for Aziza (2008) and Hamidah (2008) even if they did not realize it then.

Agent of intervention within the supernatural environment

1. Power persons

In Islam, the religious leaders are highly respected because they can proclaim the message of God and the spirits to people. Similarly, the Christian leaders like the missionary, evangelists and pastors represent what is divine. Some informants respected these people so much and took their words very seriously e.g. Dansa (2007), Farida (2008), Faiza (2008), and Maimuna (2007).

The Christian husband can also be an agent to reach the supernatural even though they represent social life. Once he becomes Christian, he seems to take on a

new role to advocate for change in his families. Being the leader of the home, his influence on his wife and children cannot be under estimated.

2. Supernatural intervention

As mentioned earlier, dreams and visions play a very important role in the potential convert's life. Sometimes they leave more questions than answers, so the person has to seek further guidance from Christians or even more devotion to Islam in protest. Faiza's (2008) and Dansa's (2007) cases respectively as explained earlier. In that sense, they precede the crisis. In other cases, they come at a time when the person may be in dilemma or confusion and help in clarifying issues.

Stage Five: Interaction

In this stage, interaction begins way back to childhood to find out how the informant was warmed up for Christian conversion over a long period of time. For Muslims, these formative years are crucial and therefore the study cannot ignore those 'seeds' that were planted in the lives of Muslim women at an early age. Moreover, the limited interactions with Christians in the informants' lives have built up over time up to the point of commitment to Christ.

Not everyone who encounters an agent of change follows through the encounter. Rambo states that "In the interaction stage, the potential convert either chooses to continue the contact and become more involved, or the advocate works to sustain the interaction in order to extend the possibility of persuading the person to convert" (Rambo 1993, 102). A relationship is therefore developed depending on the duration, frequency and intensity of the interaction. Some relationships build up over time and are at times broken by distance between the two concerned individuals. Sometimes the agent comes just in time to give a push towards the faith the potential convert had always desired.

This section focused on the agent more than the convert, following Rambo's recommendation (1993, 66). The aim was to discuss the role of the agent in the conversion process. This position did not assume that the potential convert was passive. In fact, most seekers were active as previously shown in the quest stage. The major themes that characterize the agents formed the center of the discussion. The question at hand is; what makes these agents so unique even when the person has previously interacted with many Christians?

Kindness

Before experiencing kindness from Christians, the person may have heard about it. During her childhood, Salma (2008) was told by her guardian grandmother about her cousins who were orphaned due to the *shifta* war. She learnt that a Christian priest had been kind enough to adopt them as they later became Christians. She came to interact with them much later in her life. One cousin also became a source of solace when she was bereaved as she lost her husband.

In the midst of crisis, as the informant was searching, everyone appeared to be very indifferent and unconcerned with the informants' state. Seemingly, at this point, the informant was in need of some support to go one more mile of life. In the case of Salma (2008), the kindness of her Christian friends brightened her up in her moment of trouble. It brought back hope that was almost lost. These Christians not only bailed her out of some of her financial burdens, but they also respected her. They did not view her as a poor woman; instead they made her feel comfortable in their midst. Maimuna (2007) also collided with her husband because of the material support from her missionary friend showed her as he felt she was overstepping her boundaries by playing a role that was ideally his. Aziza (2008) also found her Christian spouse so good to her despite her continuous effort to discourage him. He was unusually tolerant

to her character change until she felt uneasy. She could not find any ground for abandoning him.

Persistence

The agent of change must be persistent in order for the intensity of the interaction to be effective. First, they are persistent in attempting to persuade the person towards change. Some informants reported that the more they resisted, the more persistent the agent became. They felt that what was being shared must have been so important for someone to keep persisting. Dansa (2007) attests to this when she says that her brother never gave up; whenever he had opportunity he told her about his faith. Yasmin's (2008) relative became a persistent witness after they had their first meeting.

Secondly, they are persistent in praying for the potential convert. Faiza (2008) and Farida (2008) share similar experiences in this regard. In each case, the husband who converted first prayed for and with the wife. The women were quite opposed to such open prayer for conversion for they never imagined of all things that they would become Christian. Every evening Faiza's (2008) husband thanked God that he and his wife were one body and no one was going to separate them. He prayed for her by name but she would vehemently resist such prayers.

After some time of interaction, the agent takes a bold step and invites the potential convert to church. At first, it sounds weird for the agent to make such an invitation. Consequently, most informants were resistant to the idea of going to church. The first reason raised for accepting to go to church was curiosity to see what Christians do in the church. This was true for Halimah (2008) and Aziza (2008). Halimah did not even sit in the church; she went visiting friends until the service was almost over. Aziza survived an overnight meeting but she never remained the same

after that.

Another reason for accepting to go to church is obedience to the persistent spouse. Farida (2008) resisted all efforts of the spouse to convince her to go to church for one month. She was so bored and heard nothing because she was only there physically. In fact, she did not even enter the church because it was too noisy. Later, after visits from the local evangelist, she understood the meaning of church and began enjoying her time in church.

<u>Fear and respect for authority</u>

Among the Borana, a woman's religion is determined by those in authority in her life, either the parent/guardian or the husband. The mother seems to have a big say in the lives of her daughters. For Farida (2008) and Faiza (2008), their mother insisted that the daughters should not abandon their spouses just because they had turned Christian. Having been a Christian before getting married, this was nothing new to her. She told each of them at their different times of conversion, *"mwanamke hana dini"* (Swahili for a woman has no religion of her own). Farida explains her dilemma

> I felt that when you lose your father you have no one to defend you. So I resisted because I asked my self: must we all be Christians and get lost? By then my sister was already a Christian. I decided and planned to run away, but first I shared with my mother. She told me not to leave my children, to stay with them and pray to God. Otherwise the children would suffer (2008).

Furthermore, their mother had suffered several separations and remarriages. She had advised her daughters that such behavior would have to end with her. She could not allow her daughters to begin following her sad pattern of life so she prevailed upon them to heed to their husbands in order to keep their peace in their homes.

Pastors and evangelists play a major role in persuading potential converts. The pastor represents religious power and authority so their word is taken seriously. When

the spouses could not convince their spouses, they invited these respected church leaders to boost their efforts. The pastors and evangelists went to share the gospel with their wives regularly. However, the reaction from the potential convert was not always favorable. Faiza (2008) says that she was so mad with the husband that she could prepare tea for the visiting pastor or evangelist but would then leave them alone in the house. However, they still continued to visit to share with her about Christ. The evangelists and pastors represent what is divine. Other informants respected these people so much and took their words very seriously e.g. Dansa (2007), Farida (2008) and Maimuna (2007) even if the response was not as fast as expected.

The teacher commands great respect from children. Those who go beyond their normal teaching and address spiritual needs of the child become very important in the religious life of the child. At the school, the teacher, Aziza's (2008) teacher once made a pronouncement that never left her mind. She condemned the Islamic practice of consulting *sheikhs* when in trouble. She claimed that the *sheikhs* lied to them in that they posed to read things to them in a book (she does not know which book she meant), yet they were just referring to events of dead people. Being a radical Muslim, together with other Muslim children, she quickly shut the teacher down. Immediately after her commitment to Christ, she called her teacher to share the good news with her and to confirm she had been right after all. Batula (2007) enjoyed favor before her CRE teachers. Hamidah (2008) was a household name at school as an outgoing girl. The teachers showed keen interest in them even though these girls were non-Christians.

<u>Spiritual guidance through Scripture</u>

Bible Study is very useful in helping the potential convert to understand what they are getting into. Because of the great differences between Islam and Christianity,

the study of the Christian manual facilitates clarity of issues. The aim is to provide knowledge that forms a basic for making an informed choice whether or not to follow Christ. The process may last as long as several years before the person reaches a point when she can confidently commit herself to Christ and His teaching. Maimuna (2007) and Batula (2007) were in Bible Study for five years with the missionary. They were taught the Word in words and pictures. They even learnt to read the Bible on their own. Hamidah's (2008) childhood friend introduced her to the Emmaus Bible correspondence course. She did the study and diligently sent back the answers through her friend. Through the study she got to understand Christianity.

The figure below demonstrates the relationship between the encounter and interaction stages. Just as in the crisis-quest stages, encounter at the social or supernatural levels can lead to interaction at any of the two levels. However, interaction at the social level is not an end in itself; it culminates in interaction at the supernatural level.
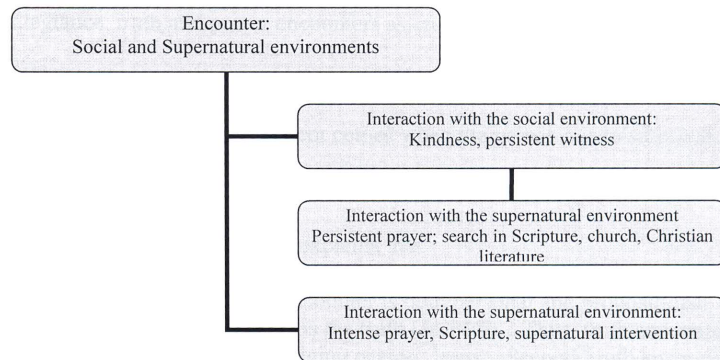

Figure 6. Encounter and interaction stages

Stage Six: Commitment

Rambo calls this stage "The fulcrum of the change process" (1993, 124). Following the period of intense interaction, the person gets to the point where he must

make a choice. This, according to Rambo, will involve decision making where the person may have to weigh between alternatives in view of pros and cons, desires and fears, social rewards and even cognitive benefits (Rambo 1993, 126).

In Peace's threefold process of conversion as insight, turning and transformation, he explains that "Conversion begins with insight into one's own condition as it concerns God. Without such insight there is no motive for change" (1999, 54). He emphasizes that insight happens when a person reaches a point of understanding himself and his standing before God.

At the point of commitment, Peace talks about turning in relation to the insight. He argues that "A person cannot experience Christian conversion without an encounter (in one way or the other) with Jesus and turning to him" (1999, 87). In this study, for some informants the experience was sudden, for others it was gradual. It is hereby assumed that all that preceded this stage culminated in insight.

Using Love's and Kraft's lenses on encounter, the study now embark on allegiance, truth and power encounters as crucial aspects at the commitment stage.

Allegiance encounter

The point of commitment comes when the person has to surrender to a new power and give up old allegiances. Love simply terms the step as truth encounter but at the personal dimension. He explains that

> The concept of truth encounter is both personal and propositional. First of all, truth is personal. Jesus is the truth (Jn 14:6)…Thus, truth encounter involves an encounter with the living person, Jesus…Second, truth encounter is propositional. Believers not only encounter the living Christ, but they must also believe certain truths (good news) about him. Jesus is a prophet of God as Muslims contend. But he is more than a prophet; he is the Savior of the world (2000, 90-91).

These personal and propositional dimensions are what Kraft refers to as allegiance and truth encounters (1981, 453). Commitment is not to Christianity but to

Christ; who from then on is considered Lord and Savior. Theologically, if one merely becomes a Christian without Christ, then it is mere external reform. Inward transformation means an encounter with Christ. For the Muslim, it means a turning point from Islam to Christ.

1. Jesus the way

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 4:6). The truth of these words has a powerful impact on a potential seeker of a relationship with God. For a Muslim, the change of allegiance is crucial. For Maimuna (2007), these were not new words but they came in a different way on that particular day. The missionary and two evangelists shared God's word with her and asked her if she wanted to accept Christ. Somehow it dawned on her that what they were saying was true; her eyes were opened to a fact she had resisted vehemently before. She accepted without much hesitation as she had already been considering the option, only she did not know it would be so soon.

In her third dream, Faiza (2008) had asked Jesus to save her. After the dream, she explains "I prayed and asked God 'If this is the right way, show me. If not, I want to know the right way.'" Soon she began attending church regularly and enjoyed the warmth and visits of Christians. On the day she accepted Christ, the preacher talked about Jesus as the way. Suddenly, she had found an answer to her prayer.

2. Jesus, the giver of rest

Crisis can impose heavy burdens on the person whether emotionally or spiritually. The burden can become unbearable. In Batula's (2007) case, the day for her suicide mission was at hand. She decided to visit the project before carrying out her mission. During Bible Study, the message concentrated on Christ as one who could give rest to anyone willing to accept Him. She felt she was 'being preached'.

She looked at her life and saw the heavy burdens. That day she decided to follow Christ.

Truth encounter

Muslims believe in God, Allah. They believe in Jesus as a prophet but no more than a prophet. Commitment to Christ involves understanding who is Christ and the need for redemption from sin through Him. There is no absolute sequence with regard to the encounters. Many times they happen at the same time or they follow each other. In the above cases of Maimuna (2007) and Batula (2007), they learnt the word over time to a point of understanding. The revelation of truth upon conversion had already begun through such prior teachings.

Learning the truths that one must believe is very important. Whether educated or not, rich or poor, the message of the gospel is simple enough for all to understand it. Some people take longer to get to the point of realization of the truth while others take a shorter time. The divine power behind such understanding cannot be over-emphasized. At times it is very difficult to convince a Muslim that Jesus is the Son of God, since they have been trained to believe that he is only a prophet. It may require a deeper experience as was the case for Aziza (2008) and Farida (2008). Their experiences will be explained further under power encounter.

Understanding the basic tenets of the Christian faith is foundational to the commitment stage. Regular Bible teaching and Christian music are good avenues of exposing the person to Christian doctrine. Yasmin (2008) and her husband discussed their need to become Christians one month before they finally committed themselves to Christ. Yasmin had already decided, but for fear of the husband she had to wait for him to make up his mind. It then became easy for both of them to finally commit themselves to the new faith because they understand it through teachings and songs.

Allegiance encounter can also precede truth encounter. The person may commit themselves to Christ but they may not be fully convinced that He is God. This requires Biblical teaching and God's intervention to help the person to understand the truth about the gospel.

As it was discussed earlier, conversion is both a sudden and a gradual process. It can be so gradual that the person may not even remember when they actually accepted Christ. In one case, there was nothing spectacular about her moment of commitment. It was just a culmination of events over a long time in her life, a span of eight years. In fact, Hamidah (2008) confesses that all she knows is that she committed herself to Christ some time in 1982. She realized she had to stop hanging between Christianity and Islam and decided to cross over to Christianity. She purposed in her heart to become a committed Christian.

Power encounter

Power encounter happens when one experiences God's power through God's servants over the work of Satan and demons (Love 2000, 113). Deliverance from demons and healing are examples of God's power at work. Sometimes they both take place at the same time.

1. Deliverance from demons

The power of God must deal with the power of Satan to bring about complete restoration of relationship at the supernatural level. After being tormented by spirits, the person yearns to be free. At times, the surrender to Christ is a desperate measure to see if it works. The person is then surprised that it works! Saumu (2007) decided that if accepting Christ was the way out, she would. At church, the spirit tormenting her was discerned and cast out. The power of discernment and the subsequent deliverance amazed her and led her to accept Christ. She went home a free person. Salma (2008)

who could no longer sleep in her house found relief. Halimah (2008) too believed Christ as God when *jinn* attacks ceased upon her acceptance of Christ. However, this came after her reluctant step of obedience to her spouse to become Christian. She now realized that God had more power than she could understand.

2. Healing

The most amazing thing to the Muslim is the power in the name of Jesus. This leads to power encounter. At times the encounter leads to or deepens allegiance encounter and therefore commitment to Christ. When Salma's (2007) friends prayed for her, it was amazing to realize that what doctors could not do could happen through a simple prayer in the Name of Jesus. It dawned on her that the power of Jesus to perform miracles was superior to all other powers that she ever knew in Islam.

Healing miracles provide an opportunity for deepening allegiance to Christ. There are different motives for conversion, so people start at different points. Whichever way it begins, the ultimate goal is complete allegiance to Christ. Farida (2008) accepted Christ out of compulsion from the husband. Two months later she was miraculously healed at a Christian meeting in the neighborhood. That day she believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God and the Healer. Her previous doubts about Christ were settled.

3. Church as a power place

For those whose conversion happened in the church, some attest to the fact that they sensed some strong power in the room. Aziza (2008) realized it was not a mere show but serious business with God. As she observed Christians praying, the program leader asked the attendants to get into a moment of repentance from their sins. She explains that

> I did a self examination and realized how I had fallen short of God's standards lately by not praying and fasting consistently as a good Muslim would. As I

looked around I saw a man in tears! This was culturally unacceptable. Borana men do not cry, more so in public! How could he do that? He was repenting his sins in my mother tongue and I could understand everything. I could not help it any more; I found myself repenting and saying "God forgive my sins". Immediately I felt something like an electric circuit in me. I felt free! I learned later that the evil spirit *ruhani* had left me. Immediately I begun loving Jesus whom I had hated with a passion and realized He was God. I never struggled again with the person of Jesus (Aziza 2008).

Aziza's story is a combination of many issues. First, she goes to a power place with apprehension and curiosity. The truth dawns on her about her standing with God and her need for Christ. What touches her most is seeing a man repenting in tears. As she surrenders herself to Christ, she experiences a power encounter as a spirit leaves her. Allegiance encounter also takes place as she embraces Christ who previously represented the gods of Christians. She begins a love-relationship with Him by acknowledging him as God. Such is a clear example of radical change accompanied by three encounters: truth, power and allegiance.

From the above illustration, power encounter is not an end in itself. It points the person to the power of God and the need for relationship with Him beyond the power experience. It is very important that the commitment to Christ should outlive the power experience. Even after experiencing the power of deliverance the person still has to decide whether or not to follow Christ. Power encounter and allegiance encounter may be related but not necessarily synonymous. In summary, the commitment stage can be represented in the table below:

Table 5 Allegiance, truth and power encounter at commitment stage

Encounter	Nature	Result
Allegiance encounter	• Jesus, the way • Jesus, rest to the weary	• Understanding of God and Christ • Faith in Christ
Truth encounter		
Power encounter	• Deliverance • Healing • Church as a power place	• Realizing power of God • Truth encounter • Allegiance encounter

Stage Seven: Consequences

The decision to become a Christian may be accompanied by various consequences. In order to describe the experiences of new converts in detail, the study concentrated on the immediate experiences of the converts after commitment to Christ. The consequences involved the attainment of what the person was searching for as well as responsibilities and challenges that accompanied their decision.

Positive consequences in the supernatural environment

For most informants, the first mark of their conversion was the presence of peace within their hearts that they could neither understand nor explain. This peace replaced the inner sense of restlessness that the person had been struggling with. Batula's (2007) suicide mission aborted as she got the peace she had so desired. Yasmin (2008) reports that she found amazing peace that helped her to cope even when she has no food in her house. There was relief from the discomfort and inner turbulence even though much had not changed on the outside. The MBBs attribute such peace to supernatural intervention because they cannot explain how it came about.

The fact that one is accepted and loved by God brings a sense of peace with God. Batula (2007), Maimuna (2007), Salma (2008), felt reconciliation with God had taken place because their sins were forgiven. For Halimah (2008) whose father died when she was a child, to be a Christian and to know God as Father was very comforting and reassuring for her. This reminded her of childhood days. Every morning she heard her mother say *Waqi gudda aboki* (Borana for 'God is great and He is my Father). She understood what the statement meant after accepting Christ and knowing God as Father.

The power encounter experience leads to freedom from being tormented by

spirits. God's power, in God's way, is manifested to God's people. Immediately after commitment to Christ, Saumu (2007), Salma (2008) and Halimah (2008) could not understand how the *jinn* attacks just ceased. Finally there was peace within the sphere of spirits which had been difficult to deal with. Those who were sick also experienced supernatural power at work as they were restored to full health. Most informants viewed baptism as a crucial turning point after committing their lives to Christ. To them baptism meant death and resurrection with Christ. It appeared to be the first open declaration of their new faith. Yasmin (2008), Farida (2008), Faiza (2008), Habiba (2008), Aziza (2008), Halimah (2008), were all excited to tell their baptism story. They took both the form and the meaning very seriously. Any remaining bond with Islam was broken then as each of them begun a relationship with Christ.

Relationship to the social environment

Jesus Christ is the Prince of peace. The peace is not just personal but also communal. The supernatural encounter facilitates a worldview change which translates to the social arena. For those who are married, and particularly those who converted with or after their spouses, they have a testimony of peace in the family. Yasmin's (2008) husband stopped drinking when they converted together. As new converts, they now live in harmony with new love for each other. He stopped beating her and treats her so well despite his lack of employment. Aziza (2008), Farida (2008), and Faiza (2008) found peace in the home when they stopped struggling with their already converted spouses. Instead they developed a lifestyle of prayer, going to church, having regular Bible Study and building their families together.

Challenges in the social environment

1. Rejection and persecution

The most difficult part of a young MBB is the social sphere. There is often a

high price to pay for leaving Islam. Two common things happen: rejection and persecution. Amazingly, the informants in this research have experienced low levels of rejection and persecution for the following reasons:

- The fairly high percentage of Christians among the Borana has taught the Borana community to remain united despite their religious differences.
- Their level of commitment to Islam as earlier noted is generally not very deep; they are more rooted in their traditional religion than in Islam. The more Islamic a community is, the more likely it is to discriminate against apostates.
- The MBBs have grown in number over the years and formed a formidable force within the community, particularly in one of their settlements in the city. This force is able to cushion new members and provide a new community for warmth and fellowship where they are nurtured until they are strong enough to stand on their own.
- Where the conversion of the husband preceded that of the wife it provided her with some protection from scorn and ridicule in society. She was viewed to be an obedient wife.
- The urban context and the Kenyan constitution to a great extent provide them with freedom to operate as Christians within a predominantly Islamic area.

For a balanced discussion, the study would have been incomplete without examining some cases of rejection. First of all, when the woman converts to Christ all alone, she risks losing her family. The situation becomes more complicated if there are no other Christians within the family or clan. When the family members live together, it is also possible to keep an eye on one another, detect and punish any unwanted behavior within the community. Batula (2007) is still a secret believer for fear of rejection from the family. Her case is unique because all her life she has lived

in the city and her close family members live around her.

Rejection can take different forms. Exclusion from family decisions and activities is a clear sign of rejection. Hamidah (2008) explains that as the only convert in their family, she is left out of major family decisions to date. Since she married a non-Borana person, she is an outsider both in religion and in culture. It can also be in the form of physical harm. Saumu (2007) was once beaten at home for attending a public Christian meeting after her conversion as a young girl.

At community level, persecution seems to be more intense for those who had a high identity and high practice in Islam. Aziza (2008) and Dansa (2007) had been known to be vocal Muslims. The radical change could not escape public scrutiny. Not only did they experience persecution at family level, but also they were opposed by the *umma.* The same people Aziza had sought help from when her husband converted opposed her when she became a Christian because she had betrayed them. However, the converts reported that they became very bold and witnessed vigorously to their Muslim relatives and friends, leading to many conversions. Halimah (2008), Farida (2008) and Yasmin (2008) argue that since they were not vocal Muslims, the Muslim neighbors did not disturb them.

It is not strange to have deceptive forms of rejection. In order to discourage unbecoming behavior, some people resort to lying. Faiza's (2008) neighbors in the rural home created a story that her mother had considered her dead like her father since she became a Christian. In shock, she began missing church and prayers as she did not want to disappoint her mother. Later she realized that the allegations were all unfounded; she was being intimidated in order to give up her new faith and her husband so that she could marry the propagandist! Later, her mother gave her full blessings to remain a Christian, asking her to obey her husband, not to disturb him in

any way and to go to church. What a relief it was for Faiza!

On the other hand, those whose husbands did not convert but learnt about their conversion rejected them. Their husbands went ahead and married Muslim women. For Habiba (2008) and Maimuna (2007) they were already separated but the husbands took advantage of the situation to remarry. Dansa's (2008) case is quite different. She wanted to start a completely new life as a Christian. Consequently, she did away with anything she could that reminded her about Islam including her husband whom she sent away.

2. Change of identity

Names have different meanings to different people. The MBB who feels her Muslim name does not give her a true identity as a Christian may decide to drop her name in favor of a Christian name. Dansa (2007) dropped her Muslim name soon after becoming a Christian and took a Borana name instead. The rest of the informants retained their Muslim names. However, their children who were born after conversion were given Christian or Borana names. There are different opinions about change of names. For Halimah (2008), change of name is not necessary. She points out that, "I do not see why I should change my name because that would not add anything to my faith. In fact, my Islamic name is a useful part of my testimony that I use to evangelize other Muslim women."

Change of dress can also signify change of identity. It can be a public symbol to show that one has left one group to join another. Only Yasmin (2008) changed her form of dress by doing away with the *buibui* (local Islamic dress for women). Most informants only removed the head covering that concealed their faces. They still wear the long Borana dress because it is a symbol of respect towards the men in their culture. For Hamidah (2008), being the only Borana in her matrimonial home, she has

adopted the common form of dress in her locality. Not every Borana Muslim woman wears the *buibui.* For example, Halimah (2008) has never worn it because she grew up knowing that the *buibui* was for Arabs.

3. Culture shock

Some informants who had very little interaction with Christians prior to their conversion experienced culture shock when they first interacted with Christians. Many practices that Christians consider to be normal were not normal to them e.g.

- Mixing of men and women in church. In Islam, men and women never pray together in the mosque; preferably, it is better for women to pray at home.

- Accompanying the husband to church.

- Carrying the Bible in the hands. Muslims revere the Qur'an in that

  a) Hands must be washed before handling it.

  b) It cannot be touched by women who are having their menses.

Halimah (2008) explains "I feared to carry the Bible to church as a new convert because in Islam I could not handle the Qur'an. I later learnt that it was acceptable to carry the Bible even during my menses."

- The worship practices in the church. Faiza (2008) found the church too noisy in the name of singing, praying and preaching so she stayed outside the first time. With time she got used to it.

- Forms of prayer. Islam and Christianity differ greatly in the area of prayer so the new convert must learn how to pray the Christian way. For example, Faiza (2008) was used to Islamic prayers said in Arabic after performing ablution (ritual cleansing). As a Christian, she did not require physical cleansing before prayer. Besides, there is no prescribed form and content of prayer in Christianity. Therefore, her husband had to write for her prayers on paper so

that she could read and pray. *Later she moved on to short and simple* spontaneous prayers.

These are only a few examples of culture shock experiences of the MBBs soon after their conversion. They provide a glimpse into the adjustments they had to make to fit into the Christian community.

Challenges in the material environment

Conversion to Christ requires a change in lifestyle. Some of the activities that the convert may have engaged in before may not be acceptable according to Biblical teaching. Finding a new way to make ends meet may be quite challenging. Aziza (2008) and her husband used to make local brew before conversion. They changed to selling kales which did not bring much income. For one and a half years, only two Christian men supported them financially by paying their rent as they began a new way of life. They kept praying and trusting God who enabled them to grow financially.

The demand for a transformed Christian life has far reaching effects on the new convert. Since she has to live an upright life, she sometimes has to settle for very little pay instead of engaging in sinful behavior. With separation from their husbands, Habiba (2008) and Maimuna (2007) had to cater for all family needs single handed with their meager earnings. Yasmin (2008) sells cigarettes in her small kiosk. She knows it is not acceptable but as the only bread winner in the home, she has to sell what is on high demand for better profit. Her husband cannot get work at the local goat selling market because the predominantly Muslim business fraternity discriminates against him.

Challenges in the supernatural environment

Once the person commits herself to Christ, she has moved out of the dominion

of Satan to that of God. This may cause a reaction from Satan who still pursues the convert to lure them back to Islam. Dansa (2007) had such an experience. The first night after she went to church she was attacked by evil spirits. She describes her experience a follows:

> I saw a big-eyed creature peeping at me through the door hinge. It crept into the house and attempted to strangle me. I was in so much pain, yet I could do nothing about it. I saw another hand come and remove the creature's hand. Later I learnt from the pastor that it was the hand of Jesus that overpowered the creature.

Spirits may not necessarily stop attacking the person just because they have come to Christ. The spiritual battle is a lifelong process they have to fight daily. The good news for Christians is that Christ enables those who believe in Him to overcome the evil powers. The following table captures the consequences of the commitment to Christ as discussed above.

Table 6 Consequences of commitment to Christ

Level	Positive	Challenges
Personal	Inner peace	Change of identity
Social	Peace in the family	1. Rejection and persecution 2.Culture shock
Material	New means of livelihood	Economic problems
Supernatural	1. Freedom from spirit attacks 2. Physical healing	Attacks from spirits

Having discussed Rambo's stages of conversion, it should be noted that the experiences of the Borana MBBs are varied because of individual differences. As mentioned earlier, the differences are clearly seen at the crisis and encounter stages. Some people meet the agent of change at the hour of crisis. Others meet them long before the crisis. Two patterns emerge as follows:

1. Crisis-Quest-Encounter-Interaction-Commitment-Consequences

2. Encounter-Interaction-Crisis-Quest-Commitment-Consequences

A summary of each individual's experience is given in Appendix 4.

Changes Resulting from Conversion to Christianity

This section seeks to examine the changes in the life of the informant after conversion to Christ. Change is a dynamic process that takes a lifetime. Since many converts have been Christians for a long period of time, the period under scrutiny was limited to the first two years after their commitment to Christ.

It is very difficult to measure change in worldview. The aim of worldview change is to grow in relationship to God and his people. The concepts of Rick Love about moral and cultural encounter will provide the framework for analyzing the changes after conversion. To Love, these two types of encounter result from truth and power encounter. It is expected that the converts go through a worldview change because as mentioned earlier, the worldview level is the center of change in conversion. In this study, worldview change is confined to moral and cultural areas because they form the personal, social and cultural levels of worldview.

Moral encounter

Love Rick explains that power encounter is not enough in distinguishing between truth and falsehood. He also considers character development as an integral part of church planting. Moral encounter manifested in character demonstrates values of God's Kingdom. He observes that the two most vital aspects of kingdom ethics are love and peace (2000, 168-169). Using his idea of moral encounter, the study embarks on understanding the character changes that resulted from the conversion of the Borana MBB women. Challenges faced at each level will also be examined for a balanced discussion.

Change at personal level: love

Love Rick points out that power encounter demonstrate God's love because it is a manifestation of God's kingdom. Its purpose in the believer's life is love (2000, 166). Love for God is manifested through changes in moral behavior. Dansa (2007) admits that she engaged in adultery but stopped when she received Jesus. She reported that such behavior was not strange among Muslims in their locality. Yet she reckons that only God could deliver her from such a sinful practice.

Love for God is also manifested in interpersonal relationships through forgiving others. Aziza (2008) and Farida (2008) pointed out that their main struggle as young believers was in the area of anger. The Word and the power of God have helped them to grow in dealing with anger and learning to forgive. They are not yet fully successful, but they understand that God is still working in their lives.

Practicing love at family level is very rewarding for the new convert. Attitudes that one could not change are transformed. The informants reported that they learnt to love and obey their husbands. Previously, the relationship was based on fear rather than respect and love. Upon conversion, respect for each other grew as each party stopped fighting the other whether physically or verbally. In Faiza's (2008) case, she admits that she was stubborn to her husband, very argumentative and rude, but God gave her a new heart. Due to her husband's patience with her, God transformed her in an amazing way. Yasmin (2008), Farida (2008), Aziza (2008), Halimah (2008), Saumu (2007) all attest to the fact that they gained peace in their families.

Perception about others accompanies the love that one experiences from God. Compassion and kindness towards others result from an encounter with Christ. Salma (2008) attributes this attitude to the inner change that had taken place in her life when she became a Christian. During the recent post-election violence in Kenya, she

extended her compassion for others by giving food and clothes to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Her motive was to do to others what had been done to her. Love for God demonstrates itself in love for others.

Change in the social life: A new community

Change in the social scene typifies conversion. New relationships develop with time as one begins to learn more about their newfound faith. This creates a sense of belonging in that without acceptance and support from older Christians, the new convert may be tempted to give up and go back to Islam. Close Christian friends play an important role in leading the new convert to the wider Christian community, the church. Those informants who managed to socialize with Christians long before they finally surrendered their lives to Christ reported that they found it easier to fit into the Christian community. Hamidah (2008) and Habiba (2008) fall in this category. In contrast, some informants first became Christians before being assimilated into the fellowship of believers as was the case of Aziza (2008) and Dansa (2007). Adjusting to the Christian community was quite challenging because they begun as strangers.

Conversions within the family and friendship circles have at times resulted from the conversion of individual. Salma's (2007) two children became Christians just a few months after her. Aziza's (2008) relatives admired their Christian life and stopped fighting her and her husband. Instead, some became Christians because they followed their example. Salma (2008) and Yasmin (2008) also found themselves reaching out to friends who also converted to Christianity. As recent converts in 2007, their zeal in leading others into the Kingdom of God is notable.

Challenges in moral encounter

Home visits are very important in building the social life of a new convert. Hosting home fellowships also encourages the convert to belong to the wider

fellowship of Christians. Hospitality is an integral part of Borana culture. It is a great honor and a sign of acceptance when one is visited. Despite her longing for a visit from Christians, no church member or leader has ever visited her since Yasmin (2008) became a Christian. Consequently, she feels lonely having not been fully accepted into the fellowship.

Cultural encounter

The main characteristic of culture is ritual. Rick Love defines ritual broadly as "anything from the etiquette of daily greetings to the solemnity of sacred ceremonies" (2000, 178). This discussion focused on religious rituals. Rituals not only preserve culture, but also they give a sense of group identity. If change has to happen in the life of a new convert, it must affect their rituals that form the core of what they believe. Their practices must be transformed as well as their worldview. In essence, every culture has sinful tendencies that the gospel must confront in an individual and in the community. That is why Love recommends cultural encounter. In this discussion, a distinction will not be made between Islamic and local culture for they are so intermingled.

The power of God

Allegiance, truth and power encounter result in recognition of God as Supreme over all other powers, which are the powers of Satan. Borana Muslims experience powers through *jinn* and spirits like *ruhani* and *ayaana.* Through her experience with *jinn,* Dansa (2007) reckons that now she knows that calling upon the Name of Jesus is the only way to overcome any form of demonic attack. Maimuna (2007) reports that her conversion experience resulted in *baraka* (blessing). She attributes such blessing with the transforming power of God that gave her assurance of life after death.

It is very important for a new convert to acknowledge Jesus in their lives. Who

is Jesus to them? Various answers were given in response to this question with reference to what Christ has done for these women. In principle, all the informants have come to terms with the fact that Jesus is the Son of God even though this happened at different times during their conversion journey. He is God and Lord over their lives. He has forgiven their sins and given them power to inherit the kingdom of God after this life. As noted earlier, some informants only arrived at such a conclusion after regular Bible teachings and healing or deliverance experiences.

Power places

One of the distinct changes that have occurred among the Borana women is in the area of power places. None of them goes to the mosque as a power place any more. Apart from Batula (2007) the secret believer, all the informants freely go to church to worship. They consider the church a place to meet God and take what is done in church very seriously. For Batula, she goes for home fellowship at a time that raises no suspicion in her home.

In Islamic culture, Muslim women must respect the mosque and should not to go there unceremoniously. As Christians, the church takes on a new meaning as a power place. In the course of the interviews, the researcher realized that church activities in and out of the church building were taken very seriously because the church was a very special place. At times, the interview had to be rescheduled to allow the informant to go for the church "program" as they call it. This could be prayer, public Christian meetings or women's fellowships. Some of these activities take place in their homes while public meetings for witnessing to their neighbors take place at the marketplace.

Power persons

Power persons are very important to MBBs. In Islam, people like *ayaana*

experts and *sheikhs* are perceived to be the power persons through whom people can access the spirit world. In contrast, the pastor and the evangelist are now regarded with high esteem in their talk. As the researcher gathered, the opinion of the *mtumishi wa Mungu* (servant of God) is so crucial in their lives even if they are strangers to them. Aziza (2008) reports that one time after her conversion, she met a stranger who claimed to be *mtumishi wa Mungu* in a public vehicle. Under normal circumstances it would be easy to dismiss such a stranger especially in the city where there are very many conmen. She narrates that

> This man gave a prophecy regarding my life that has now been fulfilled. He told me he could see three baskets; one with food, another clothes and the third had money. These were to be a sign of God's provision for my family. I believed these words because they addressed our area of need as a family. Since then, we have never lacked in the three areas that were addressed because God has always provided for us (Aziza 2008).

Understanding the power of each believer in Christ is very crucial to an MBB in the same way it is for all Christians. Such understanding is manifested through witnessing, counseling, praying with those in need around them, etc. Maimuna (2007), Batula (2007), Aziza (2008) and Hamidah (2008) reported that they reach out to others, especially those who are not believers in Christ. The first three informants have preached, prayed and counseled with women in Islam and even new converts to Christ. Hamidah has become instrumental in discernment of personal and other people's issues because God continually speaks to her through dreams. This seems to be a substitution of her former power of divination in Islam. All these women are leaders in their churches and fellowships where they are able to exert influence on others as they serve God. Through Aziza (2008) and her husband who is an evangelist, many conversions to Christ have been realized in their community. Her husband is one of the evangelists who have been very crucial to the conversion of most women living in their locality. In short, some of the advocates also became

symbols of power that the women looked to after their conversion.

It would be an over-generalization to assume that all MBBs know their position as power persons in Christ. There is room for growth for each of person. For example, Hamidah (2008) admits that her level of commitment to Christ is very low despite her ability to discern issues. She says, "I know that had I been seriously committed to God, He could have used me more than He does." From her explanations, it seems that she did not get proper discipleship when she became a Christian. Her experiences are full of power encounters but there is limited evidence of truth encounter and allegiance encounter.

For the married, transformation in the family relationship is very important. With a few exceptions like Dansa's (2007) case (who sent her husband away), there is change in attitude towards the husband whether he also converts or not. Where both partners became Christians, the new relationship is characterized by love and understanding and mutual respect with freedom from abuse of the other party. Their families have become role models to their Muslim relatives and friends in that those who opposed them earlier now regard them with great respect. For those who remain with their Muslim husbands, their attitude towards their husbands changes even though the challenges of possible divorce, having a co-wife and beatings still remain. This is true for Batula (2007) who constantly fears that her marriage might fall apart.

Power rituals

1. Circumcision

There are different rituals in the life of a Borana Muslim; some related to their life cycles while some are not. As mentioned previously, all these women have been circumcised. None of them wishes to have their girls circumcised. As Maimuna (2007) puts it, "That thing is very bad. It inhibits a woman's sexual urge. I would not

like my child to go through such horror." They claim that they underwent the ritual because it was compulsory and had to be fulfilled without questioning. By then, most of them were too young and powerless to question the practice. It is a power ritual because it binds the person to the community and also marks a transition from childhood to adulthood. Farida (2008) adds that from her reading of the Qur'an she discovered that the practice was not mentioned therein and therefore it is not Islamic.

2. *Sadaqa* (Offering)

Some life cycle rituals tend to persist in some contexts. Culturally, they are considered to be very important. One such ritual is the giving of *sadaqa* (offering) on behalf of the dead. Aziza (2008) and Farida (2008) used to participate in the ritual until they became Christians. However, even as a Muslim, Farida realized that Islam disapproves of the practice but people observe it. Yasmin (2008) explains that this practice shows the distinction between Christians and non-Christians in the community. It involves cooking and partying as an honor to the departed loved ones and to appease the spirits over their sins. Following the demise of the loved one, the ceremony is held after forty days, eighty days and then annually. Since they became Christians, the Borana MBB women had to reject such practices because they were not supposed to pay for the sins of the dead. Once a person is dead their sin cannot be cleansed by offering *sadaqa* on their behalf. Recently Yasmin lost a relative and was asked to give *sadaqa.* When she asked the pastor for counsel, he told her it was Biblically unacceptable to give such offerings.

3. Prayer and fasting

Another power ritual is prayer and fasting. The realization that God is so close to them and that He answers prayer is very important to the MBB woman. One does not have to physically clean oneself before approaching God because He is more

interested in the heart condition rather than the outward appearance of the person.

The object of prayer is very important to an MBB. They pray to Jesus with whom they now have a relationship. Batula (2007) is very happy that she can pray and fast without any restrictions like before. She can pray from any place and do so even during her menses. God does not regard her as unclean during her menses. She can pray and fast any time without being coerced; she can be open to God who shows her mercy all the time unconditionally.

Lack of specified times of daily prayer among Christians can be a challenge to a new convert. Having been used to a timetable, developing personal discipline to pray and read God's Word is difficult. Extrinsic motivation to prayer and fasting had conditioned the MBBs so much that it takes time to develop intrinsic motivation for these basic disciplines. Hamidah (2008) has always found it difficult to maintain a pattern of prayer without external help so she only prays occasionally.

For some MBBs, the regulated Islamic timetable still guides them to some extent in their private prayer lives. Habiba (2008) rises up early in the morning at 2.00 am to pray, goes back to sleep, then wakes up to prepare to go to work. Dansa (2007) still prays at 4.00 am. These women have maintained the time but not the form or meaning of the prayer. Yasmin (2008), as discussed earlier, was a practitioner in the *ayaana* ritual. When she became a Christian, she had to stop carrying out this weekly activity in her house. She submitted to the power of God and begun living a Christian life by engaging in Christian prayer.

Fasting is very crucial to the MBB. Like prayer, they have maintained the concept but modifications of times, forms and content of fasting have taken place. Some informants fast both at individual and corporate levels. Biblical teaching has helped them to understand the Christian fast. However, Batula (2007) still has to fast

during Ramadan in keeping with the family culture to avoid any suspicion about her faith in Christ.

The figure below captures the relationship between the encounters in the conversion process. At the center of change is allegiance, truth and power encounter that were explained in the commitment stage of Rambo's model. As discussed above, change begins at the personal and therefore moral level, leading to moral encounter. The next level of change is cultural. The gist of this level is the power shift involved. It should be noted that change is a continuous process at all the levels shown; conversion is just the starting point of the lifelong process.

Allegiance, truth and power encounter: Christ

Moral encounter: Love, peace

Cultural encounter: Power
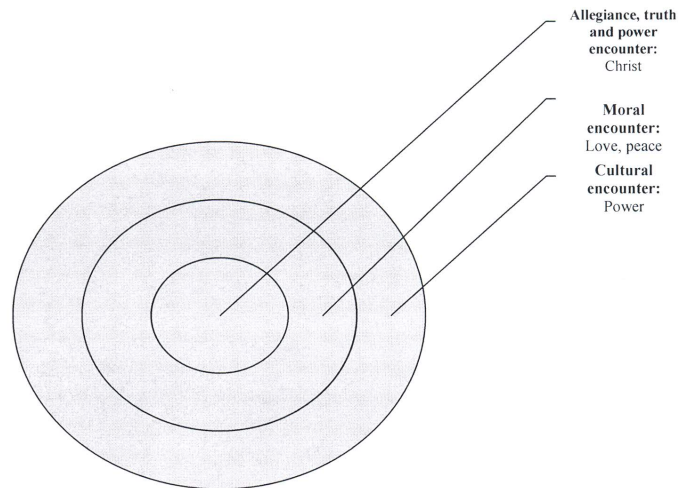
Figure 7. Encounters and levels of change upon conversion

Summary

This chapter has examined the following:

- The background of the informants, that is, their family, educational and religious backgrounds.

- The religious state of the informants before their conversion to Christianity.

- The conversion process of the informants with Rambo's model as the framework of analysis.

- Changes that resulted from conversion to Christ.

The next chapter will focus on the summary of findings, missiological implications and recommendations for further study.

Missiological Implications

God-Centered Ministry

Much as one commits him/herself to God, conversion is God's work. Chew

argues that

> The emphasis thus far has been on the manward side of conversion. The Scriptures are clear that there is also a Godward aspect. Conversion is the work of God. God enlightens the mind, opens the heart, and quickens the total person. The triune God is the author of conversion. He also is at work in believers to change and sanctify them (1990, 31).

Unless all ME workers come to such realization, they will make little progress

in their task. God is the one who transforms his people to become Christians.

Dependence on God rather than well-organized strategies is crucial and even when

plans are made, they should be flexible enough to fit in changes that God demands.

The aim of cross cultural ministry is to be God centered and people-oriented; taking

people at their pace and realizing that God is working in their lives.

Dependence on God only comes through commitment to the Word of God and

to prayer. Personal and group growth in these areas needs to be enhanced and

cultivated over time. Those who are strong in the Word and in prayer will be able to

model their lifestyle to new converts. Learning without seeing something in practice

does not bring many changes in behavior; living examples in speech and conduct will

yield much fruit.

The role of the Bible in ME

The basis of truth encounter that counters ignorance and falsehood is

Scripture. In our witness to Muslims, effort must be done to give each person an

opportunity to arrive at a level of understanding the truth of the gospel. Realizing their

background, especially the women, it is necessary for the agent to patiently share the

word and not impose conversion. God will use His Word to speak to the person and

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conversion has become a subject of primary concern among missiologists

because of the current prevalence of religious pluralism throughout the world. The

purpose of this study was to examine the conversion experiences of the Borana MBB

women living in Nairobi. This thesis was an attempt to contribute to studies on

conversion of African Muslim women from Islam to Christianity.

Qualitative research was chosen for the study. Under this, ethnographic

interviews became the main method in collecting the data in order to bring out the

deep level experiences of the informants. Using Rambo's seven-stage model, the

study established the pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion experiences of

each informant. The model was modified to suit the context of the Borana MBB

women. The study also highlighted the changes that have occurred in the lives of the

MBBs since conversion. This information culminated in understanding the dynamics

of conversion within such a context in order to equip missionaries, pastors and

evangelists for a better ministry in such contexts.

The findings reveal that the conversion process of the Borana MBB women is

highly marked with a search for relationships at both the social and the supernatural

levels. From a steady state, most informants got into crisis at personal, social or

supernatural levels that led to a search for solutions that culminated in their

commitment to Christ. The findings have missiological implications for cross-cultural

ministry that will be the next point of discussion.

help them come to the realization. The Muslims already have their own Scripture, but is it the truth? They may not require long sermons, but those few verses and thoughts become a bank the Holy Spirit draws from to illuminate the light of God into the seeking Muslim.

Deliberate evangelistic Bible Study is recommended as a means of helping the Muslim, whose worldview is quite different to understand the Bible. Some of the things they have learnt in the past about Christians and the Bible are not true, and only the truth of the Word can wash away these misgivings and impart life to God's people. Each person should be treated as an individual during this process and allowed to grow at their pace to a level of understanding the truth of God's Word. On the part of the agent, this will require patience.

Upon conversion, follow up should be intensive in teaching the Word to enable the convert to have a good foundation as they start their journey as Christians. Such teachings have been observed as useful in preparation for baptism, a ritual that the MBBs take very seriously for it marks a public declaration of a break with the past. However, after baptism, discipleship does not end, so teaching of the Word should go on until the person is properly grounded.

Deliverance ministry in ME

The struggle with the supernatural world is quite clear in the experiences of the MBBs in question. This means that power encounter must be a deliberate part of our ME strategies. Every person participating in ME should be equipped for deliverance ministry. Often, due to lack of knowledge and skill in this area, new converts have reverted back to Islam because they came to a powerless Christianity. They desire to experience God's power in healing, casting out of demons and answer to prayer in 'impossible' situations. Power encounter has been observed in pre-

conversion and post-conversion experiences. Some converts still struggle with spirits after they come to Christ because they do not get the necessary help in their formative stages after conversion.

The deliverance ministry should not be a means to an end. The desire for every ME worker is to lead the person to a relationship with the healer and deliverer so that like Mary Magdalene, they may desire to always follow Christ whether the agent is present or not. The emphasis in discipleship should be to know the love of Christ and Him crucified so that even if healing does not take place as it happens in some situations, the person does not give up but looks beyond the situation to God who is in control over the situation and answers the prayer as He sees best out of love. Kraft stresses that "God's purpose in ministering in power is always to show love. Our purpose should be the same. If ministry is not done in love it is not done God's way. He is the epitome of love, even when he uses power" (1989, 138).

People-Focused Ministry

Agents of conversion

From the current study, it was noticed that the key persons in the conversion process were the Christians who were most persistent and consistent. These women living in the city had many other Christian friends but what made this particular person different? A close look shows that it is their initiative that carried the day. They were creative and seized opportunity as it arose to share the love of Christ to the Muslim. The opportunities were often part of their normal interactions with the Muslim friends. They did not struggle to create it. Christians need to be more sensitive and deliberate in their witness to Muslims in order to realize God's leading in those timely opportunities.

The two strengths that Christians have in reaching women in particular are friendship and power in the Word of God and prayer. Friendship evangelism has been recommended as a powerful tool in evangelism among Muslims. This is quite true. However, time has come when believers in must go beyond a mere friendship. The context of all the above informants shows that they already had several Christian friends even before conversion, even if they were not close friends. Those friends who made a mark in their lives went beyond the level of simple greetings and discussions. They deliberately shared the Word of God with them, invited them to church or prayed with them. In all this, the necessary ingredient was persistence.

The window of relationship is therefore a great opportunity for reaching the Muslim woman. The agent is a symbol of a trusted friend in whom the Muslim woman can confide or lean on in times of need. The ultimate goal of every agent should be to lead the person to a relationship to Jesus Christ who alone can be the best friend the Muslim can ever have. The agent must therefore realize that they are only instruments and bridges to Christ. Standish observes that "Because they are women and their felt needs are more psychological *(insecurity and fear-fear of illness, death, rejection and the spirit world)* than theological, more rational than informational, they need to be understood and they need to have the love and power of Christ related to them at the point of felt need" (1990, 205). She advocates focus on the *person,* with the goal of establishing a relationship because in the non-Western world relationships are very important. Such relationship can only be built over time because walls of suspicion and mistrust must be broken. A good approach can be summed up as "build trust- build bridges-walk over the bridge" to share the gospel.

Understanding worldview

One of the greatest assets that every worker in ME requires is to understand the worldview of the particular people group they are reaching. The surface level behavior that is observable is often a veneer with deep level norms, values and assumptions. If the gospel is to penetrate into the lives of the Muslims, a proper understanding of their worldview is very important. God has always reached out to human beings where they are within their cultures. Culture in itself is not evil, but since sin has penetrated every culture, the gospel must address the person at those deepest levels. An understanding of Worldview will also prevent workers in ME from doing cultural conversion rather than conversion to Christ.

Crisis intervention

The most crucial point in the conversion journey of the informants was noted to be the crisis period. Whatever happened and whoever came in at that moment of their life made the most difference. Those who work among Muslims need to be sensitive to the crises in the lives of seekers and new converts because at that point they are most vulnerable and can either draw close to Christ and Christians or draw away. If they draw away, it might be a daunting task to engage them back to their new found faith. Material help is very useful as a symbol of concern to the person. However, Christians must go beyond that. Those agents who made a difference in the lives of the informants during their crises assisted them materially where possible, but they also touched their spiritual lives. They prayed with them or shared the gospel with them or did both on top of their material help. They pointed them to the Giver of peace in the circumstances the informants were in.

Another element noticed in that regard is that there was deliberate effort and intention on the part of the agent. They purposely reached out to the victim in need

without any attached strings. They came in at the opportune time just when they were needed. Any witness to the Muslims must be in tune with the Holy Spirit in order to be there at the proper timing for the Muslim.

Reaching Muslim children

Muslim children can be reached through Jesus films, sports evangelism and school ministry. As such, Christian teachers need to be empowered to realize their potential and capacity to impact the Muslim children through their lives and their witness. The Christian children can also be empowered so that their informal interactions with Muslim kids can give them an opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ Jesus at their early stages of life. In contexts where the parents are more protective, ways and means should be devised such that the children can be a link to the parents. Thus, the teachers and children workers should endeavor to reach families through children by establishing relationship with the parents. Muslims in Kenya are generally hospitable, they entertain visitors a lot, even Christians. This is a door of opportunity the teachers and children workers can exploit.

Convert care

One advantage the Borana MBBs enjoy in the city is that there are quite a number of their own Borana who are Christians. In taking care of new converts, this community of believers has been quite instrumental. The manifestation of ministries like those of pastors, evangelists and other key church leaders from among their own people has worked out to their advantage in Discipling MBBs. Community life makes the environment even better because new converts under threat can be secretly discipled without raising eyebrows from the rest of the *umma*.

One constant factor about conversion is change. Change begins at the point of allegiance and permeates to the rest of one's life and relationships. The church must

be patient with the MBB as they adjust to their newfound faith. The role of the church is to provide that atmosphere where positive change will take place and where the person will feel loved, accepted and nurtured. Expecting radical change is good, but it seldom happens. Change can only be noticed through relationship with family and community because loving God leads to harmony in relationships to others. Those who disciple MBBs must be extremely patient at times because progress can be slow. More so, those who disciple others need to remember that they themselves are not yet perfect and that it has taken many patient people to get them where they are.

Empowering MBBs to become agents of the gospel

It has been deduced from this study that MBBs can become instruments in doing ME. They have greater advantage than the outsider because they have been in Islam before. Their testimony alone is enough evidence of the work of Christ in their lives. Besides, they live together and their levels of interactions with their Muslim neighbors are high. They can be agents of change without raising suspicion of intention to convert their neighbor. Within their families, most MBBs can be instrumental in reaching the Muslims for Christ.

The Borana people generally enjoy great tolerance from their Muslim counterparts. This is a unique strength from a Muslim dominated people group and a window of opportunity that can serve for the advance of the gospel.

On the wider scale, the Borana people group is also more receptive to the gospel as compared to their neighbors the Somali. Could this be an opportunity for ME to the dominantly Muslim Somali group? This should be explored further for Nairobi where Somalis are densely populated in the famous Eastleigh section.

On the other hand, the Borana MBBs of the city have been quite instrumental in doing ME in the rural homes that are strongly Islamic. There is need for further

empowerment of these attempts by providing the necessary support to these strategically placed servants of Christ. Mobilization of the urban groups should be intensified too, for even with such attempts, there is great room for improvement to involve as many people as possible in the outreach effort. New MBBs need to be nurtured towards being mission-minded through the Word and prayer so that they can also participate in ME.

Challenge to the Urban Church

Conn observes that whereas the percentage of Muslims in the city is high, that of Christians is even higher. Despite this fact, the church in the city has remained a sleeping giant and will remain asleep until it is woken up. As discussed previously, Muslims notice the fear and indifference from the church. At times opportunities for ME have been lost through such an attitude.

One common area of weakness in urban churches found in predominantly Muslim contexts is that they remain self-contained. Linguistic and social barriers cannot allow the Muslim inquirers to come to church. New converts are perceived as a source of curiosity rather than brothers and sisters in the faith so that they are closed out of the social life of the congregation. Conn therefore recommends that "Urban churches must learn to welcome converts from Islam more heartily and integrate them more fully into the fellowship of the congregation" (1990, 79). The main reasons why converts from Islam sometimes tend to stagnate include:

- Continued ascription of revelatory authority to Muhammad
- Continued dependence on rites and festivals
- Continued reliance on forms of worship
- Isolation from the wider Christian community

(Adopted from Green 1990, 246).

From this study, if the church overcomes the fourth barrier by providing a conducive atmosphere to the convert for growth and transformation, the other three problems will be easy to sort out. The church must allow the MBB to experience conversion not only to Christ but also to His body; the church and provide the community where a sense of worth and belonging can be nurtured. Whether the convert belongs before they become or they becomes before they belong, it is their right to find an atmosphere in the church where they can be treated with love and not suspicion. Indeed the urban church must wake up to this urgent task.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study is by no means exhaustive. The following areas need further study:

1. Conversion among the elite MBBs and those with higher economic status because this study concentrated on women with low literacy and economic status. Such a study may give more balance to the discussion of conversion among MBB women.

2. There role of the Christian husband in the conversion of the wife. Husbands who convert first have been central to the conversion of their wives.

3. The role of crisis and crisis intervention has emerged as a crucial theme towards conversion from Islam to Christianity among women. Further study on this specific aspect is recommended.

4. It has been established from the present study that *madrasa* is an integral part of the spiritual development of a Muslim child. A study needs to be done to establish its role in the life of the Muslim child and community.

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APPENDIX 1: GUIDING QUESTIONS

Personal Background:
Name: _____ Marital Status: _____
Age: _____ Church: _____
Education level: _____ Occupation: _____

Research Question 1: What was the religious state of the Borana MBB women before their conversion to Christianity?
1. When you were a Muslim, how often did you pray and fast?
2. What did you like most about Islam and why?
3. What did you find challenging in Islam?
4. What did you find challenging in Christianity as an outsider then?

Research Question 2: How does Rambo's model apply to the conversion process from Islam to Christianity among the Borana MBB women in Nairobi?

Context
1. Where did you grow up?
2. Where were you living when you got converted?
3. What role do you think the following played towards your conversion to Christianity: Family, Friends, School, Neighborhood, Community, and Church?

Crisis
1. What made you particularly interested in Christianity?
2. How long did it take between your first contact and when you seriously considered Christianity as an option?
3. Is there a particular challenge or situation you were facing before your conversion? Please explain in what area: personal (emotional, intellectual, financial, physical), family, community, religious, spiritual or any other.
4. How do you think this challenge affected your decision to become a Christian?

Quest
1. What steps did you take to deal with the challenge mentioned in Q.2 above?
2. What challenges did you face from the following areas: personal, family, friends, religion, and culture in your search for meaning?
3. What motivated you in your pursuit despite the challenges faced?
4. What appealed to you most about Christianity?

Encounter

1. Is there a particular person(s) who played a key role in leading you to Christ as family, friend or neighbor?
2. What was your impression about this person(s)?
3. How did you get to know the person?
4. How long after you met the person(s) did you finally come to Christ?

Interaction

1. What are some of the things you did together with the person(s) mentioned above at personal, family, cultural and religious levels?
2. How did your relationship with them encourage you to become a Christian?
3. What Christian rituals/activities were you engaged in that contributed to your conversion to Christianity?

Commitment

1. How did you finally decide to become a Christian?
2. What happened on the particular day that you finally accepted Christ?
3. What struggles did you experience in your final decision making stage to become a Christian and how did you deal with them?

Consequences

1. What are some of your positive experiences immediately after committing your life to Christ?
2. What challenges did you experienced then: At family, community and church levels?
3. What motivated you to remain a Christian in view of all the above challenges?

1. Research Question 3: What changes have resulted from the conversion of the Borana MBB women from Islam to Christianity in the following areas: personal, social and cultural?

1. What are some of the changes that you experienced in your life as a result of your conversion to Christianity?
   a. As an individual
   b. As you related to others
   c. In your cultural practice
2. What other changes did you experience as a result of your conversion to Christianity?
3. What challenges did you experience as you went through change after conversion and how did you face them?

APPENDIX 2: RAMBO'S MODEL OF CONVERSION

STAGE 5 INTERACTION	STAGE 6 COMMITMENT	STAGE 7 CONSEQUENCES
Encapsulation Sphere of Change • Physical • Social • Ideological Relationships • Kinship • Friendship • Leadership • Disciple/teacher Rituals—choreography of the soul • Deconstruction • Reconstruction Rhetoric—systems of interpretation • Attribution • Modes of understanding Roles—reciprocal expectations and conduct • Self and God • Self and others	Decision making Rituals • Separation • Transition • Incorporation Surrender • Desire • Conflict • "Giving In": relief and liberation • Sustaining surrender Testimony: biographical reconstruction integrating personal and community story Motivational reformulation • Multiple • Malleable • Interactive • Cumulative	Personal bias in assessment Nature of consequences • Affective • Intellectual • Ethical • Religious • Social/political Sociocultural and historical consequences of conversion Religious landscapes Unintended socio-cultural consequences • Nationalism • Preservation of the vernacular • Secularization Psychological consequences • Progression • Regression • Stasis Stories of conversion Theological consequences

Source: Rambo, Lewis. 1993. Understanding Religious Conversion. New Haven: Yale University Press. (168-169).

APPENDIX 3: BACKGROUND OF THE INFORMANTS

Name/ Community	Year of conversion	Marital Status	Age (years)	Education level	Occupation
Hamidah Borana	1982	Married, eight children	44	Standard Eight	Shop attendant
Aziza/ Borana	1991	Married, five children	38	Standard Six	Small business
Halimah/ Burji	1993/4 not sure	Married, four children	44	Standard seven	Small business
Saumu/ Borana	1995	Married, two children	27	Standard four	Small business
Dansa/ Burji	1993	Separated, five children	46	None	Small business
Faiza/ Burji	1997	Married, four children	27	Standard eight	House wife
Batula/ Borana	1998	Married, two children	27	Standard eight	Small business
Maimuna/ Borana	1998	Married, five children	38	Standard Seven	Small business
Yasmin/ Borana	2007	Married, one child	22	Standard five	Small business
Habiba/ Borana	2007	Separated, one child	23	None	Cook
Salma/ Borana	2007	Widow, seven children	40	None	House help
Farida/ Burji	2007	Married, four children	29	Standard eight	House wife

APPENDIX 4: CONVERSION STAGES OF BORANA MBBS

	Stage 1: Context	Stage 2: Crisis	Stage 3: Quest	Stage 4: Encounter	Stage 5: Interaction	Stage 6: Commitment	Stage 7: Consequences
Maimuna	1. Muslim Family 2. *Madrasa* 3. Catholic school	1. Marital breakdown 2. Rejection at home	Guidance from God	1. Missionary 2. Friends	1. Bible study 2. Friendship	Allegiance and truth encounter	1. Inner peace 2. Love for God 3. Love for others
Batula	1. Muslim Family 2. *Madrasa* 3. CRE teacher	1. Abandoned by husband 2. Rejection at home 3. Hopelessness	1. Hope 2. Care and concern	1. Missionary 2. Friends	1. Bible study 2. Friendship	Allegiance and truth encounter	1. Inner peace 2. Hope 3. Secret believer
Saumu	1. Muslim Family 2. Christian guardian	Attacks from ancestral spirits causing fear	Release from spirit attacks	1. Friend 2. Pastor	1. Sharing about Jesus 2. Discerned spirit	In church Power and allegiance encounter	1. Freedom from spirit attacks
Dansa	Muslim Family No school	1. Strange dreams 2. Brother's words	Divine guidance	1. Brother 2. Evangelist 3. Neighbors 4. Dream	1. Shared gospel 2. Command to change residence	In church 1. Truth and allegiance encounter	1. Inner peace 2. Fear to go to church 3. Spirit attacks
Salma	1. Muslim Family; 2. Mother died when 3 weeks old	1. Death of spouse 2. Financial needs 3. Sick child 4. Jinn attacks 5. Persistent headaches	1. Healing; 2. Deliverance; 3. Care and concern	1. Cousins 2. Friends	1. Material help 2. Prayer 3. Bible teaching Jesus' film	At friend's place Power, truth and allegiance encounter	1. Inner peace 2. Healing 3. Rejection from *umma*
Aziza	1. Muslim Family 2. *Madrasa* 3. Debates with Christian kids 4. Teacher's witness	Husband's conversion: loss of identity	1. Divine guidance 2. Identity	1. Muslim leaders 2. Husband 3. Friend	1. Persistent prayer 2. Invitation to coffee and church	In church Power, truth and allegiance encounter	1. Inner freedom 2. Love for Jesus 3. Family and *umma* rejection

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7
Yasmin	1. Muslim Family 2. Christian brothers 3. Mixed context	1. Mistreated by step mother 2. House help 1 1/2 years 3. Drinking husband; physical abuse	1. Friendship 2. Marital harmony	Relatives	One month 1. Gospel 2. Songs 3. Convincing husband	In church Allegiance encounter	1. Family peace 2. New friends 3. Ayaana practice stopped 4. Loneliness
Habiba	1. Muslim Family 2. Free interaction with Christians 3. Father died when young	1. Death of two children 2. Marital stress-husband drinking 3. Escape from physical abuse	1. Friendship 2. Spiritual guidance at mosque, then church	1. Employer 2. Neighbors 3. Yasmin, an MBB	One month 1. Sharing 2. Material help 3. Invitation to church 4. Advice	In church 1. Short teaching 2. Allegiance and truth encounter	1. Joy 2. Rejection from husband
Halimah	1. Muslim Family 2. Married to Christian	1. Need for child 2. Husband's loss of job 3. Jinn attacks after conv.	1. God's healing 2. Deliverance	1. Husband 2. Evangelist	One year 1. Lifestyle 2. Shared gospel 3. Amharic song	In church Allegiance encounter with little understanding	1. Answered prayer 2. Peace of God 3. No Jinn attacks ceased
Farida	1. Muslim Family 2. Mother Christian before marriage 3. *Madrasa*	Husband's conversion; loss of identity	1. Guidance 2. Marital harmony 3. Healing after conversion	1. Husband 2. Mother 3. Evangelist	One month 1. Resisted church 2. Prayer 3. Persuasion to stay in marriage	In church Allegiance encounter with little understanding	1. Inner peace 2. Peace at home 3. Stopped *sadaqa*
Faiza	1. As above; sister to Farida 2. *Madrasa* 3. Christian meetings	1. Husband's conversion: loss of identity 2. Dreams and visions	1. Guidance 2. Sound marriage	1. Husband 2. Mother 3. Pastor 4. Supernatural intervention	1. Persuasion for church 2. Gospel 3. Church attendance	In church 1. Jesus, the way 2. Truth and allegiance encounter	1. Inner peace 2. Peace at home 3. Rejection
Hamidah	1. Muslim Family 2. *Madrasa* 3. Kitale-Machakos	1. No major crisis 2. Alternative religious offer 3. Escape from arranged marriage	1. Christian lifestyle 2. Freedom to preach and teach	1. Schoolmate 2. Teachers 3. Husband	1. Bible course 2. Gospel 3. Freedom of choice	At Machakos Gradual growth in allegiance and truth encounter	1. Freedom to preach 2. Stopped divination; now discerning;