

**AFRICAN RELIGION IN THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE  
RELIGION:  
A CASE STUDY OF KIPSIGIS RELIGIOUS PRACTICES**

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## ABSTRACT

### **AFRICAN RELIGION IN THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION: A CASE STUDY OF KIPSIGIS RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.**

African Religion exists and is real having existed from the beginning of creation. However, the available literature on the study of Comparative Religion indicate that scholars of world religions have ignored African Religion in their works and studies. This thesis examines the place of African Religion in the study of Comparative Religion using Kipsigis Religion as a case study. The research demonstrates that African Religion has not been studied comprehensively like other religions of the world. Instead, the majority of scholars have abstained from including African Religion in their work. Others have labelled African Religion as "primitive", "animistic", and similar terms which were a product of evolutionist trend. In such write ups, African Religion is portrayed in a shallow manner, reflecting on a few aspects of the religion and very often erroneously.

This research study has shown that the conventional religions studied in Comparative Religion are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. The definition, aims and the scope of Comparative Religion, however, revealed that the study should involve all religions of the world, whether dead, living or emerging. It was established that for a religion to be studied in Comparative Religion, it should have three components, namely, religious expression in fellowship, in thought and in practice.

This study therefore intended to accomplish four objectives. First, to investigate the criteria used in identifying the religions considered in the study of Comparative Religion. Second, to ascertain the place of African Religion in the study of Comparative Religion. Third, to demonstrate that African Religion is at par with other faiths of the world and finally, that African Religion should be studied as an academic subject in Comparative Religion.

Two main methods of data collection were used in this study. The Historical Method was used to analyse the historical development of the study of Comparative Religion. This method was also used to determine the criteria used to qualify a

religion to be studied within Comparative Religion.

Survey Method was also used to collect primary data among the Kipsigis of Kericho and Bomet districts about their religion. This information was analysed and organised along the criteria established above.

This Study has indicated that, contrary to the assumptions that African Religion lacks the required components, the essential elements required in any religion are present. It has further shown that, the elements that are said to be missing in African Religion are not necessary requirements in the study of religion. The research concludes that Kipsigis Religion, hence African Religion, has all the essential characteristics present in other religions which are studied within Comparative Religion. Consequently, African Religion has its place among world religions in the study of Comparative Religion.

The study is organised in six chapters. Chapter one introduces the statement of the problem, literature review, significance of the study and the methodology used. The second chapter is an overview of the History of Religion and the place of African Religion in the study of Comparative Religion. In Chapter three, the Kipsigis Religion expressed in fellowship is examined. Here, the factors which unite the Kipsigis people are discussed. Chapter four deals with the Kipsigis Religion expressed in thought. The Kipsigis concept of *Asis*, cosmology and man are analysed. The Kipsigis Religion expressed in practice is the topic of chapter five. Various Kipsigis religious practices are examined. Chapter six is the conclusion of the study, containing a summary of the findings, contribution and recommendations for further studies.