

**INCULTURATION WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: A CASE OF COCK
RITUALS AND CULTURAL VALUES OF THE ABAMARACHI OF BUSIA
COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

To my parents, my late father, Mr. Benedict Oyoma Mulaa (Abuku) (1920-2000) who taught me that “book knowledge,”(academic development) is not sufficient for one in life, it must be supplemented with “*Elimu dunia*,” (Wisdom); and my mother Teresina Aloo

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ABSTRACT

In the African worldview, there is no clear distinction between the sacred and the profane while the Western Christian one clearly distinguishes the two. In the present African context, there is the dilemma of choosing between traditional African values and Christian ones in critical situations of life because they are usually in conflict. Often African Christians revert to traditional practices to address critical needs in their lives. The purpose of this study was to examine the possibility of inculturation within the Catholic Church using cock rituals among the *Abamarachi* of Butula Sub-County, Busia County. A cock ritual is where a cock is identified for a social-sacred purpose often involving special persons, actions and utterances in specific places culminating in a symbolic feast. The study objectives were to: identify potential areas for integration of Christian teachings and practices in the cock rituals of the *Abamarachi*; identify the relationship between cultural practices involving the cock and Catholic teachings; and propose a model of inculturation that integrates positive elements of the *Abamarachi* culture and Catholic teachings and practices. The study adopted a descriptive research design to collect facts on cock rituals. The study used the Functionalist Theory as propounded by Bronislaw Malinowski and Emile Durkheim. The theory asserts that religion unites people around practices that have lasting values. Ethnographic survey was used as to identify positive *Abamarachi* cultural beliefs and practices associated with cock rituals and how they can be incorporated into Catholicism using the Vatican Council as a point of reference. Data was collected using interview schedule and questionnaires. The researcher observed and participated in some *Abamarachi* rituals where the cock featured. Eighty respondents were purposively sampled for the study, 40 from the *Abamarachi* traditional community and 40 from the Catholic Church. Descriptive statistics were used in data analysis and interpretation, presented in forms such as cultural anecdotes and case reports. Some quantitative data were presented using graphs, tables, pie charts and pictures in evaluating the impact of the *Abamarachi* culture and Catholicism on each other. The findings indicate that though the *Abamarachi* traditionalists and Catholics maintain their unique beliefs and practices, they show signs of willingness to accommodate each other. Thus, it was concluded that inculturation can assist in making the *Abamarachi* to “feel at home” within the Catholic Church and Catholicism will be aptly meaningful in its *Marachi* context. It is recommended that the Catholic Church could embrace *Abamarachi* worldview and borrow positive elements inherent in the worldview as proposed under the papal decree. Greater enculturation is possible were the *Abamarachi* traditionalists and Catholic faithful to open up more by inviting each other to celebrate their ritual ceremonies and embrace positive and beneficial norms and values in the spirit of ecumenism. The model of inculturation proposed in this study opines that the symbolism of the *Abamarachi* cock ritual sacrifice ought to be understood in the same vain as the Catholic understanding of Jesus as the lamb.

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DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

- Abamarachi:** *Luhya* speaking people, one of the *Luhya* dialects who speak the Marachi dialect. They live in Marachi location, Butula Constituency of Busia County in the Western region of Kenya.
- Ancestors:** Departed members of a family, in particular those from whom the living descended. The people invoke the ancestral spirits i.e. *emisambwa* (plural), *omusambwa* (singular) during sacrifices, and offerings among other ceremonies.
- Christianity:** Religious tradition based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- Church:** All Christian denominations that profess Jesus Christ as the Lord and saviour. In this study the Catholic Church is applicable.
- Cock:** A domesticated fowl. The cock is normally a male bird but in this study it is used in a generic form to include the hen.
- Evangelization:** The process of persuading a given group of people, in this case, the *Abamarachi*, to become and live as Christians.

- Inculturation:** Gradual acquisition of aspects of African traditional rituals and, in particular, cock rituals among the *Abamarachi*, and other positive cultural values into Christian practice or tradition.
- Olwibulo; Oluyia (Descent):** Members of a community related by blood. The family unit is also referred to as ‘*olwibulo*’ or ‘*olwanyi*’. A sub-clan constituting several families is referred to as ‘*oluyia*.’ The full clan is known as ‘*inono*.’
- Omusango (Ritual):** *Omusango* (singular), *emisango* (plural) a ceremony or customary act conducted in a particular manner to symbolically affirm an event or occasion. For example, the dowry cock is sacrificed to bind the families of the bride and the groom.
- Omusiro:** *Omusiro* (singular), *emisiro* (plural) refers to that which is forbidden by the *Abamarachi* custom because it is offensive or may cause social upheaval e.g taboo.
- Religion:** Belief in the existence of a god and/or ancestral spirits and activities such as sacrifices and rituals connected with their worship.
- Sacrifice:** An animal offering to God or the ancestral spirits or both to seek favour, or as a means of promotion, or thanksgiving to prevent bad happenings. A special animal or a cock is killed or offered. A sacrifice is called *esisashiro*.
- Were:** The name for God among the *Abaluhya*, also called *Wele*, or *Nyasaye*, (*Nasaye*).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Among the *Luhya* people of Western Kenya, the cock, *itaywa*, is significant and an integral part of their life. There is hardly any family throughout the *Luhya* community which does not keep or utilize the cock. Those who happen to have none either borrow or buy when a function demanding its use arises.

The cock is used in all rites of passage of an individual from birth to death. Some of the occasions and rituals when the cock is utilized include: when a child is born, naming, initiation ceremonies, at the time of establishing a new homestead, marriage arrangements, at the time of reconciliation and at funerals.

The use of the cock in these occasions has persisted despite the prevalence of Christianity, Western culture and modernity. For this reason, this study set out to investigate the forces at play in this phenomenon and determine the potential significance of the cock in the evangelization process among the *Abamarachi*, a sub-tribe of the *Luhya*. Integrating cultural beliefs and practices in Christianity is an aspect of inculturation. Waliggo et al underscore the goals of inculturation as:

The honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation everywhere understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-pattern of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and his Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly feel at home, in the cultures of each people (Waliggo et al, 1986:12).

It has been argued that the Old Testament, which was a prelude to the New Testament where Christianity originated, was a source of inculturation. This is because it was able to transform the Israelites into people of God by incorporating their worldview, history,

culture and aspirations (Mc Garry, 2001: 192-197). No one can usefully expound the richness of Christian teachings to the African traditions without considering the specific African worldview, culture, institutions, histories, wisdom, thought, patterns and aspirations of the people. The cock rituals thus have been sampled in this study as a possible model of inculturation and making the Gospel relevant or more meaningful to the African. Resorting to traditional remedies is a common thing in other parts of Africa. The Kamba of Kenya, Bemba of Zambia, the Tigrinya of Ethiopia and Dinka of Sudan have reports of resorting to traditional remedies during illnesses. All these show that old mentalities have not been obliterated (Magesa, Laurenti, 2013: 15-16).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Christianity has permeated the landscape of the *Abamarachi* for over a century. This notwithstanding, there appear to exist a conflict between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices and Christian teachings. It is not uncommon that when the *Abamarachi* Christians face certain inexplicable problems, they resort to cultural practices and rituals for remedy instead of the church or church sanctioned mechanism. Such problems include infertility, still-births, mental illness, and the existence of long periods of bachelorhood and spinsterhood among those who have not taken the priesthood or sisterhood vows.

Recourse to cultural practices is often done without the knowledge and/or approval of the Christian church. This tendency to do things secretly arises out of fear of being expelled from or censured by the Christian church. Such secrecy should not be the case if the church understands that some of these practices have a positive bearing on the day-to-day life of *Abamarachi* just as Christian teachings do. One may opine that such cultural practices could be understood as being responsive to their immediate needs as they are relevant to their worldview. At the same time the *Abamarachi* have to adjust their position

to fit into Catholicism. This give and take scenario is quite demanding and often misunderstood. Some people may gloss it as syncretism, while others may brand it as a case of not being truly Christian.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to examine potential ways of inculturating *Abamarachi* cock rituals into Christianity, taking the case of the Catholic Church in Busia, Kenya as a point of reference.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To identify areas for integration of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic doctrines.
2. To examine the relationship between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices involving the cock rituals and Christian teachings.
3. To develop a model of inculturation that integrates positive elements of the *Abamarachi* culture and Catholic teachings and practices.

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Which are the areas of integration of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic doctrines?

2. What is the relationship between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices involving the cock rituals and Christian teachings?
3. How can a model of inculturation that integrates positive elements of the *Abamarachi* culture and Catholic teachings and practices be established?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will enhance the symbolic understanding of the cock rituals among the *Abamarachi*. It will also be a useful source of information to scholars on religion, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, among others, to appreciate the importance of cultural or traditional rituals and beliefs in a given Christian context which is wholesome and inclusive. The findings will also enable the church to acculturate evangelism in order to make it effective among the *Abamarachi* people bearing in mind that people are inclined to their culture while at the same time being practicing Christians. The findings may trigger positive changes in evangelization among the *Abamarachi* with regard to cock rituals.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study used cock rituals among the *Luhya* as an element of inculturation into Catholicism. The study was limited to the *Abamarachi* in Busia County, Kenya. The field study was conducted between August 2008 and January 2009. The justification of choosing the *Abamarachi* was because this community engages in various practices associated with the cock ritual. Moreover, majority of people in this community of Butula Sub-County in Busia County are inclined to the Catholic Church. This was fundamental in establishing the relationship between the Catholic Church's values and cultural traditions. The study mainly focused on *Abamarachi* cock rituals. The aspects of *Abamarachi* traditions which were investigated included naming, marriage, reconciliation, funerals,

among others, where the prominence of the use of a cock as a social and ritual object was significant. Being a native speaker, the choice of *Abamarachi* helped in overcoming the limitations of language barriers and suspicion from the respondents. The researcher opted for the Catholic Church because it has a documentary guide in the form of papal decree (Vatican Council II) that served as a yardstick in gauging the success or otherwise of inculturation in reality.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was influenced by the Functionalist Theory of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942). The functionalist theory which he championed asserts that every custom however strange or bizarre served some contemporary purpose. He proposed that all cultural beliefs and practices are useful parts of the society in which they occur. Malinowski asserts that:

Every culture is a working whole, an integrated unity in which every element has a functional contribution to make; the function of any institution is the part it plays within the interrelated whole in fulfilling human purposes and needs (Oke, 1984: 69).

The Functionalist Theory was developed from the metaphor of comparing institutions in the life of society with that of organs in the body. There must be close inter-connection of different institutions. Malinowski argued that all customs are significant to those practicing them and their function is indispensable to the society in which they are found (Mair Lucy, 1965:234).

Malinowski's theory relates to the *Abamarachi* worldview significantly. This is because the cultural beliefs and practices involving birth, initiation, marriage and funerals, and which entail cock rituals, are linked in the sense that ordinarily they contribute to the fullness in the life of an individual. For example, when a cock ritual is conducted in a marriage arrangement, it authenticates the union paving the way for an orderly

relationship. A woman for whom the bride wealth and the cock ritual were not performed was considered as being only cohabiting with the man. (see details in chapter three). Magesa confirms that social cohesiveness is guaranteed in marriage where accepted procedure is followed, lack of which pre-empts the meaning of marriage (Magesa Laurenti, 1997: 125). Malinowski was concerned with order in society. Will inculturation between the Christian practices and meaningful lasting cultural practices of the *Abamarachi* ensure order? If so, one may opine that there will be need for a new paradigm shift in Christian evangelization to incorporate the *Abamarachi* cultural practices to guarantee harmony.

Malinowski's theory was further developed by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), who saw, religion as, "an eminently collective thing" which binds people together through four functions-disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing and euphoric social forces (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1961:426).

These four functions in respect of religion affect the society as follows:

- (i) Religious rituals prepare people for social life by imposing self-discipline and a measure of asceticism.
- (ii) Religious ceremonies bring people together and thus serve to reaffirm their common bonds and to reinforce social solidarity.
- (iii) Religious observance maintains and revitalizes the social heritage of the group and helps transmit its enduring values to future generations.
- (iv) Religion has a euphoric function in that it helps to counteract feelings of frustration and loss of faith and certitude by reestablishing the believer's sense of well-being, their sense of essential rightness of the moral world of which they are part (Komonchak A. Joseph, 1987:905).

Durkheim's theory was relevant to this study because most of the rituals involving the cock among the *Abamarachi* resonate with some of the functional elements of religious rituals and ceremonies as for instance:

- (i) The naming rituals mark continuity of the chosen names in the families concerned, which helps to maintain the identity of the family.
- (ii) The cock rituals in relation to marriage cement the bonds of the families involved,

The medicine person by appealing to God to restore the health of the patient through the cock ritual restores the victim's confidence as well as that of those connected to him/her.

In brief, the religious factor has a relational impact on the society by keeping it connected since the beliefs and practices bring people together. Unless the Christian Church and clergy come to terms with these functions inherent in the *Abamarachi* cock rituals, any quest for meaningful inculturation will become futile.

1.9 Literature Review

This literature review is a brief survey of some works covering rituals in other communities, some very distant from the *Abamarachi*. The existence of these rituals elsewhere supports the fact that the goings-on among the *Abamarachi* are by no means unique, but rather, widespread socio-cultural practices. It is hoped that these examples will enhance an understanding and appreciation of the *Abamarachi* cock rituals and provide a relevant model for meaningful inculturation.

Aswani Hellen in *Luyha (Bunyore) in Popular Culture of East Africa* (1972) highlights the naming tradition of the *Abanyore*, a sub-*Luhya* community using the cock as a significant item in the ritual. In this study the cock and the hen are used to determine

whether the name for the child is to be from a male or female ancestor in the family. This suggests that the use of the cock ritual is significant in giving people a sense of identity (names) in many communities among the *Luhya*. And what emerges from this study is whether or not a people's names should necessarily be compatible with Christian identity.

Taylor John in his book, *The Primal Vision* (1963) writes that the names given to children are identified from one of the ancestors. And once a name has been given to a child it is believed that the ancestor has been "restored" in the child. This thinking correlates with the *Abamarachi* world view in relation to ancestral veneration.

The book, *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied* by Hillman Eugene (1993) discusses the traditional names as being of paramount influence. Although he is discussing the Kikuyu cultural practices, the important issue here is with regard to the fact that a name of the ancestral lineage of people is more symbolic and significant than an imposed foreign name. This brings out the idea of the need to recognize traditional names in the Christian perspective. In the case of the *Abamarachi*, the cultural name given to a child at birth or initiation should be recognized and upheld in a similar way as the Christian name.

Magesa Laurenti shares Hillman's idea in his book *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (2004) where he argues that the Church should be willing to make concessions towards cultural practices through inculturation. This book is relevant to the study because the study focused on the fact that there is need for Christianity and the *Abamarachi* cultural practices to find a suitable merger in order for the *Abamarachi* Christians to find Christianity more meaningful.

Another author, Roscoe John in *The Baganda: Their Customs and Beliefs* (1965) gives an elaborate description of the use of the cock in the *Baganda* traditional rituals in marriage

arrangements. This compares with the *Abamarachi* in their use of the cock in marriage and other rituals. A notable difference, however, is that in the *Baganda* marriage case, the cock is given to the bride after marriage as a meal gift while in the *Abamarachi* case the cock is exchanged with the first dowry of animals and given to the bride-groom's family who slaughter it thereby shading blood to "bind" the prospective union.

In the book *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Achebe Chinua discusses some cultural practices among the Ibo people of Nigeria which involve elaborate use of the cock rituals. One occasion is connected with the celebrations of the *Uri* (marriage feast) for Obierika's daughter. During the function the bride emerges holding a cock in her right hand as the crowd cheers. She presents the cock to the musicians who have come with her prospective husband. She then joins the dance and afterwards accompanies the visitors to stay for seven market weeks with them. On their way back home, the guests make courtesy visits to prominent men like Okonkwo before they finally leave the village. Okonkwo gives them a present of two cocks. It appears like the token of the cock presented by the bride is a solemn gesture of her recognition of the new bond that is to develop. The use of the cock here corresponds with the *Abamarachi* case where the groom's relatives are given a cock on the first day of dowry payment. On another marriage function, described as the ceremony of confession, a cock is slaughtered to ratify the bride's acceptance of her husband, which also corresponds with the *Abamarachi* rituals.

Among the Yoruba of West Africa a cock is slaughtered when an elderly person has died. Ogungbemi Segun in the book, *A Critique of African Cultural Practices* (1997) writes that the Yoruba believe in life after death. The cock that is slaughtered is referred to as *adieirono* which is interpreted as a ceremony which "buys the road and opens the right

way for the departed” into the ancestral land. This belief in the life after death correlates significantly with the *Abamarachi* who use the cock in a similar ritual.

Jomo Kenyatta in his book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965) discusses sacrifices and offerings among the Gikuyu people of Central Kenya. Sacrifices and offerings are ritualized for several purposes, such as resolving disputes, approaching Ngai (God) for favours such as rain as well as establishing good relations with ancestors. Cleansing and purification as well as healing techniques also involve the use of animal sacrifice among the Gikuyu. Such practices resonate well with the *Abamarachi* situation.

John, S. Mbiti in his book *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969) discusses sacrifices and offerings covering many diverse communities in Africa where various items including animals and chicken are offered to the deities. Mbiti adds that there are four main theories advanced to explain the function and meaning of sacrifices and offerings; the gift theory, the propitiation theory, the communion theory and the thank-offering theory. He further argues that the sacrifices and the offerings help to maintain the ontological balance between God and man, the spirits and man, the departed and the living. The sacrifices also act to renew the contact between God and man, and also are a symbol of fellowship between the departed and the living families.

Mbiti reflects on the *Abaluhya* and by extension the *Abamarachi* who believe that God is “the one to whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made or paid” (Mbiti John, 1969:58). He notes that there are formal occasions when these people make sacrifices to God, including the time of birth, naming, circumcision, weddings, funerals and harvest time. At such times prayers are also made, for example, to secure peace for the living dead during funerals and express thanks and joy to God at harvest time. All these examples suggest that rituals are widespread and significant among the communities that uphold them.

In yet another work, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Laurenti Magesa (1997) argues that the life force of the African people is inseparable with cultural practices which propel the life of a person to its recognition and fullness. For instance, he argues that a woman for whom dowry has not been paid is not recognized as being properly married. This argument is relevant to the *Abamarachi* perspective concerning dowry as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. Magesa highlights the importance of dowry among several African societies, for example, the Zande of Congo, Tswana of Southern Africa, Gikuyu and Kipsigis of Kenya, Kwaya of Tanzania, Akan of West Africa and the Thonga of Zimbabwe.

Githae, Jack Kaguu in his article *Dialogue on Renaissance of Indigenous Knowledge, Science and Religion* (2009) discusses healing in African culture which is relevant to the *Abamarachi* situation. According to him, traditional African medicine is related to religion and science. As highlighted in this study African religions are strongly connected with culture. As such, since science is usually based on empirical knowledge and experience which touch on humanity and culture, it is therefore connected to religion as well. Githae advances this argument by explaining that traditional medicine is both art and science. It constitutes health and care in Africa. Traditional medicine is therefore a culture, a way of life for many in Africa. It incorporates religion as it treats a person's mind and spirit. Therefore practices of traditional medicine are integrated into traditional African values (Githae, 2009:366). He further demonstrates how science and religion affect each other. In his view, science facilitates the process of healing; a cultural belief facilitates the aspect of faith that the medicine will work (which) while nature God (religion) does the actual healing. One cannot work without the other, and neither will work without the other (Githae, 2009:366). The argument about traditional medicine and indigenous religion surviving in the modern situation can be equated to the general position conveyed in this

study where the African traditional religion is seen continue growing. This is in spite of the presence of Christianity.

Moreover, Githae argues that traditional medicine is bound to survive for a long time and is still relevant in modern times. He explains that there are many threats to continuity, linking the past with the present, the old and the new. Traditional medicine, science and indigenous religion (have) survived and still will survive, because they find a new application in the modern situation. One of the world's vowed atheists, Charles Darwin, even acknowledged this in his often quoted theory of use and disuse: those traditional societies that respect God survived and lived long enough to pass their knowledge of success to the succeeding generations. Those that foolishly digressed from nature and God survive to pass on their mistakes (Githae, 2009:366).

Similarly, another author Stinton B. Diane in the book *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology* (2004) explains that medical efforts that produce healing among the African traditional religions should be upheld. Stinton thus concurs, quoting an elaborate assertion from one of her interviewees. She explains that for any African, the image of healing is important. Healing is a ministry within the African tradition, because our understanding is that a person is whole and we try to alleviate anything that interferes with this wholeness of life (Stinton B. Diane, 2004). Stinton further reiterates the centrality of healing for the Africans. According to her, the black African person, the aspiration to life, to eternity, is so primary that the person called to administer it holds a place of eminence. Soothsayers and healers, medicine persons of all kinds are pillars of social life (Stinton B. Diane, 2004:99-100). This position strengthens the fact that these persons should be given recognition by the Christians.

From the literature review it is apparent that names emanating from a cultural community are important as Aswani and Magesa have argued. Although Roscoe and Achebe discuss cocks of the Baganda and Igbo communities these appear to be presented as gifts or tokens rather than rituals. Kenyatta and Mbiti dwell on sacrifices but no mention of ritualization is made. Even Ogungbemi's cock among the Yoruba does not actualize into a ritual. As for Githae and Stinton traditional healing persists in given communities but again both writers do not offer actualized events. The literature review is related to the study as it underscores the persistence of indigenous approaches. This is seen among the *Abamarachi* where cock rituals persist. A noticeable gap in the literature review is the absence of a documented ritual. It would have been clearer if a ritual was involved and an explanation offered as to how such a ritual links a traditional culture and a new one for the convenience of both. In this study, and that is the point of departure from this literature review, cock rituals are offered as a possible link between an existing culture, the *Abamarachi* culture and a new culture, Catholicism, through inculturation.

1.10 Research Methodology

The research methodology provides a framework for the techniques and procedures that were used in research conceptualization, data collection and analysis. The study is largely qualitative in nature with a few aspects that render the quantitative techniques relevant as a tool of analysis. Key methods of data collection used included: oral interviews, questionnaires, observation of some rituals and library research as outlined below.

1.10.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design so as to collect in-depth perspectives on cock rituals and their cultural values among the *Abamarachi* of Busia County, with the

aim of finding possible areas of inculturation within the Catholic Church. In this study, the researcher investigated the relationship between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices and Catholic Christian practices and teachings. To do this, an ethnographic survey was done. In conducting this survey, the researcher was based in Nyapera village from where he traversed selected villages such as Nyapera, Butula, Bukati, Bulwani, Munga'bo, Munga'mbwa, Bwaliro, Lugulu, Tingolo, Kingandole, Burinda and Ikonzo, among many others in Marachi. These villages were chosen on the basis of having both strong presence of upholders of Abamarachi traditions and Catholic adherents.

The researcher was keen in observing and identifying aspect of the *Abamarachi* culture and Christian teachings that are fundamentally similar, thus providing room to inculturate them. Since it was not possible to cover all the cultural practices of the people owing to the limited time and the widespread nature of the cultural practices, focus was made on specific cultural practices involving the cock. In particular, the practices covered included naming, child rehabilitation, marriage, reconciliation, and death rites. The researcher kept a journal and made descriptive notes of events and functions that were taking place across the aforementioned villages in Marachi during the research period (August 2008 to January 2009).

1.10.2 Study Area

The study area covered was Butula Sub-County of Busia County, Kenya. The inhabitants of the area are *Abamarachi*. This area was chosen because the researcher is a native of the area and it would be convenient to operate.

1.10.3 Target Population

This study was conducted among the *Abamarachi* community of Busia County, from among whom the researcher is a member. The *Abamarachi* are a sub-group of the *Luhya* - a major tribe in Kenya. They are closely associated with the use of the cock in ritual practices and in consumption, hence their use in this study. The *Abamarachi* dominate Marachi location of Butula Constituency in Busia County and are further divided into various clans numbering over 60 as indicated in chapter two of this study. These clans include *Abafofoyo*, *Abang'ayo*, *Ababere*, *Abamwima*, *Abaderia*, among many others. Reference to *Abamarachi* means the collective consideration of these clans because the rituals affect them without exceptions.

1.10.4 Study Sample

The total population of Butula Sub-County is 120,000. The respondents were purposively sampled. The selected respondents were deemed to be the most appropriate because they understood various aspects of Christianity as well as cock rituals and cultural values among the *Abamarachi*. The sample consisted of 80 respondents, 40 participants from the *Abamarachi* traditional community and 40 from the Catholic Church. Among traditionalists, 5 chiefs, 5 assistant chiefs, 7 healers, 2 circumcisers, 6 rainmakers and 15 elders were sampled. On the other side were: 5 priests, 10 catechists and 25 lay persons from Butula Catholic Parish and other sub-parishes such as Buhuyi, Bukhuma, Siribo and Budunyi. The respondents were selected through snowballing technique.

The sample included *Abamarachi* men and women from the age of 18 years, and non-Marachi who, having lived in Busia County for a period of at least two years, were deemed to have gained some familiarity with the local traditions and values.

1.10.5 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select key respondents from among local administrative officers (chiefs and assistant chiefs), assistant chiefs, healers, circumcisers, rainmakers, priests, catechists and lay persons. In purposive sampling the researcher used snowballing technique to identify respondents from both the *Abamarachi* traditionalists and the *Abamarachi* Catholic Christians. These were viewed by the researcher as the custodians of the cultural and religious heritages of the *Abamarachi*. Purposive sampling was used to select eighty mature people at least from 18 years onwards, men and women, deemed as the repository of traditional religion and Christianity. In snowballing sampling technique, the researcher identified small numbers of individuals who had the requisite knowledge and practitioners of Marachi culture and/or Catholic traditions. These people were used as informants to identify others who qualified for inclusion in the research. In the case of traditionalists, village elders were used to identify chiefs, assistant chiefs, healers, circumcisers and rainmakers while in the case of *Abamarachi* Christians priests were used to identify catechists and lay persons.

1.10.6 Data Collection and Research Instruments

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from the field through the use of oral and written interviews (Appendix IV and V) and questionnaires (Appendix II and III). Some of the cultural practices that were noted during the interviews included naming rituals, marriage, reconciliation and death rituals. Secondary data was obtained from public and private university libraries in Kenya. The main ones were Margret Thatcher Library (Moi University), Amecea Gaba Campus Library and the Kenya National Library (Eldoret).

The questionnaires were in the English language. Two research assistants were also used to help in the distribution process and translation where the participants found it difficult to understand the English language. Questionnaires that were given to traditionalists and those issued to Catholic Christians had different questions although general questions that applied to both groups were similar. Regarding the interviews, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. Questions were asked as the researcher took notes. Since the researcher was brought up in the area under research, as part of the ethnographic survey he took time to stay with the people and participate in some of the rituals. Some important events were captured using photos as indicated in Appendix VIII.

1.10.7 Data Analysis

The data collected during the field research was analyzed qualitatively. The data, some of which had been written in the local language, was first translated to English. Broad themes were then manually identified and placed in clusters after which they were presented in a descriptive form. Data was first coded to reduce it into manageable summaries after which tabulation was done. The computer program SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 18 was used to analyze the data. Analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. It was then presented in statistical percentages using frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

1.11 Ethical Consideration

Any names of respondents or interviewees mentioned in this study were not their real names. This was observed in order to maintain their confidentiality. The information gathered was voluntarily given.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS PROFILE OF THE ABAMARACHI

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at establishing the background of the cultural and religious profile of the *Abamarachi* in order to create an understanding of the situation on the ground from which to identify areas of integration of the cock rituals into the Catholic Church. The chapter examines the *Abaluhya* people in general and in particular the *Abamarachi*, a sub-community of the *Abaluhya*. Under this chapter are issues involving the clans, the family and the African traditional religion. Christianity among the *Abamarachi*, the evangelization process, and the duality of the *Abamarachi*, in respect to Christianity and African traditional practices such as rituals and sacrifices are also covered in this chapter. It argues that the clan system among the *Abamarachi* is a strong phenomena because under each clan are various families sharing a common ancestry. The *Abamarachi* practice

Africa traditional religion and Christianity. Some of their cultural practices involve rituals and sacrifices used to address varied issues in the community.

2.2 The Geographical Location

The *Abaluhya*, also known as the *Luhya*, *Baluhya* or *Abaluyia* is a Bantu tribe living in the Western region of Kenya.

They are neighbours to the nilotic tribes, namely, the *Luo* (in the South), the *Kalenjin* (in the East) and the *Teso* or *Iteso* (in the North). Generally, the *Abaluhya* are considered as one ethnic group though they comprise of about twenty sub-ethnic communities, each identified by a different dialect. The *Bukusu* and *Maragoli* are the largest groups. The others are the *Abamarachi*, *Wanga*, *Bakhayo*, *Samia*, *Banyala* of Busia, *Basonga*, *Marama*, *Kisa*, *Banyore* and *Tiriki*; there are also the *Banyala* of Kakamega, *Tachoni*, *Bagisu* and *Bamasaaba* (Osogo John, 1965:iv). The subject of focus in this study is the *Abamarachi*.

Today the population of the *Abaluhya* is estimated to be 5,338,666 in Kenya (2009 Population and Housing Census). The *Abaluhya* are scattered in almost every sector of the Kenyan economy in most urban areas as professionals and semi-skilled workers in the self-employment sector popularly known as the “*Jua-kali*.” In the Western Kenya region where they form the bulk of the population they engage in subsistence farming growing maize, beans, potatoes, cassava among others and cash crops such as sugar-cane, tea, coffee and cotton. They also pursue dairy and poultry farming as well as numerous light industrial concerns, including transportation in all its manifestations. Today Christianity has been widely accepted among the *Abaluhya* people.

2.3 Myth of Origin

The ancestral and migratory origin of the *Abaluhya* is debatable but some oral tradition indicates that they hailed from Egypt and they are descendants of *Wele (Were)* believed to be God or the initial ancestor. *Were* created or bore a boy, *Mwambu*, and a girl, *Seera* (with some *Abaluyia* saying that the boy was *Akuru*, and the girl, *Muka*). These two married and bore another boy *Mugoma*, and a girl *Malaba* who also married and gave birth to all the Bantu peoples” (Osogo John, 1965:8).

The tradition maintains that, from Egypt, the *Baluhya* migrated southwards through Bunyoro in Uganda to their present home in Western Kenya. The people were deeply religious and in their undertakings, for example, during sacrifices they addressed “*Were*,” God to whom they referred to as “*Khakaba*” i.e the one who gives life and all things. Thus God was also known as “*Wele Khakaba*,” i.e. God as the source and giver of life (Wako Daniel, 1985:45). Today the people also refer to God as *Nyasaye*, a name borrowed from the nilotic *Luo* neighbours. African belief systems and practices centered on *Were* permeated the entire spectrum of the life of the people.

Families were closely knit and shared duties and responsibilities both in difficult and happy situations. This was part of the social support system, which was meant to avoid over-burdening individuals or sections of the community, in circumstances such as harvesting, circumcision, marriage arrangements and celebrations, and bereavement. Thus their worldview was largely based on a collective approach.

2.4 The Abamarachi Clan System

The *Abamarachi* are a sub-ethnic group of the *Abaluhya*. Geographically they live in Butula Constituency in Busia County. Their neighbours, among them the *Abaluhya* sub-ethnic groups, include the *Samia* to the West, the *Bakhayo* to the North-West and the

Wanga to the East. The *Luo*, a Nilotic ethnic group borders them to the South. The *Abamarachi* and the *Luo* inter-marry and thus share some cultural and religious beliefs and practices. For instance, many people from both communities are bilingual, use identical names, and conform to similar matrimonial and funeral rites.

The *Abamarachi* occupy land which is known as Marachi or *Ebumarachi* and their dialect is *Olumarachi*. The *Abamarachi* comprise of over sixty clans found in Western Kenya. Although their dialect is generally similar, and they basically eat “*obusuma*” (maize flour meal) with vegetables, meat, chicken and fish as their main diet, some differences among the clans do occur in some aspects. For example, whereas the *Abafofoyo* bury their dead with heads facing the West, the *Abamwima* bury their dead Eastwards, with claims that these are the directions from which their ancestors came. Some of the clans trace their roots to areas along the River Nile, beyond Uganda.

The clans include the *Abafofoyo*, the most populous group, which consists of various sub-clans such as the *Abafofoyo be Idokho*, *Abafofoyo be Iyenga* and *Abafofoyo Bakhamari* among others. The other clans are the *Bang’ayo*, *Abonwe*, *Abapwate*, *Abasimalwa*, *Abaderia*, *Abamudu*, *Ababoro*, *Ababunyi*, *Abarano*, *Abamwima*, *Abamalere*, *Abasuba*, *Abakolwe*, *Abarunga*, *Abamulembo*, *Abageri*, *Abakangala*, *Abagowa*, *Abakwera*, *Abatura*, *Abaliba*, *Abang’ale*, *Abayenjele*, *Abakaywa*, *Abaliba*, *Abashire*, *Abasirekwe*, *Ababuka*, *Abawesi*, *Abasonga*, *Ababwali*, *Abamurono*, *Abawangwe*, *Abang’unywe*, *Ababere*, *Abashibe*, *Abatsame*, *Ababulwe*, *Ababukaki*, *Ababarango*, *Abamagoya*, *Abawinyi*, *Abasumia*, *Abamwaya*, *Ababulwa*, *Abadetso*, *Abaradolo*, *Abakaliba*, *Abanyung’we*, *Abamucheyia*, *Abarwotsi*, *Abamasaaba*, *Abakune*, *Abakunda*, *Abamwaka*, *Abagori*, *Abamulobe*, *Abashieni*, *Abeyala*, *Abamudiru* and *Abamutsama*. The list is by no means conclusive.

The clans relate to one another amicably and despite their diverse ancestral roots they regard themselves as *Abamarachi*. The basic clan system is patrilineal. The clan elder/head is normally identified by clan members by virtue of one's seniority in age or based on special merit such as possession of exemplary wisdom. Some clans practice circumcision rites for boys while for others it is optional. There is no strong tradition of age-sets among the initiates. However, people born about the same year refer to themselves as belonging to one "age-set" loosely referred to as "*likhula*," "*oluse*" or "*olubaka*," (Osogo John, 1965:9). Such would be expected to constitute a "special" kind of "age-set" thus play, initiated or marrying more or less at the same time.

The clans observe different taboos. Among the most important and common one is that relating to sexual taboos. It is considered incestuous for people belonging to the same clan or having blood relationship to engage in sex. This position is supported by Magesa when he quotes Kenneth Little thus:

A person must not have sexual relations with one's own parent or child; grandparent or grandchild; sister, half-sister, brother or half-brother; aunt or uncle; the children of one's sister or brother or again their children; sister-or brother-in-law while either of the couple lives; the sister, brother, half-sister or half-brother of a woman or man with whom one has had sexual relations; any woman whose milk a man has suckled (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:141).

Those found to flout this taboo are subjected to some cleansing ritual (*okwabasibwa*) accompanied with very stern caution and at the very worst they may be banished from the community. This cleansing ritual also involves the use of a cock. An example is given here where a man has had sexual relations with his niece. The girl is a practicing Catholic while the man is a traditionalist. The traditionalists (elders) invite a medicine man/woman (*owamanyasi*) to preside over the cleansing ceremony. The medicine man/woman administers the medicine on both the man and the girl by giving them to drink. Then

he/she 'brushes' them with a cock which is slaughtered and eaten only by the elders. The man and the girl do not eat the cock. It is presumed that the sacrifice of the cock washes away the sin that was committed. For inculturation to be realized, the Christians would be present on such an occasion so that the priest offers prayers through the Holy Mass in an attempt to cleanse the victims. In that way, both traditional and Christian gestures would strengthen the motive of the occasion.

2.5 Family Organization and Social Support among the Abamarachi

The family structure is important among the *Abamarachi*. People refer to the family as "*olwibulo*," otherwise also known as "*olwanyi*." Thus for example, Namayi's family is referred to as "*olwibulo lwa Namayi*" or "*olwanyi lwa Namayi*." Namayi together with his brothers Okechi and Wesonga are people of the same family, referred to as "*abebulwa*." In reference to their father Kukhubi, they are known as the family of Kukhubi, i.e. "*abebulwa ba Kukhubi*." Kukhubi's family belongs to a number of other families that form a sub-clan called "*omuliango*" or "*inyumba*." Several sub-clans form the bigger clan unit or "*inono*." The sub-clan refers to itself as belonging to a unit called "*oluyia*," which refers to related families. The clans have a family tree stretching backwards to many generations. To get one's family list or genealogy, a person counts himself, and then his father, then his father's father and so on as far as one can remember. Each individual in the list represents a generation. The list follows the patrilineal hierarchy. The members listed are connected by blood relationship.

The list or link entails strong bonds and family members are socially bound in various aspects. For instance, they will contribute to raise dowry/bride wealth for one of their own sons who is financially handicapped, assist to raise school fees, help settle medical bills and collaborate in funeral arrangements among other social activities. The level of

cohesiveness in the clan appears to be stronger than the Christian or western concept of concern for other people. So the individual survives in society bound in a strong kinship network. Quoting Radcliffe, B. and Dartll, F. (eds), Osaso confirms this position when she writes:

Kinship system controls social relationship and regulates the entire life style of an individual in society (Osaso Millicent, 2006:12).

Within the array of the multiplicity of clans, there are numerous activities that unite the people in what eventually reflects a homogeneous and cohesive society. For instance, the various ceremonies and rituals performed in the community, especially touching on rites of passage bring people together. Communal rites are those associated with birth, initiation, marriage and death. A few illustrations will enhance better understanding of this position. When a child is born to a couple relatives join them in welcoming the arrival of the child by visiting to offer congratulatory messages, bringing along food clothing and the necessary medication for the mother and the baby. During circumcision when the initiates live in seclusion while undergoing nursing relatives bring food for the initiates and those attending to them.

The marriage ceremony is another occasion for relatives, friends and neighbours to join hands with the family involved. Perhaps more than all these ceremonies, a funeral attract not only the family members, but neighbours and friends of the bereaved family from far and wide. All of them express their solidarity with the affected family through material, financial and moral assistance. This co-operation indeed underscores the aspect of cohesiveness in the family and well beyond. Thus the ceremonies enhance social ties, a view that is supported by Emile Durkheim's Functionalist Theory which suggests that religious ceremonies are a unifying force in society (Mair Lucy, 1965:198).

The integrational factor in family ties among the *Abamarachi* as illustrated is strong and the same can be said about many African communities. Blood relations and marriage bonds unite families and relationships stretch from the living to the dead through rituals. For instance, children are named after departed family members and in funerals the narration of the departed is upheld clearly attesting to the family unity. Oborji Francis Anekwe rightly supports family cohesiveness in the African worldview when he writes:

The term “family”: in Africa evokes not only blood communal membership of a few living members, but also the themes of clan, tribe, affinity, maternity, *patria potestas*, priesthood, ancestors (thereby including the themes of mythical time, archetypes, heroes, founders), initiation and hence fecundity, life, power, sacrality, and so forth. It is particularly in this concrete mode of integration and all-embracing, that is, in the local cultural and in its universal colouring that the originality of the African concept of the family lies (Oborji Francis Anekwe, 2005:107-108,187).

Elsewhere the author argues that:

For traditional Africans, humanity (individuals and community) is at the centre of consideration. For traditional Africans, the value of interdependence through relationships comes high above that of individualism, personal independence and ethnicity (Oborji Francis Anekwe, 2005:120).

This position he reinforces by quoting a classic example from Madagascar:

The people of Madagascar use the word ‘fihavanana’ (relational in life) to express this fact. For them the life of a human being is a network of fihavanana, which consist of relationship with God, the ancestors, the spirits, the living and even with nature (Oborji Francis Anekwe, 2005:120).

The *Abamarachi* link the family with God the creator, *Nasaye Nomulongi, Were Khakaba*, who not only creates the family but also provides, protects and guarantees its continuity. Thus God is in charge of human affairs both here and in the afterlife. So the people invoke the ancestors and the spirit mediums for support from God, for example, when children are born, when mothers are expectant and in marriage transactions among others (Khalayi Owara, informant, Nyapera village, December 2008).

This reliance and belief in the transcendental nature of life is supported by Edward Burnett Tylor's animism theory that links the physical life of an individual to the spiritual one through the soul (Mair Lucy, 1965:189). Mbiti asserts that the group mentality in the African worldview is paramount:

Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man (Mbiti John, 1969:108-109).

The dependence of the individual on the community is also corroborated by Banzikiza who states:

In Africa, the past, present and future generations form one community through which an individual acquires his or her life and its fulfillment. A person is named, educated, brought to adulthood and initiated into fecundity through the community. Although his/her individuality, personal responsibilities and rights are appreciated, they are subject to the community concept (Banzikiza Constance, 1995:81).

He continues to emphasize that life in the community was paramount. So for the traditional Africans:

Life had to be one-in-community and they remained true to it because they believed in the philosophy of "I am because I participate (Banzikiza Constance, 1995:82)."

In addition to these social aspects that attach the individual to the community, the religious ones are equally strong.

2.6 African Traditional Religion

Considered in a broad outline religion is defined as:

The belief in the existence of a god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them (Wehmeir Sally, 2000:990).

Religion has also been defined as “a set of beliefs and practices that are different from surrounding beliefs and practices and that embody special relations to deity, that transcend others” (Winston L. King in Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 12, s.v. ‘Religion’ as quoted by Gabriel Mmassi in African Ecclesial Review, Vol. 55, No. 3 and 4, Sept/Dec 2013, pp 229-230).

Both of the foregoing definitions focus on the relationship between humanity and the deities. In the particular case of King’s definition, the emphasis is oriented towards doctrines, religious disciplines and organizations with the aim of cultivating a special relation between human beings and the transcendental reality or beings (Mmassi Gabriel, 2013: 230).

Hans Kung has offered one of the most comprehensive descriptions of religion. For him, as reflected by Magesa,

Religion is a “*believing view of life, approach to life, way of life, and therefore a foundational pattern* embracing the individual and society, man and the world through which a person (though only partially conscious of this) sees and experiences, thinks and feels, acts and suffers, everything. It is a transcendently grounded and immanently operative *system of coordinates* by which man orients himself intellectually, emotionally and existentially” (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:32).

For Africans, the assertion by Magesa about religion appears quite appropriate. He writes:

For Africans, religion is far more than “a believing way of life” or “an approach to life” directed by a book. It is a “way of life” or life itself, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:33).

Magesa’s definition is an accurate reflection of Mbiti who argues that:

Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it (Mbiti John, 1969:1).

The *Abamarachi* believe in the existence of a supernatural being that they call “*Wele Khakaba*,” also known as *Nyasaye* or *Nasaye*. “*Wele Khakaba*” is translated as God is the

giver of life and all things. God is believed to be powerful and the ultimate source of everything. It is believed that ancestral spirits and all other spirit mediums are under *Wele Khakaba's* control. Religious specialists such as elders, seers, diviners, rainmakers, healers and all other special personalities derive their power, influence, or any other of their special attributes from *Wele/Were/Nyasaye*. Thus prayers, sacrifices and offerings are directed ultimately to him even when other mediums are invoked. He is known to provide such things as good health, prosperity in all its manifestations and blessings among many other benevolent features (Wako Daniel, 1985:45). Waswa Wesonga, an elder, and one of the respondents emphasized that the *Abamarachi* believe that *Wele* resides somewhere in the east, although he moves everywhere. So the people pray facing the East.

Waswa Wesonga further explained that with regard to worship, usually the eldest family member prays early in the morning in a special sacred place (*esiyembeho/siyembeho*) at the centre of the homestead facing the East. First, one spits saliva on the roof of the house before proceeding to the prayer joint. Saliva or a mouthful of water thrown on the roof thus is a sign of one linking oneself and the family to Mother Nature that *Were* has provided. Regular prayers (and attendant ritual sacrifices especially those involving the cock) are in the form of expression of gratitude to *Were* for his goodness and provisions and further requests for continued support. Other special prayers may be made according to prevailing circumstances. For example when there is sickness and *Were* is approached for blessings to remove the conditions even as medicine is being administered on those affected. In such a situation the medicine men, seers or other relevant specialists preside over the function (Waswa Wesonga, informant, Munga'bo village, 2009). Mbiti argues that religion is one of the strongest influences on the lives of a people. For him:

Religion is the strongest element in traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned (Mbiti John, 1969:1).

This argument indeed supports the behavior of the *Abamarachi* who acknowledge the place of *Were* in their lives so much that they give him first consideration as they open the day with prayer. It must be emphasized here that the rituals of the cock presented in chapter three are all directly or indirectly informed by the dependence of the people on *Were*.

Other events in the social life of the *Abamarachi* may also call for prayers to *Wele*. For instance, when a family elder releases the first bull to be taken as bridal payment or dowry by their son, he makes a passionate plea to *Were* (God) that the dowry may be acceptable to the in-laws. Such invocations may also include the desire for the would-be bride to be a source of unity between both families and to be prolific (i.e. that she may beget many sons and daughters, generate great wealth and a source of delight to the whole family).

The nature of African traditional religion and the manner in which it is practiced makes religion a component of life in such a way that the entire concern of a person can be described as religious (see, Mbiti John, 1969:1).

The practice of the *Abamarachi* in most instances in their daily lives justifies Mbiti's observation. Below are a few examples relating to greetings, thanksgiving and an expression of contentment. When two *Abamarachi* meet, say, Okwemba and Nyongesa their greeting ordinarily accompanied with a handshake goes like this:

Okwemba: *Mulembe bwana* Nyongesa -

Okw: Peace to you Mr. Nyongesa

Nyongesa.: *Mulembe muno bwana* Okwemba -

Nyo: Peace to you too Mr. Okwemba

Okwemba: *Oli mulamu bwana* Nyongesa? -

Okw: Are you well Mr. Nyongesa?

Nyongesa. *Ndi mulamu, naye ewe, -*

Nyo: I am well, and you

Nende worula?-

And where you hail from?

Okwemba: *Ndi mulamu, Khandi-*

Okw: I am fine,

Bosi nabalamu,-

And all are fine,

Omulongi akhulindire -

The Creator is caring for us

The final sentence, “I am fine, and all are fine, the Creator is caring for us,” has very deep meaning connoting physical, cultural, religious, mental and psychological values. It is an acknowledgement that both human and animal as well as plant life is prospering courtesy of the transidential reality or being.

When someone gives out money or some other token to another person, the receiver holds the money in the hand and symbolically spits on it saying something to the effect that may the giver be blessed immensely and be able to get much more to replace what he/she has parted with. The spiting gesture is a formal recognition of God’s goodness or providence. According to the *Abamarachi* culture, when one makes a formal spitting act on a gift bestowed on them, the action in a way expresses gratitude for the token received. This gesture would also be done by the recipient of a cock that is given to the group that pays the initial dowry to the bride’s parents. Upon receiving a cash gift some people hold the cash and look in the sky thanking God.

When someone especially a woman meets another woman who is in the company of her children she will express joy saying something to the effect that “I see all is well with you,” (*Ndola oli bilayi*) to which the mother of the children will respond with a hearty “Thank you.” The inference here is that both of these women are not taking the fertility of the mother and the good health of the siblings for granted: both women believe that these are good tidings from God for which they are happy and grateful.

It is apparent that the *Abamarachi* have strong sentiments with regard to religion which is not just practiced but lived. Ongong'a expresses this point quite explicitly when he posits that for the Africans the sacred and the secular are inseparable:

Life is not artificially divided into 'sacred' and 'secular' but rather, reality is seen as a unified whole in which everything seems to have meaning only in terms of the religious (Ongong'a Jude, 1983:15).

From the illustrations given above we realize that the two men who exchanged greetings, the receiver of the money and the women of the children spontaneously engaged in religious over-tones without necessarily awaiting a "sacred" coverage.

For the *Abamarachi* then their approach to the entire spectrum of the mystical forces, the cosmic arrangement and the place of man, women and the children in all these connotes a strong inclination towards the religious. In fact for the individual the entire life span from the cradle to the grave is covered with religious activity which also extends to the life beyond the grave. When elders visit sacred sites (such as shrines) for example, to offer thanks giving tokens, a cock is one of those items that is symbolically offered to the Were and/or the ancestors. Other specialists such as rain-makers are given cocks in the process of discharging their duties. Many of these religious gestures involve cock rituals which also help to keep people connected not only with the sacred but also to one another.

Today even though the *Abamarachi* have embraced Christianity and other religions, some aspects of African traditional religion are still prevalent though in a modified fashion. For example, in a reconciliation ceremony where a traditional approach is used, the specialists presiding over the function dressed in traditional attire, perform the ritual ceremony, where traditional brew is served. However, the modern approach would incorporate Christian prayers with food being served without necessarily involving any form of brew.

This is a possible pointer to future models of inculturation. Apart from prayers, the religious world of the *Abamarachi* is also expressed through ritual sacrifice.

2.7 Rituals and Sacrifices

The words rituals and sacrifices are so inter-twined that to understand them they must be considered together. Sacrifice is understood as the practice of giving something of value, especially endowed with life, to God to express devotion or commitment. The Israelites would, in their religion, sacrifice animals, birds or grains which were carried out by the ritual destruction of whole or part of the item involved (Zinkuratire and Colacrai (eds), 1999:2166). The item for sacrifice was usually a good or valuable one. This resonates with the choice of Isaac by Abraham. Then God said, “Take your son your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering,” (Genesis 22:2). A sacrifice thus denotes something endowed with life being destroyed and presented in whole or part to a deity or spirit. The ritual itself is the ceremony or customary action which may be repeated in identical form (Murphy Michael, (eds), 1992:1191).

Unlike sacrifices which involved the shedding of blood, offerings are gifts which are given voluntarily by the offerer to a sacred being. They are pragmatic ways by which the living acknowledges their limitations before the ancestors and God and their indebtedness and gratitude to the mystical powers (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:184). The items for offering may include cereals or other vegetables, prepared food and/or drinks, animals, sometimes human life, and other objects (Turaki Yusuf, 2008:79).

So for example, when a cock is slaughtered for a religious cause it is a sacrifice and the process of presiding over the slaughter which may call for special persons, actions and

utterances in specific places culminating in a symbolic meal by a given group turns the entire ceremony into a ritual. In the context of Christianity, it may be explained that a ritual:

Can be used to refer to a book, a collection of rites other than the Eucharist or liturgy of the hours, which are under the presiding of a priest...ritual, however, has a more generic meaning as a particular form of action (Komonchak, et al, 1987:905).

So for a specific action to become a ritual it has to take on a solemn dimension. A ritual may be recognized in several aspects:

Ritual can be understood as a social, symbolic process which has the potential for communicating, creating, criticizing and even transforming meaning (Komonchak, et al, 1987:906).

For the sake of clarity some exposition is necessary to understand what ritual entails:

- i) It is a social process since it is a product or creation of society.
- ii) It arises out of a specific need, for example, the need for structure or social order, the need to bond humanity and the need to restore a crisis.
- iii) It is symbolic since its basic units comprise a series of symbols such as an object activity, relationship, word, gesture, or spatial arrangement serving as units of the ritual.
- iv) It establishes and enhances relationships which increase bonds through given beliefs and values.
- v) It serves as an occasion for making critical reflection on the relevant beliefs and values.
- vi) It also helps in the creation and transformation of identity (Komonchak, et al, 1987:906-907).

It can be argued that where some rituals require sacrificial objects, such objects “generally have close affinities with the sacrifice or the offerer, thus signifying the giving up of one

thing for the sake of another (Turaki Yusuf, 2008:79).” This is because these objects are surrendered to the deities and the people involved expect certain favours to be granted.

These various aspects of sacrifices and rituals are significant for the *Abamarachi* because they enhance societal cohesiveness. This position is corroborated by Yusufu Turaki who argues that although “Such offerings serve many purposes; their overriding concern is the pursuit of harmony (Turaki Yusuf, 2008:79-80).”

Two cases, one of a sacrifice and one of a ritual are cited here to enhance the position. In January 2010, a vehicle veered off the road at Muruka, in Butula sub-county, then rolled and killed one of the passengers instantly. The driver and the other passengers sustained serious injuries. The group was coming from a funeral function. The accident victims were taken to hospital, treated and later discharged. Sometimes after, the driver’s family organized a sacrifice. His father consulted a medicine man who instructed that a sheep and a cock be slaughtered and some food be made for the occasion of the sacrifice. On the material day, the medicine man arrived in the driver’s home where other family members were gathered. The Catholic Church catechist of the area was also invited. Food was served, “*obusuma*” as well as mutton and chicken. The medicine man supervised the preparation of the meal. He prayed to the ancestors and God to cleanse the driver of the blood of the accident casualties, and to restore peace in the home. Then the catechist prayed and the food was eaten (Nyongesa Kusinyo, informant, Muruka village, Dec. 2009).

The purpose of slaughtering the sheep and the cock was to offer their blood to God and the ancestral spirits to remove any perceived spell from the family in order to avert similar accidents in the family in future. The point of convergence in the function was the blending of traditional and Christian practices in the ceremony. This is because both the

medicine man representing the traditionalists and the catechist representing the church performed their specific religious roles for the occasion without any conflict. It was a clear example of inculturation.

Another event involved rituals as a form of expressing gratitude to God and the ancestors when a new car was bought by one family. In this case, the owner of the car and his family were instructed to gather near the car by the father of the car owner who was an old man. The catechist of the Catholic Church of the area was also invited and he came with holy water and ointment. For the ritual, the old man had a bowl of “*simsim*” and “*amalwa ke tsimuma*,” the ingredients for making local brew. First it was the old man who uttered good-will words invoking the name of God and the ancestors to care for the driver(s) of the car and their passengers. He then sprinkled both the *simsim* and the “*amalwa ke tsimuma*” on the vehicle. The catechist sprinkles the holy water on the vehicle and anointed the owner of the car with oil as well as sprinkling some water on him. He then prayed for God’s blessings over the car and the driver. That done all who were present were invited into the house of the vehicle owner for a meal. Before embarking on the meal the owner of the car had made a ceremonial drive around the compound which was applauded by the people (Wabuko Mwata, informant, Nyapera village, Dec. 2009). This ritual was another blend of cultural practices and Christianity which was also a clear example of inculturation.

2.8 Christianity in Marachi

At the time of European imperialism and colonial expansion in Africa, Christianity was introduced through evangelization. In Marachi, Christianity was introduced early in the twentieth century. The first Christian station, although temporary in nature, was established at Bumala “A” by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1910, on their way

to Uganda. Towards the end of the third decade the Catholic missionaries set up a station at Butula in 1937 (Burgman, 1990:176). These two denominations - the Anglicans originating mainly from the CMS and the Catholics are predominant in Marachi today and have spread to many areas. Mode of preaching and interaction with local culture should be elucidated. This is important as a precursor to the acceptance of *Legio Maria* and the alleged condemnation by Church Missionaries of African traditions in the next paragraph. Today there also exist offshoots from these denominations in the form of African Independent churches, for example, the *Legio Maria* which is a splinter group from mainly the Catholics. It surfaced in the early 1960's (Burgman, 1990:176). This information was further supported in an interview by John Wandulu, a pastor in the ACK Church, Lugulu parish on 19th Dec. 2009. In Kenya the *Legio Maria* Church was started in 1962 by Gaudencia Aoko, a Roman Catholic (Mwaura, P.N., 2012). The presence of *Legio Maria* is a pointer to the yearning by African Christians for a ministry that is responsive to their cultural and social context. This could be a wakeup call for the mother churches in Marachi to seriously imbibe the inculturation spirit to forestall future breakaways.

The point of focus here is that while Christianity was arriving the *Abamarachi* were already involved in African traditional religion. The persistence of African cultural practices which were condemned by the Western Christian missionaries is a proof of the importance attached to them by the communities in which they are practiced. The practices which were condemned and which continue to be practiced include polygamy, ancestral veneration, magic, traditional dances and ceremonies connected with the rites of passage (Ndung'u Nahashon, 2008:81). Therefore, when Christianity made demands for conversions or change, these would not be accepted wholesale as the influences of traditionalism lingered on. For instance, the demand by the Christian Church for people

converting to Christianity to adopt monogamy in marriage was not earlier welcomed by the traditionalist *Abamarachi*. This is because the *Abamarachi* considered polygamy to be a form of prestige, among other factors. In any case, the methodology of introducing Christianity and the assumptions the Christian missionaries made which disregarded the *Abamarachi* traditional practices and beliefs left a lot to be desired. Assumptions such as imagining that the *Abamarachi* would forsake making sacrifices to *Wele/Were* (God) through ancestral spirits just because they had heard about Christian messages were misplaced. This is because the gospel “should neither enslave nor alienate the African Christians from their cultural roots” (Ndung’u Nahashon, 1993).

The main focus of evangelization was to convert the Africans to the new faith, Christianity, with utmost disregard to the cultural dictates of the Africans (Nandi, 2002:152-153). The process was carried out by the missionaries with great zeal, albeit with alienating consequences. As Nasimiyu-Wasike observes, Jesus was to be imposed on the Africans:

Jesus was imaged as the warrior king in whose name new territories were conquered and the cross planted. The people of the conquered territories were both physically and spiritually subjugated to the colonial powers and to the religious powers of the European missionaries. The missionaries strove to conquer Africa for Christ and to ‘erase’ what Africans held as their particular identity, culture and beliefs. This indeed created an identity crisis, which has continued to linger on in the minds of Africans (Nasimiyu-Wasike, 2005:103).

One would argue that much of African culture and customs were regarded with disdain by the European missionaries and had to be replaced with “civilizing” culture of the imperialists with Christianity being at the core. For example, in other areas of Luhya-land, specifically around Kakamega, some Catholic missionaries rejected and condemned cultural practices framed within traditional songs and dances. They referred to them as “the favourite hiding places of the devil” (Bauer John, 2009:239). This approach of

ignoring the Africans and their worldview for the sake of evangelization was suspect among a few missionaries, and some colonial rulers. As Chepkwony rightly points out at least one colonial administrator and anthropologist, Driberg J.H had realized the shortcomings of the missionary approach as early as 1930 when he cautioned:

What is disconcerting is that this zealous solicitude for our native wards is not informed with that knowledge which should guarantee them the best guardianship (Chepkwony Adams, 2005:33).

Indeed, such concerns invited a need for a change in evangelization strategies. It was, therefore, a great relief when in 1994 the Synod of Catholic bishops converging over the theme of evangelization for Africa, expanded their outlook on evangelization by creating five sub-themes that appeared to cater for a wider scope of the African worldview, to encompass:

- (i) Evangelization as proclamation: Evangelization is about announcing, shouting, proclaiming, echoing repeatedly and broadcasting far and wide, the good news that in Jesus of Nazareth God is dwelling in humankind so as to save, liberate and set him/her free. It is an appeal to an individual and the community to respond to God's gift of love, divine call and concern, to be in fellowship with His son Jesus Christ (Cf. Jn 1:1-18. Lk 4: 16-19, Mt 13: 53-58, Mk 6: 1-6, Mt 28: 18-20). Evangelization involves gathering of disciples for Christ from different people and places. It goes beyond mere giving of information or acquiring intellectual knowledge. It is an in-depth transformation of individuals in their cultural, social, economic, political, emotional, psychological and structural being and outlook (Joseph Bitole Kato, 2009:117-118).

- (ii) Evangelization as inculturation: For Catholic Christianity in Africa, inculturation implies integrating Christian doctrines with “useful” African traditional values and a modern way of life with a view of making Christianity a religion acceptable to all, that is, the giver and the receiver of Christianity (Laurenti Magesa, 2004:23).
- (iii) Evangelization as dialogue: it has been argued that evangelization involves openness or outreach to other persons whereby authentic conversion takes place. The process of conversion enables the one converted to reach out to others in dialogue. So conversion makes dialogue possible and in this way there is established a basis for a dialogue of religions and the secular (Cyril Orji, 2008:98).
- (iv) Evangelization as justice and peace: For evangelization to flourish there should be a viable environment of peace and justice. Peace is considered as the presence of justice and both go hand in hand. Mahatma Gandhi argued that if an oppressive society lacks violence, the society is nonetheless not peaceful because of the injustices of the oppression. So, in an environment of proper peace, justice must prevail. An influential peace researcher Johan Galtung described peace with justice as “positive peace” while the presence of peace in the midst of injustice is “negative peace.” Martin Luther King Jr in his advocacy for the civil rights movement advanced the view that peace is more than just the absence of war; it calls for a just system. For him, “true peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice” (Genevieve Mwayuli et. al, 2010:534-536).
- (v) Evangelization as communication: Communication mainly involves, but is not limited to, the use of words, both written and spoken. Since it involves

receiving, perceiving, interpreting and comprehending the meaning of the words, both the communicator and receiver of the word must share a common meaning of the words and phrases for effective communication to take place. The challenge in any communication process is for the source to determine the degree to which the meaning as decoded by the receiver agrees with what the source intended to convey. A conflict may occur when the source and the receiver do not share a common meaning of the message. To avoid communication breakdown or conflict, communication and of course evangelization for that matter must be clear, and relevant (Charles Ochieng Ong'ondo, 2006:158-159).

In summary, the 1994 synod considered evangelization from five perspectives as highlighted above:

- (i) Evangelization as proclamation'
- (ii) Evangelization as inculturation,
- (iii) Evangelization as dialogue,
- (iv) Evangelization as justice and peace, and
- (v) Evangelization as communication (Ezeogu, 2009:341).

Apart from number (i) above which appears to limit the introduction of Christianity to verbal utterances, the other five points offer a more pragmatic approach. They seem more accommodative to the potential Christian converts. These are the points that this study advocates.

This broad based approach to evangelization recommended by the Synod is indeed more inclusive than the earlier approach of imposing Christianity on the Africans which created an ambivalent response from the converts. It becomes necessary and more meaningful that

Christian propagators also address issues that relate to non-spiritual yet important needs of humanity, for example, accommodating other cultures, embracing diplomacy to narrow the gap between warring groups, addressing conflict resolutions, and approaching issues in plain language understood by those concerned. Mbiti makes this point clear when he proposes what religion and for that matter Christianity can achieve.

It should and can provide tools and inspiration to the man (and the woman) of Africa to think afresh the fundamental issues of his (her) life which matter most, and to find both meaning and security in that life. And it is in its occupation with the *Sasa*, more than with either the *Zamani* or the future that a religion can hope to make a lasting contribution to modern Africa (Mbiti John, 1969:273).

Therefore, for Christianity to appeal to the Africans especially from this context of Mbiti's view it must involve itself with the practical needs of the people too. In fact confronted with both Christianity and African religion, the African may not find either of these complementing his/her needs today. It is this dilemma that often leads to religious dualistic practices.

It is to be emphasized that one of the major causes of dissatisfaction among the *Abamarachi* over Christianity is the fact that whereas Christianity generally acknowledges the place of sacrifices, the evangelization process ignored this Biblical realm. The sacrifices of the *Abamarachi* were discouraged and even rubbished. Oshuru Musundi, a respondent had this to say, "When a woman gives birth to twins a specialist is invited to do a ritual that involves slaughtering a sheep. This is done for the purpose of 'letting the twins free.' Although Christians discourage this kind of sacrifice, people continue to do it" (Oshuru Musundi, informant, Mauko village, 2009). Yet Abraham was commanded to give out his son as a sacrifice. The negative approach of the missionaries towards the African religious practices is reflected in the words of Peter K. Sarpong who explains that the missionaries contended that they had to do all they could to snatch "the

wretched African” from the grip of the devil. African dances and songs were condemned, as being too sexy. Institutions such as puberty and funeral rites, enstoolment of chiefs and such like where sacrifices were involved were forbidden as being idolatrous (Peter Sarpong, 1990:107).

2.9 Religious Duality of the Abamarachi

It has been noted that when important or some aspects of the African culture are not fully integrated into Christianity, the African Christian converts end up in a dualistic status, so that they may exhibit both Christianity and their traditional religion depending on prevailing circumstances. Magesa raises this concern as follows:

One of the common complaints of Christian leaders concerns the ‘duality’ of the African Christians’ way of life, meaning that Africans do not always adhere to religious and spiritual demands that are formulated and expressed by the leaders of their churches. Many times they seek comfort in their own African religious symbol systems, even though these may not correspond exactly to those inculcated and expected by their Christian leaders. Indeed these are often symbols and rituals that church leaders have explicitly condemned (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:18).

Examples of religious dualism are cited in other parts of Africa. In Nigeria for instance, some African Muslims and Christians retain their traditional religious practices such as the conception of God, the world and morality. They allow these aspects to continue penetrating into Christianity in Africa. The same applies to the Sotho-Tswana who maintain their traditional world-view in Christianity. Despite widespread Christianity, the *Baganda* retain many expressions of African religion such as divination and the use of healing practices (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:18-19). Understanding why African Christians and Muslims exhibit religious dualism is key in making a given religious tradition fully meaningful to a people. There are a number of instances where dualistic practices are well reflected in the lives of the

Abamarachi who have been converted to Christianity. The following ten examples help to explain the point.

- (i) **Pregnancy (*Okhurulutsa*):** When a married woman who experiences frequent still-births accompanied by continuous bleeding during the pregnancy and where conventional medication and Christian prayers appear not to offer a remedy, the family turns to indigenous solutions. This involves consulting a seer (*owamanyasi*) and offering sacrifices to the ancestral spirits, known as “*emisambwa*”
- (ii) **Naming of children:** Ancestral names are bestowed on children to assure their protection. Such names also serve as a way of remembering the departed members of the family. Parents know that the name is acceptable when they see the child growing in robust conditions. Other cultural names are based on the event during or marking the time of the birth of the child. Christian names are equally ascribed.
- (iii) **Twins:** As aforementioned, a couple who gives birth to twins would conduct a ritual ceremony called “*Okhwikula makhwana,*” freeing the twins from evil spells where a sheep is sacrificed. No ritual is prescribed in Christianity with regard to the birth of twins. The occasion of the sacrifice of the sheep is accompanied with prayers led by the catechist. On the other hand, traditionalists invoke the name of *Were* (God) and the ancestors and perform relevant rituals to bless the twins. Both Christian and traditional practices are performed on this occasion after which all those who are present participate in the meal of the sacrificed sheep.
- (iv) **Dowry:** After the payment of the first bull in dowry payments, the groom’s party is given the rope that was used to lead the animal to the bride’s home. The rope is kept safely, with a host of taboos closely associated with this ritual. For example, if the delivery of the bull was fully accepted by the bride’s family, the rope is returned together with a cock to be slaughtered on arrival by the groom’s party at

their home. The cock is eaten and the rope is released to be used for normal chores. Where the delivery of the bull failed to meet the standard requirements, the bride's family retains the rope until the groom's party make up for the shortfall. Even when the father of the bride passes on, the pending requirements must be paid before he can be laid to rest. On the occasion of fulfilling the outstanding requirements, the traditionalists carry out their duties while the Christians offer relevant prayers for the function. Both groups participate fully knowing that what is being done is for the welfare of the surviving members of the families involved.

- (v) **Circumcision (*Esishebo*):** Many *Abamarachi* Christians prefer their male children to undergo traditional rites of circumcision to guarantee societal wellbeing and in meeting cultural dictates. This is usually done in the month of August. The initiates are also prayed for by the Christian representative invited for the occasion.
- (vi) **Polygamy:** This is widely practiced by Christians among the *Abamarachi*. It is not uncommon to find pastors who are polygamous. Such a practice is a glaring contrast to the Christian norm of monogamy as the ideal practice in mainstream Christianity. The Kenyan Law classifies Christian marriages as potentially monogamous (Marriage Act, 2014, Section 6, Article 2).
- (vii) **Wife inheritance (*Okhuyira omukhasi mulekhwa*):** While many *Abamarachi* uphold the monogamous stance of the church, the practice of wife inheritance is carried out by relatives of the deceased male in full knowledge of the Christian fraternity. It is argued that traditionally the woman belongs to the family and so the 'inheritance' is the guarantee that the woman is not lost to the family and assured of being provided for. Wife inheritance is not just about a wife and the new husband being limited to the husband-wife relations, but the man may be involved in promoting the economic welfare of the woman and her children without the

sexual aspect. Even where the choice of the caretaker of the woman falls on a married family member who is a Christian, such a candidate takes up the task despite the demands of the Christian church for him to remain monogamous. The man now takes up the responsibility of caring for the new wife as well as his own. Some people have condemned this practice because of the high risk of HIV/AIDS infection (Kanyandago Peter, 2002:150-155), which is a different matter compared to a wholesale condemnation as being “unChristian”.

- (viii) **Funeral rites:** A burial rite where a cock is immolated by the family of the deceased is usually carried out secretly in the evening after the priest/pastor presiding over the funeral rites has long left the home. The rationale behind this practice is the belief that the ritual helps appease the spirit of the dead, a ritual the church does not entertain and calls for prayers instead.
- (ix) **Breaking the ground for new homesteads:** Usually, the father or an uncle to the prospective new home-owner precedes the church ministers to conduct the ritual attendant in breaking the ground to mark the position of a new homestead. This is done very early in the morning long before the arrival of the Christian team. The presence of the father or uncle symbolizes the “handing over” of the homestead to the son or nephew.
- (x) **Accident:** In the event of an accident leading to death or shedding of blood of a member of a family or even a stranger is shed, the families affected conduct a cleansing ritual with or without the knowledge of the Christian church. Plea for forgiveness and / or prayers in the church are considered only as a formality.
- (xi) **Removal of “bones”:** It is referred to as “*okhurusia ebikhokho*” in the “*olumarachi*” dialect. This is where inexplicable illness may be healed through the bone-removal ritual. After the problem has been addressed by the specialist, the

family proceeds to invite the Christian representative, usually the catechist, to pray for the recovery of the patient.

These examples strengthen the point that even though some *Abamarachi* are confirmed Christians they practice African traditional demands to the letter. This corroborates the statement that some Africans are torn between two worlds, on the one hand, the African worldview which they are publicly ashamed of but privately proud of, and, on the other hand, the western worldview of which they are publicly proud but secretly ashamed of. It becomes a tricky business indeed for one to navigate both spiritual realities without offending the sensibility of the others. This forces one to opt for the safer approach for survival at a given time.

2.10 Abamarachi Proverbs, Riddles, Songs and Art

Significant information and knowledge is portrayed through proverbs, riddles, songs and art as exhibited in the examples given below. These elements are used in different occasions and circumstances.

2.10.1 Proverbs

- *Niwenya esini wira yiyo* - If you want the best part of a cow (for example liver) take your own. Don't claim what you are not entitled to.
- *Ouchendachenda akwitsanga mubwina* - The animal that (wanders) jumps all over eventually falls in a ditch.
- *Kata omulayi ali nende imbala* - Even the pretty one does not lack an ugly scar.
- *Olwikho luli munda* - A real friend or relative is one who gives you food when you need it.

- *Amadere kabiri kera inda* - Two thumbnails can kill a louse, meaning unity is strength.

2.10.2 Riddles

- Riddle: *Inzu yange ibula muliango*, answer *libuyu* - My house has no door i.e. an Egg.
- *Rabuori simala lukaka*, answer *omukhula* - The animal that penetrates a fence i.e. rain water.
- *Omkhana wanje akhweswa buli nyanga*, answer *olwichi* - My girl is pulled every day i.e. a door.
- *Miranga ne senzikura tawe*, answer *amare* - I swallow but I do not get satisfied i.e. saliva .
- *Omuniyu nende sikumba*, answer *amanyi nende amafwi* - Soup with a bone i.e. urine and faeces.

2.10.3 Songs

First Song

Amoya ke ingokho nyanga kakhayale, kakhayale - The feathers of the cock will once decide.

Amoya ke ingokho nyanga kakhayale, kakhayale - The feathers of the cock will once decide.

(This song is sung during jovial celebrations)

Second Song

Mwana wa mberi bayaye, mwana wa mberi, bayaye ko.

First born child, oh, first born child, really.

Mwana wa mberi ne shikhoyero.

First born child is a star.

(A song sung on an occasion that marks an achievement)

Third Song

Luwere khulanga papa, luwera, luwera, luwera.

It is finished to call father, it is finished, it is finished, it is finished.

Luwere khulanga papa, luwera, luwera Nasaye akhulinde.

It is finished to call father, it is finished, it is finished God bless you.

(This song is sung during bereavement)

2.10.4 Art

African Art is reflected in many areas in the church for example, gowns worn by priests during celebration of Mass are decorated with designs of African images. In some churches, drawings of spiritual personalities such as Mary the mother of Jesus and even Jesus himself are depicted in African forms. During the Holy Mass the priest sometimes uses a fly whisk which has water drawn from a pot to sprinkle on the congregation at the beginning of the Church service.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address the cultural and religious profile of the *Abamarachi*. The chapter made an attempt to establish that the *Abamarachi* are connected not only through blood relations but also through cultural and religious phenomena. One of the key factors uniting the *Abamarachi* people, especially from the cultural and religious points of view is

the observance of sacrifices and the rituals that go along with them. It was observed that the clan factor and the family structure are a source of unity in the society. Whereas both the Christians and African traditionalists exist among the *Abamarachi* people, there is no permanent separation between them when it comes to certain life situations. They cooperate and work collectively. This cooperation is realized in such situations as crises that demand the attention of people to offer remedial action. This is where people disregard their religious affiliations and avail every possible mechanism to solve impending or existing challenges. It was observed that in such circumstances, the people engage both Christian and traditional means concurrently to address issues. This was clearly demonstrated in matters pertaining to sacrifices and offerings. It is against this back-drop that cock rituals are used to address the social and religious matters of the people touching on both the Christians and traditionalists. Also explored were the elements of the *Abamarachi* culture such as proverbs riddles, songs, and art.

Having established the cultural and religious profile of the *Abamarachi*, it is appropriate to turn to the cock rituals and examine their place in the social and religious life of the people. This is basically the focus of Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

COCK RITUALS IN THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ABAMARACHI

3.1 Introduction

Rituals known as *emisango*, (singular *omusango*) and particularly those involving the cock are common among the *Abamarachi*. “*Emisango chie ingokho*” translated as the rituals of the cock are the concern of this chapter. The information covered here is based on the

research findings from the field and the researcher's observations and experience of living among the *Abaluhya* people. Rituals practically cover every department of life among the *Abamarachi* (but for the purpose of this study, only a few have been given prominence).

In discussing the place of rituals, the chapter first examines the background of cock rituals which is then followed by some specific examples. Inculturation is discussed as a possible way of blending the *Abamarachi* cultural traits and the Christian, specifically within the context of the Catholic denomination. Inculturation is officially supported by the Catholic Church, as relevant reference will indicate, in particular the Vatican council (see Appendix IX). Parallels are drawn between the ritual sacrifices in Christianity and the *Abamarachi* approaches. Examples of inculturation from other parts of Africa are also illustrated.

3.2 The Status of a Cock in Abamarachi Social and Rituals Life

At this point it is important to explain why among the *Abamarachi* the cock, locally known as *itaywa* is a favourable choice for most rituals. In this work the word cock, *itaywa*, was used in its broadest sense to also include the hen, *esidakho*. However, where a particular ritual demands that a hen (*esidakho*), and not a cock (*itaywa*) be used, that clarification is noted.

The informants were unanimous that the cock is the yardstick for determining the minimum economic status of an individual in the *Abamarachi* culture. The people say "*Lwawakhaba omumanani siwakhatakha ingokho tawe,*" translated to mean "however poor one is, a person cannot fail to own a cock." Among the *Abamarachi* one who does not have a cock in the homestead, or does not even have one kept for him or her by a relative, such a fellow is considered to be entrenched in abject poverty. The discussion

below drawn from personal familiarities and observations during the field survey underscores part of the reasons why the cock is a popular item for most of the sacrifices and rituals among the *Abaluhya* in general and the *Abamarachi* in particular.

- (i) The cock is easy to handle in terms of feeding. Most of the time the bird fends for itself picking its dietary needs in and around the home, occasionally supplemented with remnants from the kitchen and food store.
- (ii) “The cock” is easy “to provide shelter for” within the homestead. Where a special room for it is not available, a cock conveniently finds space even under the bed of the home owner. When one does not have the capacity to rear cocks he/she can “*okhumosia*” (i.e. lend to another person for the purpose of rearing) to a relative or neighbor who has the capacity to rear the bird. The cock grows and matures in the foster place and its offsprings or the actual cock that was given out is collected when need arises.
- (iii) The cock is fairly cheap about Ksh 700 (\$6.5). In the event that a mature bird may be expensive, a chick often suffices in a number of rituals.
- (iv) Commercially, the value of the cock cannot be gain-said. Cocks are sold and the money raised is utilized in settling numerous needs in the home. Waste from the birds is disposed of in the family farm where it contributes to the fertility of the soil. Accumulated on a large scale the cock may also be sold to farmers. People in the market as well as local hotels also buy them for meals. They are usually more expensive than broilers.
- (v) Environmental cleanliness can also be associated with the cock considerably. Since it is a scavenger, it cleans the homestead and the immediate surroundings of destructive elements such as termites, locusts, maggots and a variety of ants. It also keeps the grass short. Snakes, rats and mice are safely kept at bay, too.

- (vi) Eggs produced by hens play dietary and medicinal roles, and could be cooked, boiled or fried as a meal. When a person is suspected of consuming poison, raw eggs are stirred in a glass of water and administered on the victim to induce vomiting which reduces the poison content in the body. This may serve as First Aid for the patient while efforts are being made to get medical assistance. Consumers of alcohol who emerge to be dangerously drunk are also subjected to the egg treatment which makes them vomit extensively thereby alleviating their drunkenness. Extracted cock fat is prepared and used as indigenous medicine for ailments relating to the ear.
- (vii) When a man suspects that his wife may poison him through the food she cooks for him, on being served, he would first throw a little to the cock or cat. The reactions of the bird or animal would indicate to the man the safety or otherwise of the meal. On the basis of this, the man would eat or discard the meal.
- (viii) In formal functions where food is served the cock flesh is distinguished as the “male vegetable” (*eliani satsa*). It stands out in its own class above beef, mutton, pork and fish which are collectively referred to as “female vegetable” (*eliani khasi*). It is considered a sign of honour to be served with chicken and it is what crowns a formal meal. Even where a bull has been slaughtered for guests, the dish of a cock must be presented to climax the aura.
- (ix) The cock is found in several colours. Sometimes, specific rituals require cocks with certain colours: white, red, black or mixed colours of its feathers. On the same vein, there are varieties of cocks whose use may be dictated by a ritual or social situation. The cock with a featherless neck, called *nalugosi* is not to be slaughtered for in-laws. The one with scattered or standing feathers, “*ogagaria*” and the pygmy type of cock referred to as *nachibende* are also not

used in formal dowry arrangements. This is because they are associated with certain malfunctions and are therefore considered unfit. If used, there is a profound belief among the *Abaluhya* that they may negatively impact on those involved in the particular functions or rituals. A cock with totally black feathers is used in rituals connected with magic and is not permitted in formal rituals e.g. where in-laws are involved. The one with white feathers is popular with meals for in-laws. White symbolizes peace, love and friendship.

- (x) The cock is well known as a good time keeper through its crowing. People who start their day early get up at the first cock-crow which is about three/four in the morning. Around mid-day the cock is ready to crow again. In this regard, it is important to note that cocks are usually very punctual and retire after the day's activities, promptly about six in the evening. Osogo John refers to this last phenomenon as "*tsingokho nitsinjira*," meaning when the cocks return to their sleeping places (Osogo John, 1965:28).
- (xi) Detecting danger is something the cock is also kept for. When cocks are feeding around the homestead they produce a curious sound to announce the presence of a stranger in the vicinity. This may be a vulture, a snake, or a person such as a visitor who may be in possession of some evil items e.g. paraphernalia used in the practice of witchcraft. The alarm raised by the cock alerts members of the homestead who verify the nature of the danger and take appropriate action. It should be noted that this function is not limited to the cocks but also inherent in other domestic animals such as dogs, cats and cattle.
- (xii) During naming rituals the cock is frequently used. The cock that has been set aside in the naming ritual is referred to as the cock of the child, "*ingokho yomwana*."

- (xiii) Considerable aesthetic value is derived from the feathers of the cock. These are used for decorating hats, and related items that are quite popular. When men and women are dressed in traditional regalia for a cultural performance some of the guests and the entertainers will be adorned with items bearing the multi-colours of cock feathers.
- (xiv) The informants were categorical that the existence of a cock in a homestead reflects how responsible the man who owns that home is. It shows that the owner is fit to own a home and when guests appear he feels proud to slaughter for them a cock he owns. It is considered a mark of high esteem when one slaughters for a guest his own cock, rather than buying one from the market. So the cock in the home serves “*okhurechekha olusatsa*,” that is, it proves the home owner is “responsible enough.”
- (xv) Moreover, the cock forms the basis of social differentiation or ordering in a family. Family members are assigned specific portions to eat. The head of the home, the father, eats the gizzard (*imondo*) and the thigh bearing the tail (*isuru*). The son eats the thigh without the *isuru*, the mother of the children and the daughters settle for the wings and the remaining parts. A mistake made in the apportioning of the specific parts can be costly. In the cultural context men have created trouble for their wives on discovering that the woman ate the gizzard. This is interpreted as the woman being spiteful of her husband.

The presence of the cocks in the home creates a sense of responsibility in the family. In addition to the limited feeding they require, they must be watered and given medical care as well as security from wild animals and thieves. The owner must put in place the necessary measures to guarantee the birds' welfare.

An interesting observation here is that even the careless drunkards who would otherwise spend long hours in the company of friends away from home are forced to cut short their escapades and return home once they realize it is time for the cocks to be let in to their sleeping places. Even when these people do not return home in time, they would make arrangements with a neighbour or friend to sort out the cocks on their behalf.

- (xvi) Cock fighting is gaining popularity as a sport in Western Kenya and among the *Luhya*. Apart from deliberate efforts made to promote this sport, cocks ordinarily fight when they meet as strangers. This is more so because cocks by nature are conscious of territorial supremacy. So there are occasions when these fights last several days before an outright winner or hero become evident. All these combative encounters offer thrilling moments for children and adults.
- (xvii) Cocks and hens are a very precious item or gift in the *Abamarachi* culture. Even when the gift is only a mere chick, there is great excitement and appreciation in that the people know that this chick will mature and rise to the occasion to serve in a ritual (*amoya ke ingokho nyanga kakhayale*) or other purposes.
- (xviii) The seers and diviners may also use parts of the slaughtered cock as an instrument of prognosis and prescription for certain problems affecting the individual or the community.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates the centrality of a cock in the social life thus seen as a possible figure in any model of inculturation among these people. What follows below are some examples of rituals where a cock is involved.

3.3. Cock Rituals

There are a number of rituals in the life of the *Abamarachi* that demand the use of a cock. The fact that a cock is nearly always readily available whenever circumstances dictate perhaps makes it a preferred item for ritual sacrifice among these people. Below are some of the events in the spheres of the *Abamarachi* which involves the use of cocks:

3.3.1 Activities Relating to Agriculture

As aforementioned, the *Abamarachi* are active agriculturalists, growing a variety of crops both for commercial and subsistence uses. In undertaking such activities certain rituals are performed to assure the production of the farms with the cock being used both in the past and today.

3.3.1.1 Planting and Harvesting

According to the view expressed by the informants, planting and harvesting are regarded as key events in the calendar of the *Abamarachi* traditional agricultural set up and may span over several days or even weeks. This is especially for the seasonal crops such as maize, millet (*wimbi*) and sorghum where the entire family is involved.

When planting commences, the most senior member of the family present (such as the husband, wife, or the oldest sibling) initiates the exercise by first praying to God (*Were*) or the ancestral spirits (*emisambwa*) to bless the crop, produce bumper yields, providing sufficient rain and protecting it from winds, wild animals, rodents, insects, floods and diseases as well as thieves and evil people. At the close of the planting season, the entire family prepares a cock meal to eat “in order to wash away their sweat,” to use a local terminology. A portion of the meal is dedicated to the spirits. One way in which this was

done was by taking some *wimbi* (sorghum) as a donation to an old or infirm person as food. It was perceived that the acknowledgement by that person on receiving the gift was by extension acknowledged by ancestral spirits.

Harvesting, like planting, is spread over several days where the entire family is again involved. The final day of the harvest is marked with a cock meal for the family where they express gratitude to God and the ancestral spirits for providing them with food. In contemporary times, some Christian families take part of the harvest or money obtained from the sale of it to the church as a token of thanksgiving. In traditional times a portion of the harvest was dedicated to the spirits.

3.3.1.2 Rain Making and Control

The *Abafofoyo* clan, the largest among the *Abaluhya* clans, is associated with having powers to make and control rain. They are also believed to bestow the powers to their nephews (*abewa*). So during an important function, for example, a wedding or a funeral of a distinguished personality where a large crowd is anticipated or marked with a cultural fete, those involved would approach a rain expert (*omuchimba we ifula*), so as to contain or hold the rain on the material day so that the function is not disrupted. Through the performance of a ritual involving *Were* and spirits of ancestors in charge of rain, he would control the rain until the function is over.

Since rain is regarded as a sign of blessings from God and the ancestral spirits the rain maker allows it to fall if the spirit world had contained it. Alternatively, he influences it to fall if the period is outside the rainy season when the function comes to an end. He is given a cock and paid for his services. In case he is invited to the function he is served with a cock meal, specifically made for him.

3.3.2 Health Related Problems

3.3.2.1 Sickness

In the views of the respondents and informants people just don't fall sick, this is a popular perception among the *Abaluhya*. There must be underlying reasons why people become ill. It is the responsibility of the medicine man or woman to diagnose the root cause and prescribe a remedy. Some of these processes involve the use of cocks. Unending illnesses are often associated with metaphysical forces or witchcraft. The relatives of such patients consult a seer (*omulakusi*) who may diagnose that the ailment is related to disgruntled ancestral spirits for not having been given deserving attention and thus demand a feast. A cock is brought and the seer holding it up in front of the patient, implores the ancestors to set the patient free, and instead eat the cock. The patient is then given some medicine with instructions to go and slaughter the cock and eat it together with the medicine. This was supported by one Owino Raganyo (not his real name), an old man, aged eighty-five years, at Bugengi village in December 2008. He explained that there have been reports of tremendous cures from patients with especially mental disorders and that the above procedure was followed to alleviate the disorder.

A difficult pregnancy where a woman experiences frequent blood flow (hemorrhage) threatening the abortion of the fetus could be contained by a therapy involving a cock ritual. A medicine man or woman is approached to provide herbal medication collectively called "*amanyasi*" for which he/she is paid a cock and a hen. Both are reared and not slaughtered. The rearing symbolizes the maturation of the pregnancy to fullness meanwhile the blood flow, "*okhurulutsa*" is usually contained. The birds are allowed to live to be slaughtered at the convenience of the healer long after the woman has delivered.

The spirits take part in the use of the cock through the invocation the medicine man makes to them imploring them to protect the woman and the baby she is expecting.

3.3.2.2 Witchcraft Related Problems

For example, when one is ill on account of having “bones in the body” (*ebikhokho*) which are caused by witchcraft (*liloko*), a cock ritual is used to correct the situation. The removal of *ebikhokho* is done by a specialist medicine man or woman who presses on the painful part of the body with his/her hands using a concoction of medicine. When the concoction is withdrawn some substances are normally found to have been captured from the body that had caused the patient pain. These, the specialist displays to the patient to see. The patient is then discharged to return home with instructions to avoid getting into proximity with those who throw *ebikhokho* at people. In August 2010, the researcher met Anzelm Ooko with his wife at Mung’ambwa village returning from a medicine woman who had removed *ebikhokho* from the chest of Ooko’s wife. She disclosed that the pain she had had prior to the exorcism was by then subsiding. On arriving home, the family slaughters a cock and partakes in a meal as a sign of thanksgiving as instructed by the medicine specialist.

3.3.2.3 Barrenness

When a young couple is unable to get children a seer (*owamanyasi*) is consulted. If the problem is attributed to the woman, a quail (*isindu*) ritual is administered, but if it is the man, a cock ritual is carried out. The results have been, in most cases, positive. During the survey, two cases were cited, in Bukalama village and, Tingolo village respectively. In Bukalama, a man called Nyegenye Francis had lived with his wife for three years without fathering a child. His wife had her own child that she got while still at school. A cock ritual was performed and the woman started bearing children. At Tingolo, Khwaka

Nanjeso was the third wife to a man who had two other wives, both with several children. Khwaka had been married for four years and she had no children. A quail ritual was carried out and she started to bear children. At the time of this research she had two children as reported by one of the interviewees (Josphat Wasike, informant, Burinda village, 2009).

3.3.3 Social Activities

3.3.3.1 Establishing a New Home

When a man sets up a new home, as indicated by informants, either because he is moving away from the father on account of having matured and thus deserves to be independent or has bought land, the father or an uncle gives him a cock and a hen with which to begin the new homestead. The act of receiving a cock symbolizes that he is now autonomous and is thereby released to take care of his own destiny. The cock gift is accompanied with a spear, a symbol of authority and defense. While handing over the birds the father chants prayerful wishes to the effect that *Were* (God) may protect him and all his offsprings in the new environment “*Were papa olinde omwana uno nende olwibulolwaye mwitala licheni.*” Later the son, having procured a mature cock, slaughters it for a meal with his family, neighbours and friends to mark the beginning of life in the homestead. This action is called opening the new homestead (*okhwinjisia olukala*).

Upon settling down, the man formally invites his parents to his home to a feast of a cock meal and local brew (*busaa*). This welcome is known as “receiving the parents” (*okhwinjisia abebusi*). From now on the parents are free to visit him and participate in any familial ceremony he has. Otherwise before that they are not permitted even to sleep in his home.

3.3.3.2 Completion of Roofing a House and Official Opening of a House

i) The Completion of a House Roof

The roof structure of a traditional *Abamarachi* house is tied with sticks and thatched with grass or reeds, forming a pointed apex known as “*esisuli*,” artistically done by the thatcher. The completion of the apex is a formal activity referred to as “*okhufunaka esisuli*,” i.e. finalizing the top. It is marked with great joy and jubilation of the house owner, his family and well-wishers, culminating in a cock ritual. Traditional brew and a cock meal are served; the brew is consumed by the family, relatives, neighbours, friends, invited guests and the thatcher with his assistants. The cock meal is, however, the preserve of the thatcher and his assistants. The family may slaughter a second cock for themselves if they so wish.

The ritual is an expression of gratitude and satisfaction by the family because ownership of a house, as opposed to a rental premise, is highly respected by the *Abamarachi* since it is regarded to be a symbol of family stability. Today, even though most houses are roofed with iron sheets, tiles etc still the day of finalizing the roofing process is marked with a cock ritual, reminiscence of a long established tradition.

ii) Official Opening of a House

The official opening of a new house is also marked with a cock ritual where traditional brew and a cock meal are served. Invited guests to this function include relatives, neighbours, friends, the contractor and his team. Like in the case of the roof, the family expresses gratitude and satisfaction for a job well done. This official opening of the house is eventually formalized by the couple, the owners of the house, through conjugal union that night. This is referred to as “*okhwinjisia inzu*.” The significance of the conjugal union is that it seals the formalization of the acquisition of the house.

3.3.3.3 Payment of Dowry

Dowry (*ikhwe*) is an essential aspect of formal traditional marriage structure among the *Abamarachi*. In dowry arrangements the cock ritual is very important. The first dowry paid is a bull, which the groom's people present to the bride's parents or their representatives. The items of dowry are cows and bull. The equivalent of a cow is four goats, and of a bull, three goats. The bride's parents in return offer a cock to the groom's party which they take back to their home where it is slaughtered and eaten with ugali (*obusuma*). Those to partake of this sumptuous meal are the youth in the family and brothers-in-law to the bride. The groom does not eat this cock for he has an alternative meal prepared for him for example, "*obusuma*" and meat. This is in line with the traditions of the *Abamarachi*. The significance of dowry is to formalize or legalize the marriage.

When the father of the bride (*omweya*) gives the cock to the groom's party (see Photo 2 in page 166) it symbolizes that the girl is his legitimate daughter whom he is releasing willingly. In the same breath he affirms that the groom is the rightful husband of his daughter whom he now recognizes as a son-in-law (*omukhwe*). The acceptance of the cock by the groom's family symbolizes acceptance of the bride (*omweya*) as a new member in the family. The blood of the cock which is shed in the groom's home is regarded as binding the girl to the life force of the new family to which she is to contribute towards generating posterity.

3.3.3.4 Reconciliation

It is regarded as bad omen to shed another person's blood, be it of a relative or a stranger. Where physical injury resulting in the shedding of blood has occurred, either by design or

accidentally, a cleansing ritual is conducted using a cock. For example, if a man assaults another, the assailant seeks pardon from the victim through a cock ritual. In this case the assailant prepares the local brew, food and a cock to which he invites the victim to partake with him and his family. Both men formally pardon each other in front of witnesses. This seals the reconciliation and the ritual is deemed to have washed away the blood stains. Anything short of this ritual is not recognized as sufficient apology.

When a person provokes someone leading him/her to commit suicide, it is believed the angry spirit of the dead (*emisambwa*) will cause harm to such a person and his/her family. So in this case one consults a healer (*omuhonia*) who organizes some medication which is administered along with a cock ritual. It is believed that the medicine and particularly the blood of the cock will appease the spirit of the deceased which is thereby restrained from causing harm. This method of arresting the spirit of the dead is called “*omwikalo*” i.e. shielding oneself from the attack of the spirit(s).

3.3.3.5 Child Rehabilitation

“Child rehabilitation,” also known as “child orientation” or “child integration”, refers to a situation where a child born out of wedlock is officially brought to the biological father. For such a child, a ritual ceremony involving a cock is done to introduce him/her to the rest of the family. Before the child comes to his/her father’s household, the father consults a medicine man/woman called “*owamanyasi*” who prepares some herbal concoction or drink. On the day the child is brought he/she is given the herbs to drink together with other children within the household. Then they all eat a cock meal together. By sharing the herbs and the meal the children are ritually and symbolically integrated or united as one family. This integration is called “*okhusasia abaana*,” i.e. uniting the children.

Traditionally it is believed that children born out of wedlock bring ill-omen to the family. So this ritual integration drives away the bad spell, “*ishira*.” The symbolism of this rite of integration is also to put all the children at par, whether born within or out of wedlock. After this ritual the rehabilitated child is fully incorporated into the rest of the family, a process that bestows to him/her equal rights and entitlements as the other children. In a way this ritual also removes the stigma often associated with children born out of wedlock. A woman with a child out of wedlock to whom no man is laying claim, may upon marriage also initiate similar procedures to integrate him/her into the family of the husband.

3.3.4 Rites of Passage

In traditional African religion there was no separation between the sacred and the worldly or profane. Thus, aspects of social life such as rites of passage were equally permeated with ritual observance which qualify them as having a sacred significance.

3.3.4.1 The Naming Ritual

Naming is an important rite of passage among the *Abamarachi*. A name may be drawn from a departed ancestor or from a natural phenomenon such as seasons or time of day the child is born. For example, Nafula (a girl born during the rainy season), Wafula (a boy born during the rainy season), Wanjala (a boy born during famine) and so on. *Abamarachi* children have ancestral names. In today’s society, some of them are given such names without the involvement of cock rituals. All the same, it is important to understand how the ancestral names were acquired in the first place.

When a baby was born a grandfather or a seer was consulted for a name. Sometimes the seer would emerge with two names from the ancestral lineage in which case a dice had to

be cast using a cock to determine the appropriate name. Two cocks would be thrown on the roof of a house each bearing one of the two names. The first cock to come down from the roof and enter the house had its name picked for the child. The deciding factor is which of the birds would be the first to enter the house. This cock is known as the cock of the child, “*ingokho yomwana*”.

Where the names chosen were of a male ancestor and a female ancestress, a cock and a hen were used respectively. The first bird to come down and enter the house won the day irrespective of whether the child was male or female. For example, if the child was a boy, and the hen won the day, the boy received a feminine name, and vice versa. This explains why some males in Marachi have feminine names while some women have masculine names. For example, Wafula is a name for men, and Nafula for women; but some women are called Wafula and some men Nafula, respectively.

As the child grew, it was believed the spirit of ancestor or ancestress bearing that name took care of him/her. Only good people’s names were used, that is, those ancestors or ancestress who had lived an upright life here on earth. Names of those who died as criminals or had committed suicide were avoided as it is believed children are influenced by the negativity of such ancestors. Sometime later, the cock that was used for choosing the name was slaughtered. On the occasion of its slaughter relatives, friends and neighbours converge to celebrate, eating it with “*obusuma,*” *ugali*; accompanied with consumption of local brew. The boy/girl (they may be even grown-ups by now) of the name is the chief guest of the day.

3.3.4.2 Funeral Rites

Burial of the dead involves two groups of people: the grave diggers (*obayabi be ing’ani*) and those who burry the body (*abasishi*). Both groups help to cover the body with the

grave soil to form the grave (*esilindwa*). They are given a cock which is known as “*ingokho eyomukulukha*,” literally translated to mean “the cock of the burial tradition.” This cock is roasted over a special fire prepared near the grave, known as “*omuliro kwa machenga*,” that is, the fire of the funeral. For a deceased female, a hen is used and for a man, a cock. This chicken is eaten with “*obusuma*,” hardened porridge and it is a way of appreciating these people for their role in the burial ritual.

When out of mistaken identity a stranger’s body is buried in somebody’s homestead, the people who exhume the body to be given to the genuine owners are given a cock like the grave diggers. In addition, this group is given a goat and some agreed amount of money. A person who discovers a dead body, for example, following suicide, murder or drowning is given a cock and a goat by the family of the deceased. A cleansing ritual is preformed to clear what is believed to be a bad omen by the dead. Moreover, male in-laws who arrive for a funeral are served with a cock meal. However, this cock is only served to those in-laws who have formalized their dowry obligations. Female-in-laws are served with any available meal and the cock meal is not mandatory for them.

From the foregoing discourse on the cock rituals, several observations can be made about society in areas relating to cohesiveness and stability, personal and group identity, health, reconciliation, parenting, morality, discipline, formalization of projects and handling of the departed members of society. The establishment of homesteads and the dowry payment procedures reflect family unity and stability while the naming rituals and the formalization of houses create identity and honour for deserving individuals. Further, social stability is enhanced more through reconciliation rituals. Moral and general discipline is vital in society which is catered for through the taboos. All these elements are in line with the dictates of the Functionalist theory.

Collective family duties as witnessed during planting and harvesting are upheld as a mark of encouraging responsibility in society. One respondent, a Mr. Welimo Nyongesa from Bukati village observed that, religious and cultural activities as a whole are an important aspect of the *Abamarachi* community: “Some assignments such as planting and harvesting can be done by all able-bodied members of the family, but others, such as healing, we leave to the specialists who work for us” (Welimo Nyongesa, informant, Bukati village, 2009).

People in the community who take care of the dead are doing noble service for which they deserve respect and gratitude, expressed through the cock ritual. Moreover, every society has people endowed with special powers for which no one society can claim monopoly. Therefore, those specialists of medical prowess and the rain makers deserve honour and recognition for their positive contributions. Through the rituals and prayers, the whole spectrum of belief in and reverence for the mystical powers emerges clearly. Even the socialization of people through participation in various celebrations keeps the society close.

Rituals, therefore, paint an overall positive picture which helped in development of *Abamarachi* society. These rituals bring people together which is clearly reflected in the Functionalist theory. It is to be noted that for Christians too, such rituals as the Holy Eucharist or Holy Mass as observed by Catholics, unites the adherents thus fulfilling the proposition of the Functionalist theory as well.

3.3.5 Maintaining the Social Order

To maintain the social order, it is important to follow the demands of the rituals. At the same time, it is necessary to avoid actions or behavior which may disrupt the social order. This is where taboos become relevant.

3.3.5.1 Taboos

A taboo is anything that is forbidden because it is offensive or may cause social upheaval. Taboos (*omusiro*) form part of the *Abamarachi* cultural set up. Taboos help to sustain good morals, discipline and general etiquette, among others. Some taboos require sacrifices and rituals involving bulls, goats, sheep and quails among others, especially in situations of non-conformity or violation by an individual. However, this section will be limited to those involving the cock. The *Abamarachi* believe that breaking a taboo or custom may cause misfortune to those involved. And so when a taboo is broken mending or correction is done to avert any potential danger. Here are a few taboos and measures taken when they are broken.

Boys and girls, from the adolescent age onwards, are not allowed to see their parents stark naked. When this happens, a cock ritual is carried out to cleanse the siblings. This taboo guards against crossing the social barrier that ought to exist between a child and his/her parents. The ritual is conducted as follows: the boy or girl who stared at the parent's nakedness comes to the father's house and the father holds a cock in both hands in front of the boy/girl, and wipes the candidate from the face, down the chest. Meanwhile he utters the words to the effect that "may a bad spell (*ishira*) not affect you for what you witnessed." The process of passing the cock over the child's front is known as 'cleansing the child' (*okhwabasia omwana*). Then the man slaughters the cock and the whole family shares in the meal.

It is a taboo for a father to go to the boy's hut and sit on his bed for whatever reason. When this happens it is believed that the action may cause a bad spell (*ishira*) to befall the son. The spell may cause problems for the boy in his future married life such as his wife suffering from miscarriages or impotence. So the misdeed of the father is corrected with a

cock ritual. In this case the man slaughters a cock in the process of which he invokes the ancestral spirits to remove any misfortune from the son. The cock is prepared as a meal and served to the family. In effect the cock acts as a penalty or fine imposed on the father. This taboo instills discipline on fathers who would otherwise take advantage of situations and raid their daughters-in-law in their privacy in the absence of their sons. It also guarantees the son of his privacy.

Another taboo safeguards the wellbeing of a mother and child after delivery. It is taboo for men to visit a woman who is still in post-natal confinement following delivery. Only the mid-wife and young children below teenage years are allowed into the room. This applies to cases where mothers deliver at home. It is regarded that the woman is still unclean and weak. The intruders may bring bad influences to harm her and, especially, the delicate baby. Besides, these mothers are usually given special diet which may attract gluttonous men if they are not restricted. The contravener of this taboo is fined a cock which is slaughtered for the mother and her children.

3.4 Persistence of Cock Rituals

Further to the information gathered in the research on cock rituals there were notable examples the informers revealed about why the rituals are still held strongly. A few cases are mentioned here involving names, marriage and illness.

3.4.1 Naming

Names with symbolic meaning and those ones given from the ancestors have great significance to the family. One symbolic name comes about following the experience described below. After losing children to still-births a woman and her husband become

quite desperate; so they employ every means possible to save the next pregnancy. The case that emerged in the research is typical of what happens.

A woman by the name Kalara Nasimiyu had three still-births in succession. During her fourth pregnancy she was under observation and strict supervision according to *Abamarachi/Abaluhya* tradition. When delivery time came she went outside the homestead and delivered the baby on some heap of rubbish comprising dry leaves and grass. She left the baby there and returned to the house. A Passer-by picked the baby and brought it to the house. (This passer-by is not just anybody, but a post-menopause women who had been identified to monitor the delivery and pick the baby). Because the baby was picked from rubbish he was named Makhokha, literally translated as rubbish. Such a baby may also be called Wafubwa, meaning one thrown away, Wanjira/Nanjira meaning found on the way. The name given is a symbolic way the woman implores God to spare the baby. The survival of this baby reminds the mother about the pain and anguish she had because of the previous still-births. Such a symbolic name is irreplaceable. For if one decides to call the baby, say, Anthony Smith, it will not reflect the painful maternal journey the mother has gone through and the divine or supernatural support she received.

A traditional name, such as, Wesonga is very significant for the child named after that person because it is relevant to the family and reflects the character and personality of the ancestor who is seen to be alive in the child. It gives the child identity and a sense of belonging. Again if one calls the boy Wesonga, by the name Anthony Smith, it is like uprooting the child from the family. Two of the informants, Wekesa and Nabonwe were categorical that whatever other foreign names Wesonga is given the indigenous name has special meaning and must be retained. In any case, they argued, Wesonga as a name is bestowed on the child through a cock ritual as discussed earlier under the naming

tradition, which is not applicable nor is it relevant in the case of Anthony Smith. The naming unites the ancestors and the living through the child. It serves three functions in the African culture: the ancestors are recognized, the living community's life is prolonged through the addition of a new member in the child and the child will in turn continue the community life circle through his/her children. It is also believed that the ancestor provides protection to the child through the sharing of the name. Thus the name provides a strong bond in the general family which would not be realized in the event that the child was given a foreign name (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:87-92).

An example was cited by the informants (Wekesa Kusinyo and Nabonwe Khalayi) of a baby at Masendebale who was baptized as an infant and was given a Christian name John ignoring the ancestral one Okubi. The baby kept on crying until the parents on consulting a medicine man were told that the ancestors who wanted to be named were responsible for the baby's woes. Indeed after receiving an ancestral name using the cock ritual, the crying stopped.

3.4.2 Marriage

During the payment of dowry by the groom's family it was stated that a cock is given by the bride's parent in exchange for the bull they received as first dowry payment. When the cock is not immediately available a pledge is made for it to be provided later. This is a solemn pledge and so the wedding arrangements and the actual marriage proceed.

In the course of this research Oduori Mabondo of Mung'ambo village passed on in 2009. It emerged that he had not provided a cock to the son-in law way back when he released

his daughter for marriage. Before he could be buried and in order for the son-in-law and his parents to attend his burial a cock had to be produced and the ritual which had been postponed at the time of the initial dowry payment had to be done. The cock was slaughtered in the son-in-law's home so that its blood which trickled on the ground bound his wife to the ancestral spirits of his fore parents and his community. The ritual also confirms the status of the son-in-law as the authentic son-in-law of the deceased man.

One informant by the name Opanyi Kubere explained that if that ritual is avoided, the ancestral spirits of the son-in-law's family will not only grumble, but cause havoc to his family until they are appeased with the cock ritual. The cock ritual makes them happy and they send blessings to the family (Magesa Laurenti, 1997:89). On the positive side this compares favourably with the Christian tradition where the Christian faithful invoke the saints for various favours. In the Catholic Church it is believed that the strength of local and universal manifestations of the Church can be enhanced by the presence of the saints (Magesa Laurenti, 2004:112).

3.4.3 Healing

In the course of the study a case of women with a birth complication was reported. One woman, after her second cesarean birth in hospital, was strongly advised by the doctor to avoid getting pregnant again as her last birth was exceptionally complicated. Sometime later, however, she became pregnant and she feared that this time round cesarean birth would not work.

She shared this concern with her husband and close relatives. They settled for the services of a healer-cum-traditional birth attendant who engaged her patient promptly. About two

weeks to the expected delivery date (the patient was also attending clinic) the healer came over to her home to closely monitor the woman's health. When the labour pains began, the healer offered the patient some herbal medicines. The woman never complained of any further pains. The healer then tied a knot of fresh grass over the woman's head methodically leaving two ends of the grass hanging. Still holding the knot over her head she prayed:

<i>Wele Papa wefwe;</i>	God our Father;
<i>Omunyali we bindu biosi;</i>	Almighty over all things;
<i>Omuhonia wakhwesika.</i>	Our trusted healer.
<i>Orio khu omwana wefwe uno;</i>	Thanks you for this our daughter,
<i>Nende omwana Wachingire;</i>	And the baby she carries;
<i>Baye obulamu nende obulindi.</i>	Give them life and protection.
<i>Nochama amalesi ko Papa;</i>	May this your medicine;
<i>Kamwikalire nende omwana;</i>	Relieve her and the baby;
<i>Mubutsuni nende obutinyu bwosi.</i>	Of every pain and trouble.
<i>Nochama Papa;</i>	As you will Father;
<i>Kekhole Mukhwenya Khwo;</i>	Let it happen;
<i>Muliralia Kristu Omwami Wefwe;</i>	Through Christ our Lord;
<i>Amina.</i>	Amen.

After the prayer, she undid the knot over the women's head by pulling the two ends of the grass apart. The knot unfolded without any difficulty. She looked at her patient solemnly and then smiled saying, "it is well my daughter." Soon afterwards, the woman gave birth to a bouncing baby girl, quite naturally and with no complications.

In her prayer the healer expressed complete confidence and faith in God and even states that the medicine is not hers but God's. Indeed faith and prayer are important elements in the healing process. This resonates with the Christian tradition. Jesus emphasized and relied on faith in His healing ministry: "And he said to her, 'My daughter.' he said, 'your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free of your complaint' " (Mk. 5:34).

On the same day the baby was born, the paternal grandfather came with a hen (a hen because the child was a girl) and performed the naming ritual. The girl was called Busalire, after the late grandmother who was held in high esteem in the family. She was later on prayed for by her church group.

This healing ritual is a clear example of inculturation in practice. The ritual is a combination of conventional medicine (the woman used to attend antenatal clinics) and traditional medical procedures. The prayer which reflects reliance on God combines the Christian and traditional aspects and it is an aspect of great faith. The unfolding of the grass symbolizes the openness of God in accepting the prayer which He reciprocates through the woman opening up in a harmless delivery. Finally, through the cock ritual the child is linked to the ancestral line of the family for care and protection. Thus the relational factor between the living, the living dead (the ancestors) and God is well pronounced.

3.5 Official Support for Inculturation

While the process of inculturation cuts across the entire Christian church, especially in its quest to make the Gospel relevant to all people, in this study the basis of undertaking such an activity will be drawn largely from various documents drawn from Catholicism. The Vatican Council II *Nostra Aetate*, 28th October, 1965, in particular, is a declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions and it strongly suggests recognition,

support and encouragement of fundamental rights of other religions and cultures (see Appendix IX). In part, the Declaration affirms that:

The Church, therefore, urges her son to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture (Vatican II, 1965:739).

The position of the Vatican is a clear reflection of the urge to the Catholic Christians to accommodate aspects of other people's traditional practices, beliefs and values in their evangelization process. When this is done positively through inculturation, it endears the holder of other religions towards the Catholic. Furthermore, the African Synod has made calls for inculturation. For example, *The Church in Africa: Pope John Paul II'S Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, has a section on the "Urgent Need for inculturation," (Number 62). In another section entitled, "Positive Values of African Culture" (Number 42 and 43) the Pope states:

Africa is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the churches and to humanity as a whole. (John Paul II, 1995).

The Pope identified some of these African values as:

- a) The belief in a Supreme Being which is in harmony with the Christian concept of God, the Creator.
- b) The importance of ancestral veneration which is a preparation for belief in the Communion of Saints.
- c) Proverbs and other types of African oral literature which are sources and vehicles of the positive African values.

The aspects identified by the Pope resonate well with the *Abamarachi* worldview. This is because the *Abamarachi* believe in “*Were*” the creator God as do the Catholics. They attach great veneration to the ancestors through such acts as the naming traditions, sacrifices and offerings.

They also have many proverbs which contain useful lessons. For example, according to a respondent, one proverb states: He who travels surpasses his/her mother in wisdom (*omwana uchenda ashira nyina amachesi*). This means that one should open up and share issues with other people rather than selfishly keeping to oneself. In that way one learns more through exposure and gets equipped with better knowledge and even skills.

Another proverb states that: He who does not respect one’s father and mother may have to walk until dawn without assistance (*owulaulira aka bebusi anyakhana*). This proverb calls for obedience of the young to their parents and older people to whom they look forward for guidance. Disobedience may bring about many challenges for an individual. Another proverb states: Things get finished for the dead (*biweranga oufwire*). This proverb has two connotations, one, there is no need to be greedy or engage in grabbing because one will not take ill-gotten wealth beyond one’s lifetime. So one should be contented with whatever one manages to acquire rightfully. Two, it also refers to the need for one not to despair in life as openings to success or fortune exist so long as one works hard. All these and many other proverbs offer useful guidelines for people in their daily activities (Wako Daniel, 1954:48-55).

The *Abamarachi* also have much oral literature which contain lessons concerning, for example, the virtues of honesty, integrity, good morals and concern for the less fortunate members of society, among others. The proverbs and oral literature help to shape society

in both the traditional and the Christian worldviews. More details were discussed in Chapter Two.

3.6 Views of Scholars and Theologians on Inculturation in Africa

Various scholars have also added their views to advocate for inculturation in many other parts of Africa especially by both African and non-African theologians. Any meaningful construction of a practical model of inculturation should take these views into consideration. Some of the salient views of these scholars are summed up below:

- (i) Francis Arinze has argued in favour of dialogue between the African cultures and Christianity so that there can be a blend between the cultures and the Christian message (Arinze, 1990). For Arinze a honest dialogue between Christianity and *Abamarachi* culture is key to inculturation.
- (ii) Emmanuel Martey approaches African theology from the angle of inculturation and Liberation where he proposes that the Christian message must be blended with the African cultures for it to be meaningful and relevant to the African people (Martey, 1993). Here, Martey, adopts a blended approach to meaningful inculturation. The question remains as to how this blend is to be done.
- (iii) John Mary Waliggo asserts that the true meaning of inculturation is not to be determined by the network of schools, parishes, hospitals and even the great numbers of the religious but that the permanence and success of Christianity will depend on its capacity to become truly African (Waliggo and Crollis, 1986). Africanization of the Gospel church is seen by Waliggo as the foundation of this transformative process.
- (iv) Laurenti Magesa takes the view that the African cultures are rich in many dimensions of life and so “whatever promotes, transmits, enriches, saves, ensures,

and heals life is good and must be promoted” (Magesa Laurenti, 1998). Thus the Christian message must incorporate African values. Magesa thus provides one possible objective criteria for selecting aspects of African culture for inclusion in inculturation. This view looks at inculturation in a holistic way and thus may accommodate all aspects of *Abamarachi* culture that enlivens the wellbeing of Christian faithful.

- (v) Ela Jean-Marc sums up his reflection on inculturation as a “dream of a theology under a tree,” where brothers and sisters sit side by side and solve problems for the transformation of their living conditions (Ela Jean-Marc, 1995:171-181). All parties i.e. cultures and denominations should find a niche in the inculturation process.
- (vi) Another theologian, Pobee John discusses inculturation from the language factor and states that Christianity should not merely be presented in African language, but should also interrogate symbolic systems for a proper interpretation of the content of the faith. In this view “We are asking for the specific theological mind to be brought to bear on the vast material of the sources of African traditional religion.” Just as God used the cultural setting of the realities to talk and lead His people, God continues to use the African culture to talk to the Africans. So theological inculturation requires interpretation of God’s presence and words in the African language and symbolism (Pobee John, 1979:2). One would opine whether or not it is possible for Christian hymns, liturgy, preaching etc to be conveyed in *Abamarachi* language, including metaphors, riddles, songs, ritual ceremonies and art.
- (vii) For Aylward Shorter, Jesus fits in the African view of healing as presided over by the “Witchdoctors” who heal and restore people’s health to wholeness (Shorter

Aylward, 1981). As shown earlier, the healing aspect of the *Abamarachi* provides a fertile foundation for Christian inculturation. Similarly, Diane Stinton presents Jesus as a healer, Mediator and Liberator, terms that make a lot of meaning and relevance to the Africans especially in the light of their long years of oppression by the foreign powers (Stinton, 2004). Here, healing is re-echoed as a great area for inculturation.

- (viii) Benezel, Bujo (1992) and Charles Nyamiti (1990) have written extensively on the theme of Christ as an ancestor of the Africans, as He is for the rest of humanity. In Bujo's *proto-ancestral ecclesiology*, Christ is presented as the Founder of a new community; the Community of Faith (Bujo, 1992). And Nyamiti's *ancestral Koinonia ecclesiology* presents the Church as "the continuation of the mystery of Christ in human communities. So the Church is the agent of Christ's ancestorship to humanity" (Nyamiti, 1984).
- (ix) Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba highlights the integral role of religious women in the mission of evangelization, and offers an appropriate model for inculturation that is relevant to the church in Africa. Thus the role of women as supporters, caregivers, producers, both at home and in religious institutions is often less acknowledged. Inculturation demands greater participation of men and women in transforming the church, according to Wirba (Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba, 2012).

3.7 Inculturation: An Option for Duality

Inculturation is a complex subject and an attempt has been made by scholars to define it and delineate areas of possible application. Below are some selected attempts to define the term:- Aylward Shorter regards inculturation as an on-going dialogue between faith and cultures. More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian

message and a culture or cultures (Shorter Aylward, 1988:11). Within the context of Christianity, inculturation may imply, among others:

- (i) The insertion of the Christian message into a hitherto non-Christian culture, a phenomenon which is understood by the premise that the Christian faith must necessarily exist in a cultural context.
- (ii) In a complete sense, inculturation embodies a stage where human culture is enlivened by the Gospel from within. This requires reformation or reinterpretation (Shorter Aylward, 1988:13-14).
- (iii) Others view inculturation thus:

A process of demanding exchange, insertion, interaction and dialogue among cultures. It envisages the re-orientation and innovations of culture in view of “transforming humanity from within and making it new” (Lott Anastasia, 1995:240).

In the context of Christianity vis-à-vis the *Abamarachi* culture it means some elements of Christianity may be incorporated into the *Abamarachi* culture while at the same time Christianity may accept certain aspects of the *Abamarachi* culture. At the material level, this seems to be already taking shape. For instance, in the Catholic celebration of the Holy Mass when it comes to the offertory time priests accept gifts such as eggs, cocks and fruits, among others, from the *Abamarachi*. It is the cultural domain of the *Abamarachi* which has generated great resistance from the church and moments of dilemma from among the people.

The process of inculturation is not limited to a few departments but involves the whole church and evangelization. As Joseph M. Lupande, et al, quoting other sources, put it:

Inculturation includes the whole life of the church and the whole process of evangelization. It includes theology, liturgy, the church’s life and structures (Lupande, et, al, 1995:253).

Thus part of the resistance from the church to accept aspects of culture of the African Christian is the manner in which evangelization has often been carried out from a “holier-than-thou” framework and a shortage of theological reflection that is broad enough to transform liturgy, mission and structures of the church. As has just been mentioned above a very significant aspect of inculturation is that it involves dialogue in the sense that both the faith and cultures concerned must be prepared to give and take. Jose Antunes de Silva quoting D. Bosch, makes this point quite clear:

Inculturation implies a double movement: inculturation of Christianity and the Christianization of the culture (Silva, 1995:208).

When this is successfully implemented both sides feel justified to accommodate each other because they are part of the new product. It has been pointed out that inculturation did not begin with the 1994 Synod. It has been an ongoing process for quite a while. When St. Paul addressed the Athenians, Acts 17: 16-34, he used some beliefs of the Athenians to proclaim the Good News to make it relevant to them before deciding whether or not to accept Christ. He did not employ any force (Silva, 1995:203). Here then lays a great lesson for Christian evangelists and theologians in Africa to broaden the scope of inculturation to be more accommodative to positive African cultures.

In the 17th century when the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries realized that their insistence on assimilation was headed for failure, a recently established congregation of the propagation of faith sent, around 1659, a message instructing the missionaries as follows:

Do not regard it as your task and do not bring any pressure to bear on the people to change their manners, customs and uses unless they *are evidently* contrary to the religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them but only the faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wish to use them unharmed....There is no stranger cause for alienation and hate than an

attack on local customs especially when they go back to a venerable antiquity....Do your utmost to adopt yourself to them (Neil, 1964:179).

With regard to this instruction what would be regarded as “evidently contrary to religion” would be any action which runs contrary to any laws of natural justice. For example, the case where the children born out of an incestuous union being condemned to death among the *Abamarachi* does not sound appealing to the common sense view. What should be strongly discouraged is the incestuous union itself otherwise the child is innocent and should be given a chance to live. That aside, the instruction itself is plausible as it gives allowance for Christianity to accommodate some aspects of the new cultures. Such approach supports the need for inculturation to be actively engaged in the dialogue between faith and culture.

The culture of the *Abamarachi* has certain practices that the Christian church would do better by accepting rather than ignoring. Some of these are the payment of dowry and the care of widows by their late husband’s relatives. This calls for general support in order to sustain the woman in the family which is vital and should not be limited to sexual exploitation.

One area where inculturation appears to be working is with regard to the Catholics’ ritual of the Holy Mass or the Eucharist. It provides key insights to the way African communities can attain inculturation. Below is an exposition of the Eucharist.

3.8 The Place of Ritual Sacrifice in Christianity: A Focus on the Eucharist among Catholics

The Holy Mass or Eucharist is known also by many other names such as The Lord’s Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Eucharistic Assembly, Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, Most Sacrament, and Holy Communion, among others (Anagwo Chinedu,

2013:8). The Holy Mass is the memorial sacrifice Christ bequeathed to the apostles and his disciples by sharing bread and wine, which became the Last Supper. Its origin goes back to people gathering to remember the memory of a dear departed one (Marie Nicolas, 1960:7). In the Holy Mass sacrifice is emphasized. Sacrifice has two meanings: to make holy or sacred and to surrender something to gain a higher value (Ronzani Rinaldo, 2004:10-24). The Mass is understood as a sacrifice because Christ surrendered his life to redeem humankind. Through the bread and wine, which is a kin to the body and blood of Christ, the Church in a sense offered a sacrifice to God, which it is believed God accepted. The Mass has both public and social characters as it involves people who come together for the celebration (La Verdiere, Eugene, 1996;ix).

The sacrifice of the Mass achieves four purposes:

1. God is adored as Lord and God,
2. Thanks-giving is expressed to God,
3. God's mercy is sought, and
4. Petitions are made to God for various needs.

This resonates with the *Abamarachi* objectives in making sacrifices where, for example, God (*Were*) is acknowledged as the creator, God is thanked for giving rain, God is implored to forgive during reconciliation rituals and God is approached to provide good health to the family (Anagwo, 2013:6-7).

The redemption associated with the Holy Mass is understood to be through the blood of Jesus, the lamb of God, who shed His blood for the salvation of humanity. Similarly, one can argue that through the blood of the cock ritual for reconciliation among the *Abamarachi* its blood restores the relationship of estranged individuals.

3.9 Example of Inculturation in Africa

Three examples of rituals are given below to illustrate that the process of inculturation is indeed taking place at the cultural level in other parts of Africa as well. Among the Kuria and the *Sukuma* in Tanzania, as well as on conflict resolution in the lower *Kongo* of Zaire.

3.9.1 The Parable of the Good Maasai

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) has been adapted to the Kuria ethnic group in Sirari Parish, Musoma Diocese, North Western Tanzania. Traditionally the Kuria and the Maasai have been enemies because of cattle rustling. The parable runs thus:

A Kuria man was once on a journey from Remangwe down to Bunchari and was attacked by local thieves. They (that is thieves) beat and robbed him, leaving him half dead. Now the chairperson of the local village council happened to be travelling down the same road but when he saw the injured man he passed by on the other side. In the same way the local church catechist came to the place, saw him and passed by on the other side but a Maasai traveler who came by on his bicycle was moved with compassion when he saw the injured man. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring local herbal medicine on them. Then he lifted him onto his bicycle, took him to a nearby private-bedded dispensary and looked after him. The next day he took out five thousand Tanzanian shillings (approximately fifteen U.S dollars which is the equivalent of a month's wage in Tanzania's 1993 economy), handed the money to the medical assistant and said: "look after him and on my way back I will pay the extra costs that you have incurred."

To inculturate the parable more in the Africa perspective, the church congregation is reminded that the Maasai played a better role as a good neighbour to the Kuria man than his ethnic group members or leaders who ignored him. The congregation made up of

mostly the Kuria people understands this clearly recalling the fact that the Maasai are regarded their enemies (Healey, 1994).

3.9.2 The Sukuma Sacrificial Goat

In the *Sukuma* language of the Sukuma ethnic group in Western Tanzania there is a proverb which states that *mbuli ya kitambo ikachanga yumela*, translated as “The sacrificial goat dies while screaming in anguish.” This proverb has significant connotations for the inculturation of the Gospel in Africa, as is demonstrated in the sacrifice of the goat (Lupande et al, 1998).

Among the *Sukuma* to be bewitched is one of the most dreaded misfortunes and so that people believe that the most powerful type of medicine is the kind that prevents witches from causing harm to the people. So in the society the diviner- cum-healer is highly esteemed. When such a one dies his tools of work are temporarily not used but are stored in his/her ancestral house for about two months after which the clan or family converged a meeting to interview the successor, one of the sons or daughters of the deceased.

When the successor has been identified, a clan ritual called *isabigula*, translated as uncovering, is organized. The ceremony is performed as a memorial of an important diviner-healer. It is interesting to note that the ceremony was also performed as part of the memorial rite for Rev David Clement, M. Afra, a Canadian missionary who worked among the *Sukuma* for a long time. More research remains to be done to get an in-depth explanation about the “covering” and “uncovering” in the rite.

All the same, the *isabigula* which is performed after the burial of the diviner-healer is where the working tools of the department are uncover and publicly handed over to the successor. Many people both from the clan and outside are invited to witness the rite. The

tombstone area is cleaned. Early in the morning, prayers are held, led by a distinguished diviner -healer assisted by other diviner-healers. The ceremonial leader is given a white (signifying innocence and purify) female goat which he/she blesses by first sprinkling white flour mixed with water contained in a white bucket. While sprinkling the flour in the four directions of the universe, the leader invites the ancestors to be guests at the function and implores them to bless the ceremony and bring rain, peace, fertility, great harvest etc.

After the prayer the goat is killed facing the eastern side of the universe using a knife or spear. The spear is driven slowly in the left side of the chest of the goat while avoiding to pierce the heart. The goat screams and cries in agony to which the people respond by humming “m m m.” The blood of the goat is mixed with medicine which is later used for cleansing the other medicine, the working tools of late divine-healer and the family members. The goat’s screaming symbolically restores power of the medicine and peace to the family of the late. This is an example of a *Sukuma* sacrifice of reconciliation which brings peace and restores relationship with the ancestors.

3.9.3 Parallels between the Sukuma and Christian Traditions

A number of parallels can be drawn between the sacrificial goat of the *Sukuma* tradition and Jesus Christ, the sacrificial lamb of the Christian tradition:

- (i) Both undergo innocent deaths.
- (ii) Both the goat and Jesus Christ are brought before the people. While the goat is dragged unwillingly under protest, Jesus comes silently (cf Isaiah 53:7, Acts 8:32).
- (iii) Both are innocent victims who must die so that the rest of the people may live (cf John 11:50, Romans 5:17).
- (iv) Both take on the sin, weakness and death of the people (cf Ph.6-8, John 1:29).
- (v) Both undergo painful, agonizing and violent deaths (cf Mathew 27:46).

- (vi) Emotions are high at both ceremonies. The *Sukuma* women in particular who had been present are greatly touched as they sorrowfully hum “m m m.” There were faithful women who accompanied Jesus on His way of the Cross whom Jesus consoled (cf Luke 23:28).
- (vii) The *Sukuma* ritual leads to the Christian teaching on the Eucharist Sacrifice. Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb, takes away the sins of all the people. The Eucharist is the medicine of eternal life, much more than the medicine of the *Sukuma*, though of course, the prayer of the *Sukuma* ritual sacrifice entreats the ancestor to cleanse the instruments of the diviner- healer. For the *Sukuma* the most important medicine is the kind that frees people from being bewitched. The Eucharist is the medicine that removes the curse of sin. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus Christ removed the curse of the devil who is portrayed as a witch in the culture of the *Sukuma* (Lupande et al., 1998:248-253).

Thus the *Sukuma* examples of the sacrificial goat and role played by Jesus during crucifixion are clear reflections of an inculturated Christianity in Africa.

3.9.4 Conflict Resolution in the Kongo Villages

According to Burke (2010: 149-151) when a conflict develops between a father and a son leading to the father cursing the son, a ritual has to be done to lift the curse. If the son is remorseful he seeks mediation of an aunt, uncle or grandparent to ask the father to receive him back. When the father consents the son approaches the parents’ house crawling on his knees and elbows. On arriving at the knees of his parent, the father puts a little soil on his thighs and brushes it off saying, “*Ga ntandu ludimi igugila ka ku nsi ludimi ko,*” translated as “I only spoke with the top of my tongue not the underside of my tongue. This means “I spoke without reflecting.” With these words and gesture, the father lifts the curse.

The Catholic Christians in Zaire Province have ritualized similar events. An example is given in 1986 about a sister of 'Final Vows' who left the Congregation abruptly because she had been requested to move to a different community without her consent. She informed the Provincial Superior of her decision and returned her Congregation Cross and prayer books; then she went to her family. Later she decided to return. So she presented herself to the Superior of the community where she had been posted. Since she had departed unceremoniously the Provincial Superior invited her to the provincial headquarters. There, the sister was formally received back after ritualizing her repentance.

In the ceremony that had never been witnessed before in the Congregation, the sister approached the front of the chapel on her knees during the Evensong and at the altar presented herself before the gathered community of Novices and Professed Sisters to the community room. There she formally asked the Provincial Superior to be received back in the Congregation. Her Cross and prayer books were returned to her as a gesture of reconciliation. The matter was sealed and no one ever spoke about the incident publicly. In this case there had been such a serious breach of relationships that correcting the situation would have required a full recognition of what had taken place and a formal ritualization of the mended relationships.

The Sisters were careful not to mention the incident afterwards, in line with Kongo proverbs:

- a) *Matutu ma nzo muwe utima mau*; translated as: it's the owner of the house alone who chases the house's mice.
- b) *Twenda tweyula ka kagenga mo, muntu kagogila ga bundu ko*, translated as: we go off to the side to talk of matters; A person does not divulge things in public.

This case demonstrates how the Sisters use Kongo rituals to settle conflicts and also use the same to avoid divulging internal problems to the public.

3.9.5 Other Forms of Inculturation

Vestments such as the *Kitenge* cloth used largely in East and Central Africa and the *Kente/Mwentoma* garb, mainly in West Africa worn by Catholic priest celebrating the Eucharist have become regular dressing codes (Magesa Laurenti, 2013:187). There are also drums and African stringed instruments which are often played during worship services. Moreover, African musicians have composed liturgical songs which respond to the sentiments of African cultures.

In the area of art where painting and sculpture are involved a “black” Jesus or Virgin Mary are common sites and they do not raise much criticism as they would have done about fifty year ago. Art across Africa has become actively engaged in innovative gestures reflecting African backgrounds. One of the best known is the “Life of Jesus in the Mafa,” which is an illustration of the life of Jesus in the Gospels based on African culture, painted in Cameroon. The Director of Catholic Schools in Yaounde, P. Dondy, argues that “our language, our life,” and “our culture,” are “urgent and necessary,” for the meaningful proclamation of the Gospel in Africa. Inculturation extends to the areas of day-to-day living. And so what does this portend for the external manifestations of inner spiritual? It means that inculturation must become a culture which is lived (Magesa Laurenti, 2013:188).

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the following issues:

- (i) Rituals and the background information related to them,

- (ii) Inculturation as an alternative to a dualistic approach to Christianity and African traditional culture,
- (iii) Ritual sacrifices - the relations between the Christian practices and the African traditions,
- (iv) Examples of inculturation in other areas,
- (v) Official support for inculturation, and
- (vi) Some theologians with works on inculturation in Africa.

What comes out of this is that inculturation, especially involving the Catholic Church and other cultures is a process that is taking place in many parts of Africa. So, advocating for inculturation of Christianity and the cultural and traditional religions of the *Abamarachi* is not something strange, but a welcome move that needs support for the good of evangelization.

It was argued that rituals and the process of inculturation were suitably applicable to the theoretical framework of the study. This is because both Bronslaw Malinowski and Emile Durkheim whose theories were employed in this study advance the position that religion plays a functional or practical role in the society. Religion is practical because through religion, people unite and work collectively. For example, the cock ritual of the marriage ceremony binds not only the two families but also the couple as well as the departed ancestors. In their commitment to the ancestral spirits and God for blessing, the people hope for the family to survive into the future generations. Thus the religious implication of the ritual is that it links the living, the living dead (ancestors), God and future generations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the results of the data collected from the field survey done between August 2008 and January 2009 in the villages of Nyapera, Butula, Bukati, Bulwani, Munga'bo, Munga'mbwa, Bwaliro, Lugulu, Tingolo, Kingandole, Burinda and Ikonzo. Butula parish, from where the key Catholic respondents were selected, comprises of the parish of Butula and the sub-parishes of Siribo, Buhuyi and Butunyi. Each station has at least 2 priests; but there were also 7 priests born in these parishes working outside but are frequently available in Butula Sub-County. The analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the analysis of respondents' biographic data and on the issue of possible inculturation of cultural rituals within Catholicism. Discussions of the findings were guided by the theoretical framework chosen and the views of scholars on inculturation. The analyzed information was interpreted in relation to the research objectives to ensure that it provided answers to the research questions, especially on the issues of how cock rituals can help enrich the wellbeing of *Abamarachi* Christians and traditionalists without being seen as outcasts or renegades.

4.2 Background Information on Key Respondents

The study found it necessary to analyze the general characteristics of the respondents as these characteristics may have had an influence on the responses elicited from them. These characteristics included: gender, age, duration of stay in Marachi area, marital status, level of education, and duration of church membership by the Catholic Christians. Out of the eighty (80) respondents sampled in the study, 40 (50%) were Catholic Christian faithful while a similar number (40) consisted of traditionalists, used here to denote custodians and practitioners of culture.

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

The key respondents for this study were 27 females and 53 males. The findings are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	53	66
Female	27	34
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

In general, there were, 5 Catholic priests (all men). 10 catechists and 25 lay Catholic Christians respondents. Out of the 10 catechists, there were 5 male and 5 female respondents, respectively. Lay persons on the other hand consisted of 15 male and 10 female respondents. In total, there were 31% (25) male Catholic Christians and 19% (15) female Catholic Christians. These numbers translated to 50% of the total respondents. Traditionalists on the other hand, consisted of 5 chiefs (2 female and 3 male), 5 assistant chiefs (2 female and 3 male), 7 healers (3 female and 4 male), 2 circumcisers (male), 6 rainmakers (male) and 15 community elders (5 female and 10 male). In some instances,

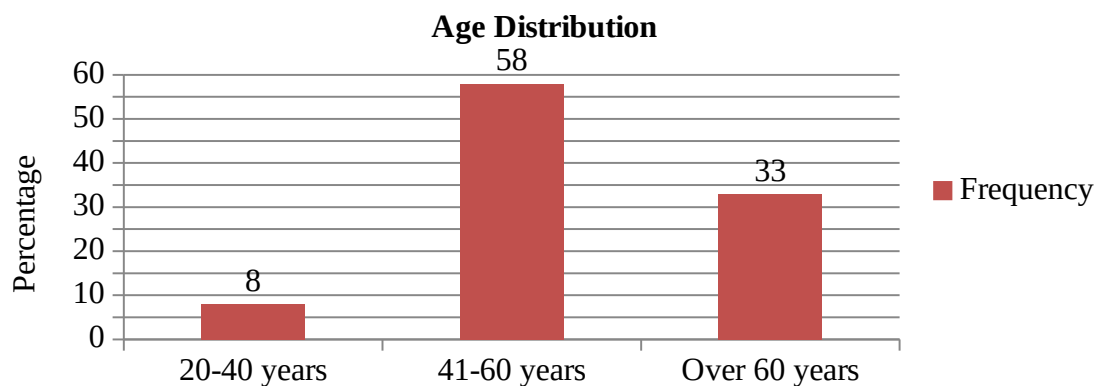
concerning traditionalists some personalities played double roles. For example, some elders doubled as healers. In total there were 35% (28) male traditionalists and 15% (12) female traditionalists. They also made up for 50% of the total respondents. Out of all the 80 respondents, 66% (53) were male while 34% (27) of the respondents were female. The high number of male respondents was an indication that women had a subordinate role among the *Abamarachi* – both in the Catholic Church and in the cultural setup. As indicated earlier, men were the ones who mostly spearheaded church leadership and the performance of traditional rituals. As suggested by Wirba, inclusion of women is core in any meaningful process of inculturation within the church (Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba, 2012).

4.2.2 Age Distribution and Time Lived in Marachi

4.2.2.1 Age Distribution

Determining the age of the respondents was important as it revealed their level of experience in dealing with both cultural and Christian matters.

Figure 4.1: Age Distribution



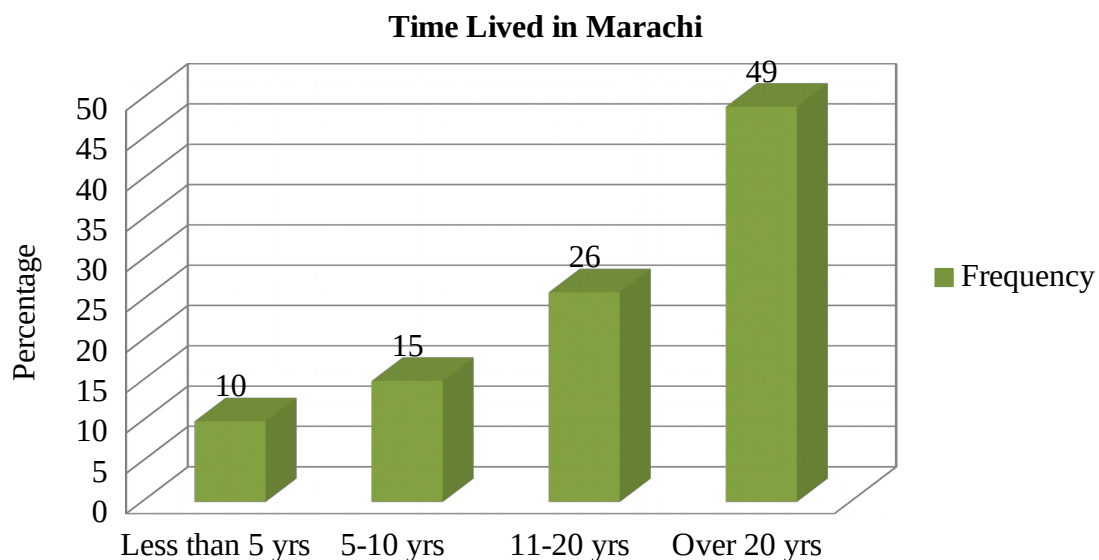
Total = 80 respondents

The findings indicate that 8% (6) of the respondents were aged between the ages of 20-40 years, 58% (47) were aged between the ages of 41-60 years while those above 60 years of age consisted of 33% (27) of the respondents. The fact that majority of them were aged between 41-60 years was a clear indication that the respondents were mature people who had enough experience in matters concerning the Catholic Church and matters concerning the *Abamarachi* cultural rituals and practices.

4.2.2.2 Time Lived in Marachi

This question was expected to shed light on how well the target population understood *Abamarachi* cock rituals and cultural values.

Figure 4.2: Time Lived in Marachi



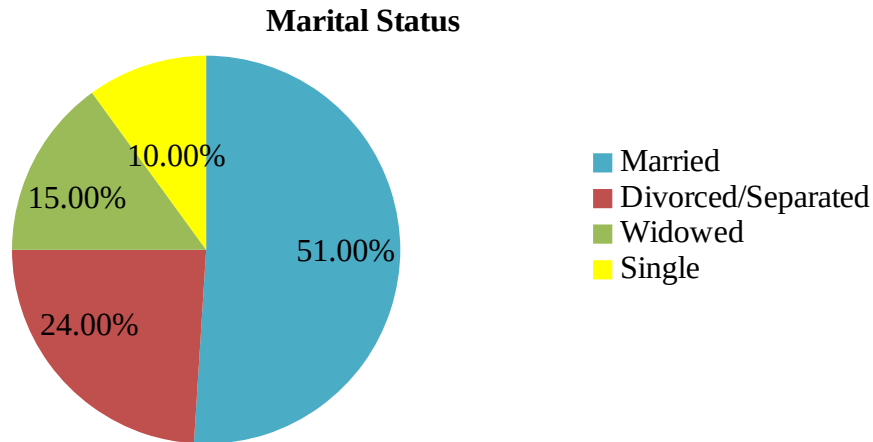
Total = 80 respondents

The findings indicate that 49% (39) of the respondents had lived in Marachi for over 20 years. Ten percent (8) had been there for less than 5 years while 15% (12) had lived there for 5-10 years. Finally, 26% (21) of the respondents had stayed in Marachi for 11-20

years. Since the majority (70%) had lived there for more than 10 years, they were conversant with the *Abamarachi* way of life.

4.2.3 Marital Status

Figure 4.3: Marital Status



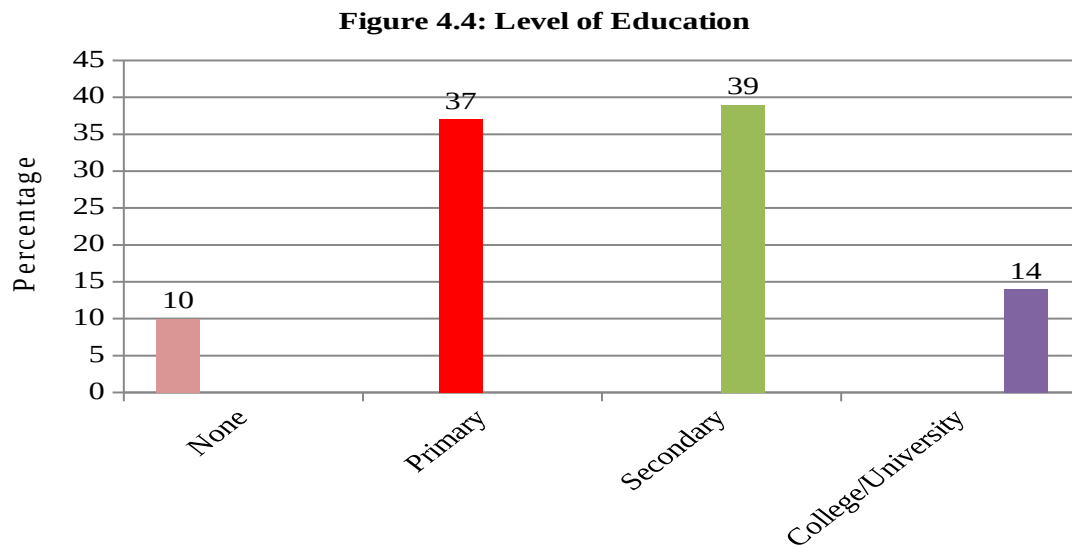
Total = 80 respondents

Among the sampled population in Marachi, 10% (8) of the respondents were single ostensibly from among the Catholic priests. Fifteen percent (12) of the respondents were widowed, 24% (19) were divorced/separated while 51% (41) were married. Majority of the respondents were married. This was an affirmation that they had knowledge and experience of rituals involving family and marriage.

4.2.4 Level of Education

Establishing the level of education helped in assessing how well the respondents understood and interpreted the questions. 10% (8) indicated that they did not have any form of academic qualification.

Figure 4.4: Level of Education



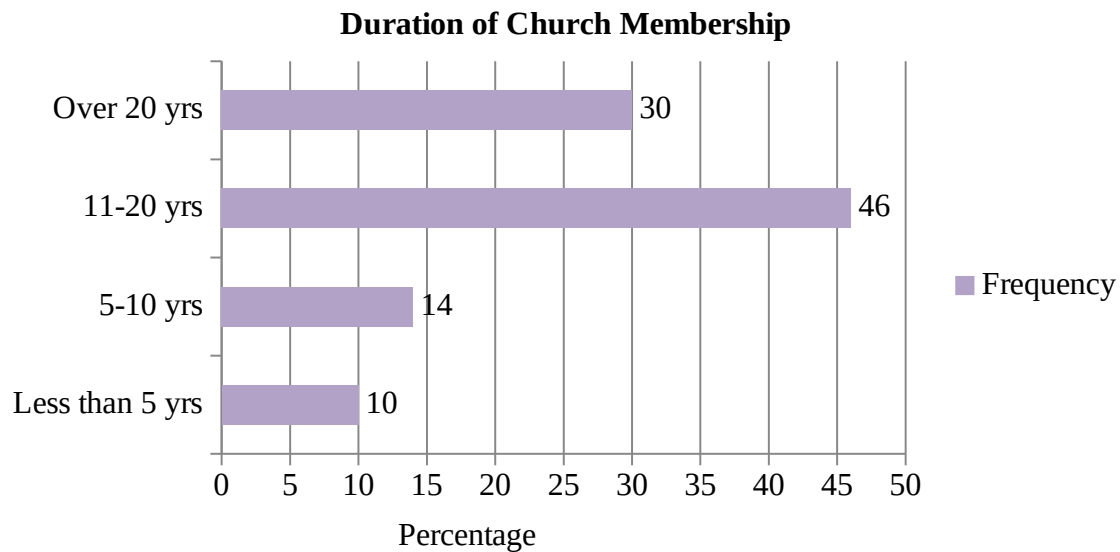
Total = 80 respondents

However, 37% (30) and 39% (31) respondents had primary and secondary qualifications respectively. Only 14% (4) had attained university qualifications. Apart from the few who had no qualifications, most of the respondents were literate. They therefore understood the issues raised in the questionnaires and answered the questions appropriately. For the illiterate respondents, the researcher took time to translate and explain the meaning of the questions.

4.2.5 Duration of Church Membership

It was necessary to establish the duration of time that Catholic Christians had served in the church.

Figure 4.5: Duration of Church Membership



Total = 40 Christian respondents

Results of the findings indicated that 10% (4) of the 40 respondents had served in the church for less than 5 years, 14% (6) for 5-10 years while 46% (18) and 30% (12) had served for 11-20 years and over 20 years respectively. Since majority of the respondents had served in the church for a long time, they were familiar with church doctrines, practices and possibly contribute to the debate on inculturation prospects and challenges.

4.3 Areas of Integration of Abamarachi Cock Rituals into the Catholic Doctrines

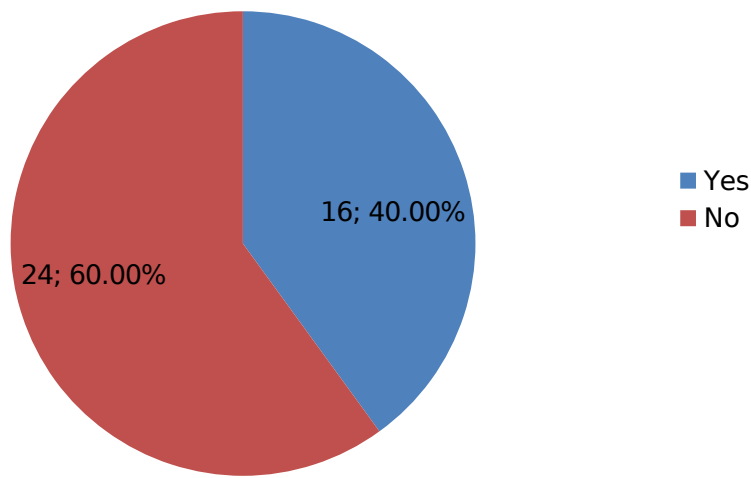
The study purposed to assess the respondents' perception and awareness of areas of the *Abamarachi* cultural practices that could be integrated into Christianity and vice versa. It was important in providing a clear understanding on how Catholic practices and *Abamarachi* cultural practices could make contributors to inculturation.

4.3.1 Participation in Abamarachi Cock Rituals

Christian respondents were asked whether they had ever participated in *Abamarachi* cock rituals. The aim of this question was to establish the extent to which integration of practices was being supported by the Catholic Church.

Figure 4.6: Participation in Abamarachi Cock Rituals

Participation in Abamarachi Cock Rituals



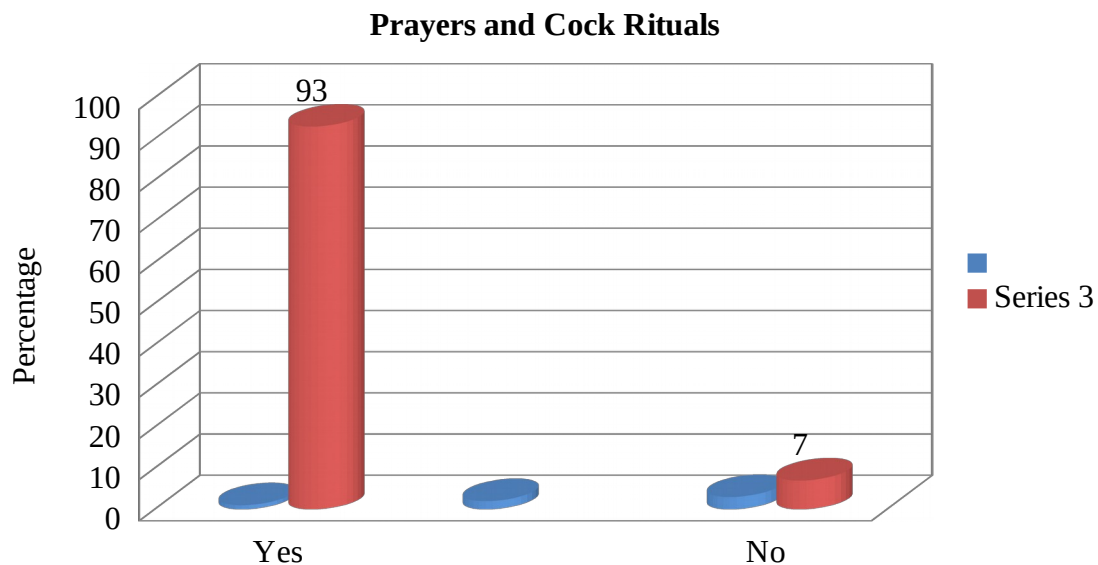
Total = 40 Christian respondents

The analysis shows that 85% (34) of Christian respondents participated in *Abamarachi* cock rituals while 15% (6) had never participated in rituals. The high number of Christian respondents who had ever participated in cock rituals is an indication that the official position and suggested paradigm shift from Vatican have not trickled down to the grassroots. If it had trickled down, the situation would translate to most Christians not engaging in *Abamarachi* cock rituals because of fear of excommunication from the church.

4.3.2 Prayers and Cock Rituals

Here the study needed to establish whether Christian prayers were conducted where cock rituals were involved. The information was important in examining the extent to which integration of Christian practices in the cock rituals of the *Abamarachi* was possible.

Figure 4.7: Prayers and Cock Rituals



Total = 80 respondents

Figure 4.7 indicates that 93% (74) of the respondents indicated that Christian prayers were conducted where cock rituals were involved while 7% (6) were of the view that these practices were not combined. Going by the views of the majority, the outcome of this analysis indicates that contemporary Christian beliefs and traditional beliefs all have an important place among the *Abamarachi* people. Despite the fact that Africans have embraced Christianity, they have not given up on cultural beliefs. Instead, they combine practices from both Christianity and the African tradition in order to achieve favourable intended results.

4.3.3 Rite Attendant in the Naming of a Child

The aim of the question in relation to the naming of a child was to examine the activities that accompany the naming of a child in order to understand to what extent Christian practices and *Abamarachi* traditions were cohered into the lives of the *Abamarachi* people.

Table 2: Rite Attendant in the Naming of a Child

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Cock Rituals	17	21
Conducting Prayers	20	25
Both Rituals and Prayers	43	54
Total	80	100

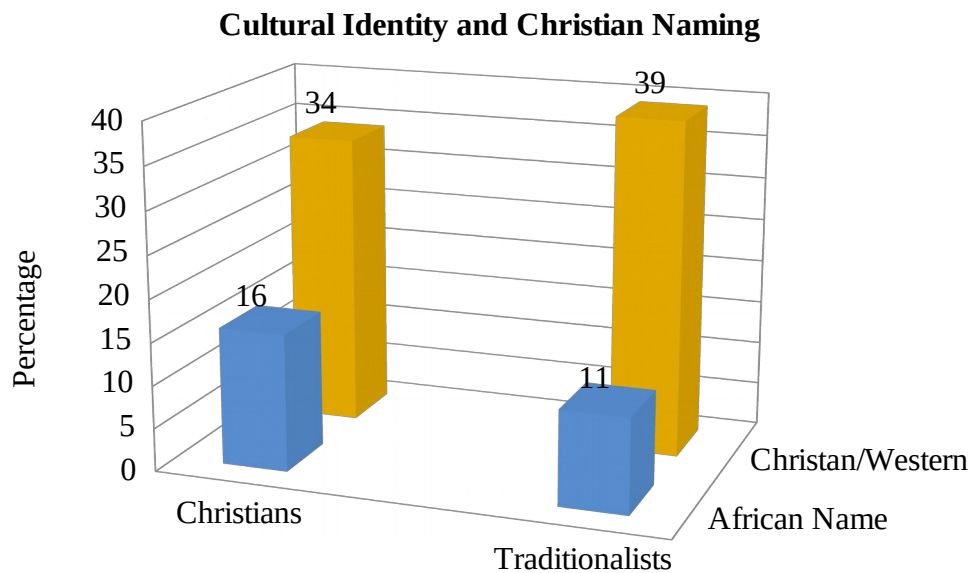
Total = 80 respondents

Fifty four percent (54) of the respondents said that both cock rituals and church prayers were conducted during the naming of a child. Twenty five percent (25) were of the view that prayers were conducted exclusively while 21% (21) indicated that only cock rituals were conducted. The combined use of prayers and cock rituals during the naming of a child as indicated by majority of the respondents portrays that integration is effectively taking place. Furthermore, the ritualization and Christianization processes enhance the appreciation for both Christian and traditional values which is very important if inculturation is to be fully achieved.

4.3.4 Cultural Identity and Christian Naming

The respondents were further asked whether they attributed their identity to their *Abamarachi* names or to their Christian/Western names.

Figure 4.8: Cultural Identity and Christian Naming



Total = 80 respondents

Majority of both Christian and traditionalist respondents said they attributed their identity to their Christian/Western names. This constituted of 34% (27) of Christians and 39% (31) traditionalists, respectively. In reference to African names, 16% (13) of Christians and 11% (9) of traditionalists indicated that they attributed their identity to their African names. The findings from this analysis indicate that Christian or rather western names are becoming increasingly popular, pointing to the influence from globalization and access to the westernized culture. The fact that most people have both Christian and African names further indicates that both cultural and Christian heritages continue to shape the identity of the *Abamarachi*. This is a dualistic reality which is not necessarily antagonistic. The fact that some of the assumed 'Christian' names are actually 'western' is an indication of the 'triple heritage' of the *Abamarachi*, namely Christian, western and cultural. Any meaningful evangelization and inculturation process must take into consideration these unfolding realities. Table 3 below shows a list of popular Christian, western and cultural names among both Christians and traditionalists.

Table 3: Christian, Western and Cultural Names

Christian	Western	Cultural/Abamarachi
Mary	Angela	Nafula
Sarah	Caroline	Nasimiyu
Magdalene	Sheila	Nanjala
Rachel	Stacy	Naliaka
Naomi	Cynthia	Nakhumicha
Daniel	Ian	Sifuna
Paul	Jimmy	Barasa
John	Kevin	Wesonga
Emmanuel	Brian	Wepukhulu
Peter	Evans	Wanjala

When a child has been given an ancestral name, say, Nafula, and upon baptism she is called Mary, this study opines that the Christian baptizer should mention that the child is now called Mary Nafula. He will then emphasize that the child has the patronage of Saint Mary and the ancestor Nafula. This will endear both Christians and traditionalists toward the child, for whom both will be proudly associated. As at the time of this research, Christian baptism requires the use of at least a Christian name. However, as inculturation develops, there may reach a time when an African can be baptized into Christianity using only African names.

4.3.5 Burial and Funeral Rites

The analysis that follows was aimed at assessing how burial and funeral rites were conducted among the people of Marachi.

Table 4: Burial and Funeral Rites

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Cock Rituals	18	22
Conducting Prayers	24	30
Both Rituals and Prayers	38	48
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

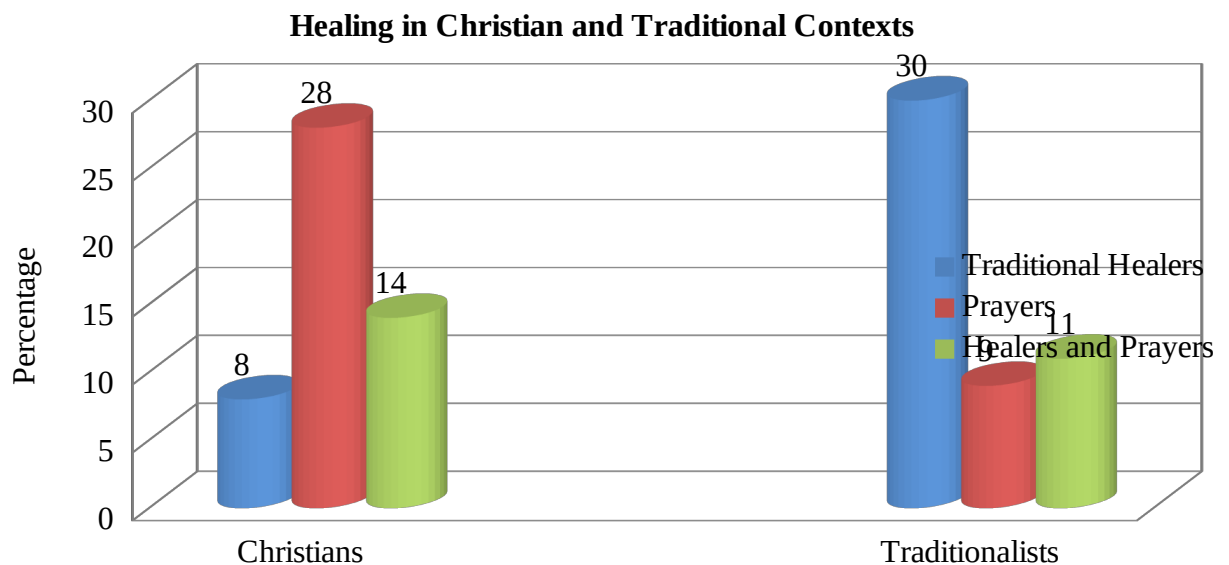
According to the findings, 48% (38) of the respondents agreed to the assumption that both cock rituals and prayers were conducted jointly. Thirty percent (24) of the respondents

said prayers were conducted exclusively while the remaining 22% (18) of the respondents had similar views regarding cock rituals. From the analysis, it is evident that both Christian and traditional funeral rites are recognized and observed in joint functions that involved both Christians and traditionalists. When integration of Christian and traditional practices is done openly and sincerely, *Abamarachi* Christians and traditionalists will no longer have misgivings about one another. This is because they will both find inculturation a situation where they feel accepted. An example of a traditional funeral song that has gained acceptance during Christian burial ceremonies is “*luwere*” translated as “it is finished” or “it is over.”

4.3.6 Healing in Christian and Traditional Contexts

With regard to healing, both traditionalists and Christian respondents were asked about what steps they took when they fell sick besides consulting modern day medical practitioners.

Figure 4.9: Healing in Christian and Traditional Contexts



Total = 80 respondents

Majority of Christian respondents, 28% (23), said that they sought the help of church leaders who prayed for them anytime they fell sick. Only 8% (6) consulted traditional healers. However, 14% (11) of the respondents sought help from both traditional healers and church leaders. On the contrary, most traditionalists, 30% (24) relied on traditional healers for healing while 11% (9) consulted church leaders. Those who sought help from both healers and church leaders made up for the remaining 9% (7). Although it is evident that Christians mainly believe in prayers for healing while traditionalists majorly rely on traditional healers rather than reliance on prayers, both groups consult one another at some point. The reason why Christians and Traditionalists seek the intervention of Christian prayers and traditional healing is because they believe in both the doctrines of the church and traditional beliefs. In such a case, Christians join the traditional healers and offer prayers when the healers are conducting a cock ritual to address a health related problem that has defied conventional or western medical procedures. To some extent it also seems like the *Abamarachi* people tend to appreciate the services of both traditional healers and church leaders. This is for as long as the end result of healing is achieved; a situation that positively contributes to integration.

4.3.7 Official Persons during Circumcision and Marriage

Here the study needed to establish the main officiates in major rites of passage such as circumcision, payment of dowry and marriage celebrations.

Table 5: Official Persons during Circumcision and Marriage

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Abamarachi</i> Elders	17	21
Church Leaders	11	14
Both Elders and Leaders	52	65
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

According to 14% (11) of the respondents, payment of dowry, marriage celebrations and circumcision were only presided over by church leaders while 21% (17) said *Abamarachi* elders spearheaded the mentioned cultural activities. Most respondents, 65% (52), indicated that both *Abamarachi* elders and church leaders were in-charge of the activities. During marriage celebrations, a Christian service, say the mass is conducted by church leaders at the time dowry is being paid. This is in recognition of the authenticity of the upcoming marriage that the dowry stands for. *Abamarachi* elders also spearhead the events that follow marriage celebrations by conducting cock rituals (see earlier discussion in Chapter 3). The rituals are supposed to bless the marriage of the newlyweds. During circumcision, Christian and traditional prayers and counseling sessions are conducted separately over the initiates. It would therefore be misleading to argue that the African culture does not instill morals and values among its people. The importance of attaching Christianity and traditional culture is what contributes to integration of practices.

4.4 Relationship between the Abamarachi Cultural Practices Involving the Cock Rituals and Christian Teachings

This section was based on the second objective of the study which focused on examining the relationship between *Abamarachi* cultural practices involving the cock rituals and Christian teachings. Questions asked under this section were aimed at identifying various attributes that connect Christianity to *Abamarachi* culture.

4.4.1 Cases of Performing Cock Rituals

This was the first question under the second objective of the study and it sought to find out whether cock rituals were conducted for religious cases or for traditional cases. The question was meant to shed more light on the *Abamarachi* cock rituals as a qualifier for inculturation.

Table 6: Cases of Performing Cock Rituals

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Traditional Cases	25	31
Religious Cases	16	20
Traditional and Religious	39	49
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

Table 6 above indicates that 20% (16) of the respondents said that cock rituals were performed strictly for religious purposes whereas 31% (25) said they were for traditional cases. Most of the respondents, 49% (39), were of the opinion that cock rituals are performed for both religious and traditional purposes. This outcome is an indication of duality which is a prerequisite for integration and inculturation.

4.4.2 Cultural Importance of Cock Rituals

Respondents were asked on the cultural importance attached to cock rituals. This attachment does not only apply to cock rituals rather it is a reflection of all other *Abamarachi* cultural rituals. The question was aimed at assessing the extent integration, inculturation and evangelization would be affected by discouraging the practicing of rituals.

Table 7: Cultural Importance of Cock Rituals

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
No Importance	4	5
Little Importance	9	11
Much Importance	67	84
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

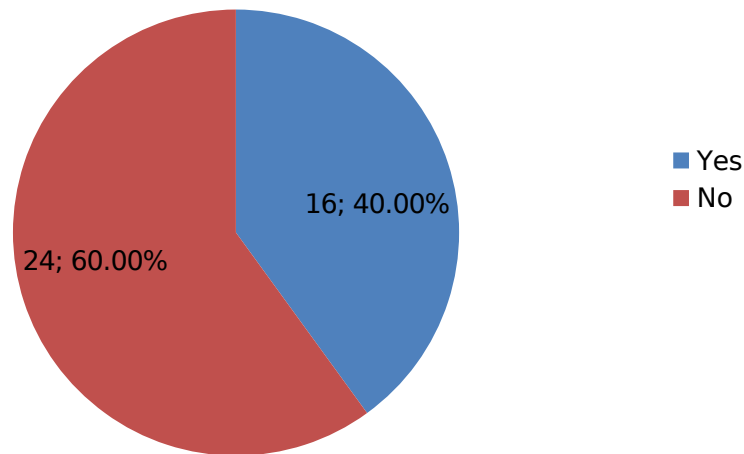
Five percent (4) of all the respondents said cock rituals had no cultural importance. 11percent (9) said little importance was attached to the rituals while 84% (67) of the respondents said much cultural importance was attached to cock rituals. The use of a cock in performing cultural rituals seems to be an important aspect among the *Abamarachi* people symbolically representing cosmic and social harmony. Where the cock is a sacrificial object dedicated to *Were* or the spirit of an ancestor, then such a gesture is directed at the restoration of a ruptured cosmic – peace; where the cock has been slaughtered for guests, it is aimed at nurturing the spirit of love and unity among the people. Such beliefs among the Africans resonate closely with Christian teachings as demonstrated by Abraham as the friend of God through sacrifice and love as the greatest virtue as taught by Jesus. If integration and inculturation are to take place effectively, it is important for the Catholic Church to consider the assimilation of positive and deep-rooted cultural traditions that are considered important by the *Abamarachi* people.

4.4.3 Fault in Cock Rituals

It was prudent to ask Christian respondents if the Catholic Church found any fault in the use of the cock. This question would remove any doubts on whether cultural rituals were a hindrance to the process of inculturation.

Figure 4.10: Fault in Cock Rituals

Fault in Cock Rituals



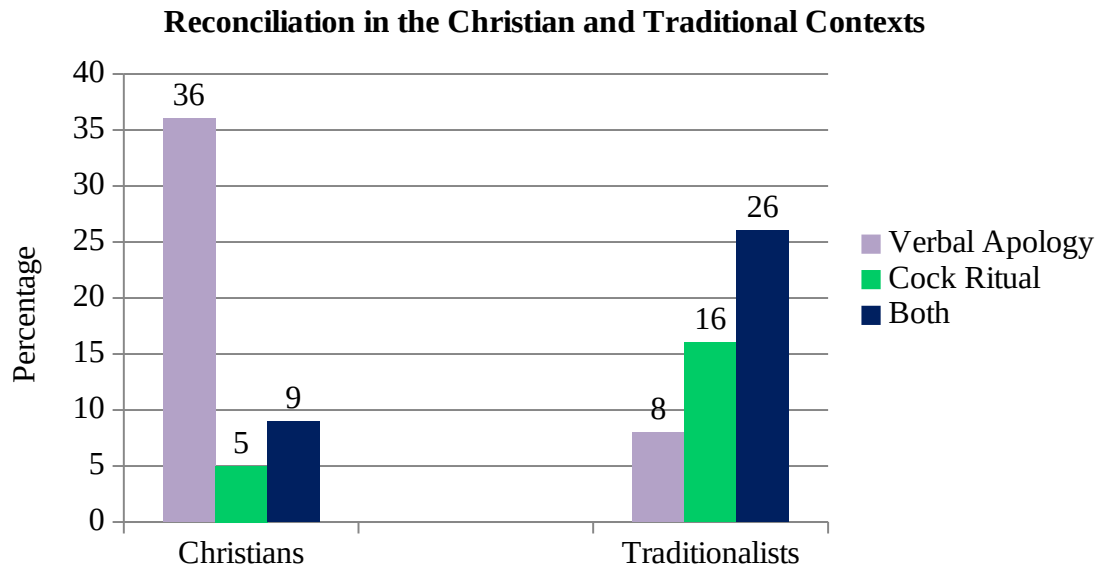
Total = 40 Christian respondents

The respondents were almost equally divided in their views. Fifty-five percent (22) said the church found fault in cock rituals while 45% (18) said the church did not find fault in cock rituals. One would say that the diversity of the responses indicates that bottlenecks that prevent the full achievement of inculturation still exist to a high degree. This is because the Catholic Church still finds fault in some cultural practices involving cock rituals. For example, the ritual that involves slaughtering a cock to appease the dead after a burial is not supported. This is because Christians believe that prayers are sufficient. Although inculturation and integration are requisites of evangelization, the analysis indicates that a good number of Christians find fault in cock rituals. It is possible that this group of people may not approve the use of the cock as a form of offering. This outcome further indicates that though it is achievable, bridging the gap between Christianity and the *Abamarachi* traditional culture still has a long way to go.

4.4.4 Reconciliation in the Christian and Traditional Contexts

Traditionalists and Christian respondents were separately asked whether they valued verbal apology or cock rituals as a sign of reconciliation.

Figure 4.11: Reconciliation in the Christian and Traditional Contexts



Total = 80 respondents

Based on the views of Christian respondents, 36% (29) preferred verbal apology to cock rituals as a sign of reconciliation. Nine percent (7) opted for both methods while the remaining 5% (4) preferred cock rituals. Traditionalists, on the other hand, had varied opinions. Majority of them, 26% (21), had a preference for both cock rituals and verbal apology. A smaller percentage of 16% (13) and 8% (6) valued cock rituals and verbal apology, respectively. Most Christians value verbal apology as compared to cock rituals. This is because Christians rely on Church teachings which lay importance on verbal apology and forgiveness rather than the use of rituals. On the other hand, majority of traditionalists value both cock rituals and verbal apologies. The eating of the cock ritual meal is believed to enhance warmth among the reconciling parties.

4.4.5 Christianity and the Abamarachi Culture: Incompatibility

The respondents were asked how they perceived Christianity and *Abamarachi* cultural practices with regard to similarities and differences.

Table 8: Christianity and the Abamarachi Culture: Incompatibility

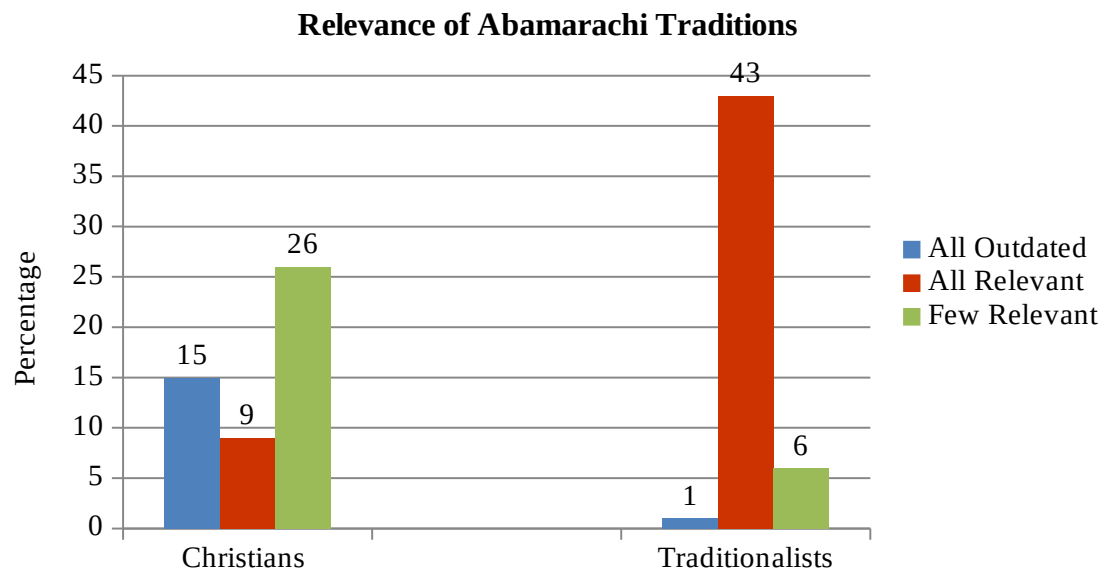
Variable	Frequency	Percentage
The Same	9	12
Related	17	21
Totally Different	54	67
Total	80	100

Total = 80 respondents

As shown in Table 8 above, the overwhelming majority 67% (54) of the respondents said that the practices were totally different, while 21% (17) said that they were related. Only 12% (9) said that they were the same. Thus, in the whole, few respondents indicated that Christian practices and *Abamarachi* traditions were similar. Majority of the *Abamarachi* people consider Christianity and the *Abamarachi* cultural practices to be totally different, for example, in their approach towards worship. For instance, Christians use a formal approach while traditionalists handle situations as they appear without necessarily engaging formalities. Despite this diverse relationship, Christians and traditionalists allow for the interaction of Christian practices and cultural practices at one point or another. For example, prayers are conducted during the performance of certain cultural practices such as circumcision, marriage and funeral rites. These findings pointed to the possibility of carrying out evangelization in a uniform way which in turn contributes to inculturation and integration of practices. However, that uniformity has not been achieved.

4.4.6 Relevance of *Abamarachi* Traditions

The respondents were further asked to give their views regarding the relevance of traditional cultural practices such as circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance and payment of dowry.

Figure 4.12: Relevance of Abamarachi Traditions

Total=80 respondents

Figure 4.12 shows that 15% (12) of Christian respondents felt *Abamarachi* cultural practices were not relevant. Nine percent (7) felt they were all relevant while 26% (21) of Christian respondents indicated that very few were relevant. On the other hand, 43% (34) of traditionalist respondents said that all *Abamarachi* cultural practices were relevant. Only 1% (1) said the practices were all outdated while 6% (5) said few were relevant. The number of traditionalists who feel *Abamarachi* cultural practices are relevant is relatively high. On the part of Christians, majority of them feel that cultural practices are either outdated or very few are relevant. Contrary to these views, a reasonable number of Christian respondents feel these practices are still relevant. This is an indication that despite strong condemnation by Church leaders against these traditional practices and/or the attendant adherence by Christian faithfuls in this regard, there are some aspects within the *Abamarachi* cultural practices that they agree with.

It is evident that Christianity has not totally consumed traditional beliefs and practices. One may opine that successful inculturation, demands for thorough investigation on relevant cultural practices and their adoption into Christianity. For example, polygamy has strong biblical foundations. Many Christian men in Kenya are known to have married more than one wife, especially among the political class. Circumcision of boys has been seen to have medical and hygienic benefits; while there is no clear cut biblical condemnation for clitoridectomy except where manifest harm has been proven. In the African traditional religion, what may be required is how to regulate the institution against abuse.

4.5 Positive Approach to Evangelization through Inculturation of the *Abamarachi* Cock Rituals

This section addressed the third objective of the study. It seeks to examine the various dynamics that exist between Christianity and traditional cultural practices. It focuses on various interactions between Christianity and African tradition that exist among the *Abamarachi* people which could positively contribute to inculturation.

4.5.1 Language Used in Conducting Mass

This first question under the final study objective was asked with the aim of establishing to what extent inculturation was impacting the process of evangelization through language.

Table 9: Language Used in Conducting Mass

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
English	10	13
<i>Luhya</i> Dialect/Kiswahili	17	21

All of the Above	53	66
Total	80	100

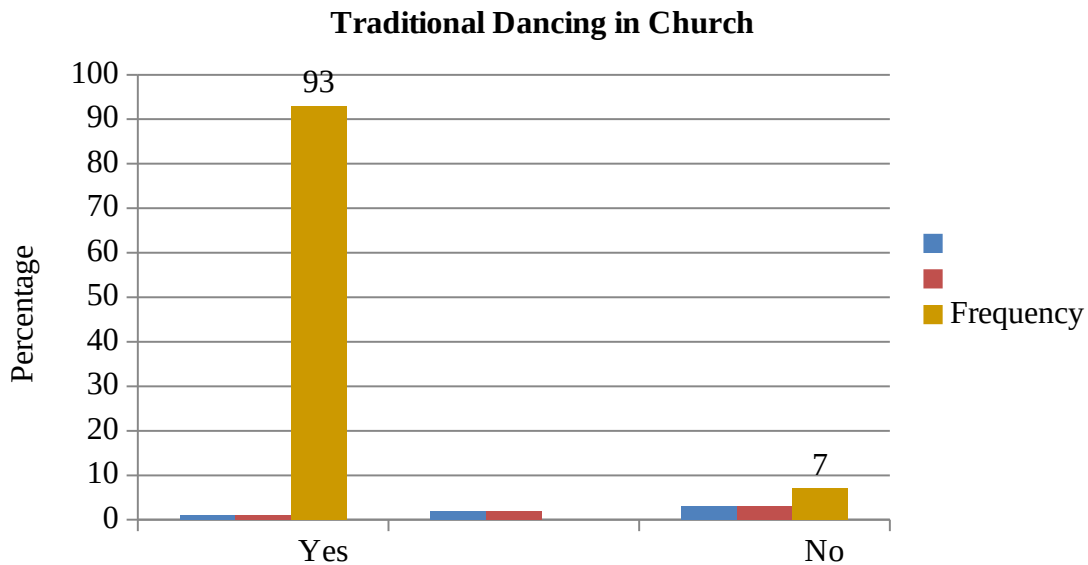
Total = 80 respondents

This study found that, 13% (10) of the respondents said English was mainly used to conduct mass with 21% (17), pointing out that the *Luhya* dialect or Kiswahili was used. Most respondents, 66% (53), said all the three languages were used. One may thus opine that inculturation is exhibited in the use of cultural symbols or languages during the process of worship. In respect to mission countries, the Vatican Council (see Appendix IX) encourages missionaries to respect the people's traditions as long as they do not interfere with the intended purpose of the Gospel (Vatican II, *Nostra Aestate*, 28 October, 1965). The use of all three languages to conduct mass seems to have not only contributed to inculturation but also to the spread of the Gospel to the grassroots where most people do not understand the English language. More so, it enriches the principle for inculturation which is aimed at enhancing interactions between Christianity and traditional culture.

4.5.2 Traditional Dancing in Church

The study also wanted to know whether traditional dancing was allowed in church with the same intention of assessing the degree to which Christianity gave room to the process of inculturation.

Figure 4.13: Traditional Dancing in Church



Total = 80 respondents

Only 7% (6) of the respondents said traditional dancing was not accepted in church while 93% (74) agreed that dancing was acceptable. The views of the majority are an indication of the strong attachment that people have to their cultural values. Based on this, one may argue that the process of evangelization can only be effective if various methods of inculturation such as traditional dancing are allowed in church because inculturation is concerned with compatibility between Christianity and cultural traditions. This compatibility goes a long way in creating a sense of belonging among *Abamarachi* Christian faithful. According to the analysis, traditional dancing seems to be a common practice in church probably because it has never altered the original meaning or rather the standards of the Christian faith. Cultural elements are fundamental in Christianity because they enrich the Gospel. Only drums as traditional instruments are allowed in church. Instruments such as *isukuti* and *nyatiti* which hold traditional importance are not used.

4.5.3 Cocks as Church Offerings

When asked whether cocks were offered as offerings in church, only 3% (2) of the respondents said cocks did not constitute part of church offerings.

Figure 4.14: Cocks as Church Offerings



Total = 80 respondents

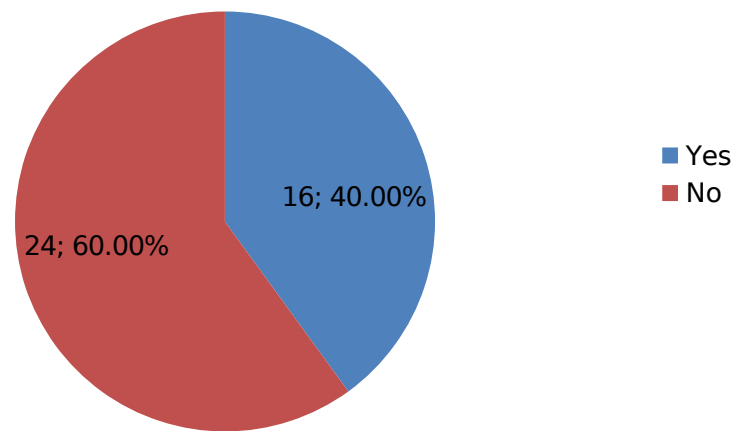
However, almost all the respondents, 97% (78), said cocks were accepted as offerings. One would opine that allowing Christians to offer cocks as offerings would make Christian teachings more acceptable among traditionalists due to the symbolic importance of the cock among the *Abamarachi*. In turn, this would positively impact the process of evangelization. Cocks are used during Eucharistic celebrations to bring out various meanings to the church assembly. In this case it reflects on the cultural values of unity and solidarity. This form of liturgical inculturation enriches Christian rites by creating a sense of assimilation that positively contributes to the process of evangelization which is the Catholic Church's mission.

4.5.4 Participation in Church Activities

This question sought to examine whether *Abamarachi* traditionalists engaged in Christian religious practices such as baptism, partaking of the holy Eucharist and attendance of Mass.

Figure 4.15: Participation in Church Activities

Participation in Church Activities



Total = 40 traditionalist respondents

Based on the findings indicated on Figure 4.15, 40% (16) of traditionalist respondents said that they participated in church activities while 60% (24) indicated that they did not participate in these activities. From the figure it is clear that a reasonable number of traditionalists embraced Christian practices. Most probably they are the same respondents who indicated that Christian practices and *Abamarachi* traditions were related if not the same. The fact that a good number of *Abamarachi* traditionalists participated in church activities points to the reason why prayers are conducted together with rituals in some instances such as in marriage celebrations. Involvement in church activities also promotes a solidarity and community spirit which is important in promoting inculturation. Altogether, the findings indicate that inculturation is slowly attending to cultural demands despite the fact that traditionalists are deeply immersed in their culture. Despite this, it is notable that there is less resistance by traditionalists in taking part in Christian rituals than is the case with Church leaders

4.6 Analysis of Whether or not Inculturation is taking Place among the Abamarachi

This is a general analysis of the views of Catholic Christians and *Abamarachi* traditionalists in relation to the teachings of the church and *Abamarachi* cultural practices that contribute to inculturation.

4.6.1 Views of Catholic Christians

According to the Catholic Christians who were interviewed, inculturation is still a long way from being achieved especially when it comes to uniting Christians and traditionalists. This is because they both still have different beliefs, values and practices. They continued to explain that the church's mission of evangelization has not been fully realized because of the contradicting views of both parties. According to them, it would be best if the participation of both groups in various cultural and church activities would be allowed and accepted among the Marachi community. Though in activities such as initiations and marriage celebrations both Christian prayers and cultural rituals are performed, the activities take place separately and not jointly. Christian respondent, however, explained that though some Christians are still attached to their cultural values and beliefs, the factor has not derailed efforts of evangelization by the Catholic Church. Christian respondents further explained that Christianity is doing all it can to ensure inculturation is achieved especially since it allows traditionalists to participate in various church activities such as attending mass. One respondent said that doing away with *Abamarachi* traditions would negatively impact the process of evangelization because the *Abamarachi* people are deeply engraved in their cultural beliefs; which is also a challenge to achieving inculturation. According to the respondent, this is the reason why the Catholic Church should support inculturation.

4.6.2 Views of Traditionalists

Traditionalists on the other hand, argue that to some extent, they do not view Christianity to be a unifying factor, rather, as a threat to the African traditional religion. Though some of them were receptive to the idea of inculturation, they explain that it is difficult for Christianity to achieve its mission if it distances itself from culture. They appreciated the fact that most people have maintained their traditional values despite the popularity of Christianity in the contemporary world. According to them this persistence is due to strong morals and values that are instilled by the *Abamarachi* cultural traditions. The traditionalists went on to say that though western culture has greatly impacted *Abamarachi* traditions, it is impossible for it to lose meaning and relevance. They continue to urge Christians to participate in *Abamarachi* cultural activities.

4.7 Conclusion

From the analysis made in this chapter, it is clear that there are many occasions and situations involving cock rituals that affect both Christians and traditionalists. In burial, funeral, healing and marriage rites, for instance, both Christian and traditional approaches are involved though they are performed separately. It is also observed that both Christians and traditionalists agree that Christianity and *Abamarachi* culture are different. Both groups are also quick to defend their practices as being relevant. These developments indeed reflect the broad Functionalism Theory of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) who argued that perpetual beliefs and practices of a people are useful customs that serve some contemporary purposes. Moreover, the cultural developments among the *Abamarachi* fit in Emile Durkheim's postulation in favour of religion being a cohesive force in society and thus cannot be washed away easily. It can thus be argued that based on this analysis and in spite of the hurdles that may exist, inculturation between the Catholicism and the *Abamarachi* world view appears to be pointing towards more successes than failures. One

may opine that if the church is committed to being “fully Christian and fully African” inculturation is the answer (Magesa Laurenti, 2013:186). The guiding principle for inculturation is partnership, meaning that, Christians and traditionalists adhere to the demands of culture while at the same time maintaining their stand with regard to the Gospel.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings that were analyzed in chapter four. It also provides conclusions and recommendations based on the findings. Also outlined are suggestions for further research. The purpose of this study was to investigate inculturation within Christianity with regard to cock rituals and cultural values among the *Abamarachi* of Busia County.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This section summarizes the findings with respect to the study objectives. According to the background information of the respondents, majority of them were male. They constituted 66% of the respondents. Moreover, 58% of them were between 51-60 years of age. The findings also showed that most respondents had some academic qualification which indicates that they were literate hence the ability to interpret questions well and give accurate answers. With respect to this, 37% and 39% had primary and secondary qualifications respectively. 14 percent of the respondents had attained university qualifications. Married respondents also consisted of the majority (51%). For Christian respondents, 46% of them had served in the church long enough that is for a period of

between 11-20 years. It was therefore assumed that they were familiar with the Vatican Council. Similarly, 49% of the respondents had lived in Marachi for a long time (over 20 years).

In reference to the first objective which sought to identify areas of integration of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic doctrines, it was established that 85% of Christian respondents participated in *Abamarachi* cock rituals due to their strong attachment to their cultural beliefs. On the other hand, 93% of the respondents indicated that prayers were conducted where cock rituals were involved. With regard to naming rituals, 54% of the respondents stated that both cock rituals and prayers were held, though separately. In reference to assessing how burial and funeral rites were conducted, 48% of the respondents said both prayers and cock rituals were conducted on separate occasions. It was further established that 28% of Christian respondents sought help from church leaders when they fell sick. On the other hand, 30% of traditionalists sought help from traditional healers. During circumcision and marriage ceremonies, 65% of the respondents said both church leaders and *Abamarachi* elders were present though they presided over the ceremony separately. The findings based on this objective indicate that integrating Christian teachings and practices in the cock rituals of the *Abamarachi* can take place in Marachi which makes inculturation an achievable endeavor.

The aim of the second objective was to examine the relationship between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices involving the cock rituals and Christian teachings. Here, 49% of the respondents indicated that cock rituals were performed for both traditional and religious cases. The findings further indicate that 84% of the respondents also acknowledged the fact that much importance is attached to cock rituals. Similarly, 45% of the Christian respondents said the church did not find any fault in cock rituals. The views of Christian respondents did not vary much because 55% of the respondents said that the church found

fault in cock rituals. This was probably because of the Eurocentric way in which Christianity was introduced among the Marachi, especially where much of African beliefs and customs were regarded as barbaric and primitive or “unchristian”. With regard to reconciliation in the Christian and traditional contexts, 36% of Christian respondents said that they preferred verbal apology to cock rituals as a sign of reconciliation. On the contrary, 26% of traditionalists had a preference for both cock rituals and verbal apology. Also, 67% of the respondents felt that *Abamarachi* and Christian practices were totally different. At the same time, 15% of Christian respondents felt *Abamarachi* cultural practices were not relevant while 43% of traditionalist respondents said that all *Abamarachi* practices were relevant. There seems to be a distant relationship between *Abamarachi* cultural practices involving the cock and Christian teachings in terms of perception. However, in real life experience, there seems to be a close relationship based on the fact that both Christians and traditionalists believe in God. Both Catholic Christians and *Abamarachi* traditionalists seem to appreciate the beliefs and practices of their counterparts. From this summary, one may opine that the positive attitude that traditionalists have towards Christianity and Christians towards the *Abamarachi* traditions is a positive indication of the achievability of inculturation.

The third and final objective was to establish a positive approach of evangelization through inculturation of the *Abamarachi* cock rituals. As indicated by 66% of the respondents, English, Kiswahili and the *Luhya* dialect were all used in conducting mass. Another 74% of the respondents further indicated that traditional dancing, songs as well as using cocks as offerings was allowed. A high percentage (97%) of the respondents indicated that cock rituals were acceptable in church. Moreover, 60% of traditionalists further participated in Christian religious practices such as baptism, and Christian wedding ceremonies. The extent to which the Catholic Church has incorporated *Abamarachi*

traditions to Christian practices allows for inculturation to fully take effect. This is because the church has transformed its approach to people's cultural heritages guided by the insight given from papal authority. There is a synergy between Vatican pronouncement and Marachi church leadership. For example, the church leadership in Marachi does not appear to tolerate the use of the local brew (*amalwa ko lutseshe*) in certain Christian/church ceremonies in burial procedures.

5.3 Conclusion

Considering the objectives of this study it is concluded that:

- (i) Cock rituals provide areas which can be integrated into the Catholic Church, for example, in aspects of marriage, reconciliation and worship.
- (ii) There exists a relationship between cock rituals and Christian teachings. The blood of the cock involved in the reconciliation ritual is related to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, which reconciles humanity with God.
- (iii) A positive approach of evangelization through inculturation of cock rituals is possible when rituals connected with marriage, naming, reconciliation and worship are enhanced.
- (iv) The theoretical framework used in this study is about religious practices and beliefs acting as unifying factors for a people. Cock rituals fulfill this framework since they bring people together.

In addition to these conclusions the following models are proposed:

Model One: Marriage Rituals

During preparations for a Christian wedding in the Catholic Church, one of the requirements the prospective couple is expected to fulfil is to have clearance from the parents of both the groom and the bride, who give the candidates consent to proceed with

the wedding arrangements. Indeed, the presiding priest will always demand to know if the duo has been given the consent from the parents. A key factor on which such consent is anchored is the payment of dowry. With regard to the information given in Chapter Three of this study, a model is hereby proposed which will enhance inculturation of dowry into Christianity.

It is suggested that the church organizes for a representative of the church to be present as a witness at the bride's home on the first day of dowry payment. On this occasion, the first bull is presented for dowry. The dowry is an affirmation that the bride is genuinely being sort and being give away. A new bond is being established between the bride's and the groom's family. So both Christians and traditionalists should pray together on this occasion to solemnize the event. The Christian prayer will seek God's blessings through the name of Jesus. On the other hand, traditionalists will seek God's (*Were*) blessings through the ancestral spirits.

At the groom's home where a cock ritual is performed, let a representative of the church share the cock meal with the groom's family. The blood of the cock that spills in the home of the groom is traditionally believed to bind the bride to the ancestral spirits of the groom. In contemporary setting, the blood of the cock may be interpreted as the binding blood of Jusus between the bride and the groom and their respective families. When the Christians and the traditionalists pray as it was done at the bride's home, the cock ritual will further enhance the actualization of the dowry. The presence of the church at both functions will be a clear confirmation of parental consent. Finally, on the wedding day, two traditionalists, one representing the bride's family and the other one representing the groom's family, should be involved to offer prayers during the Holy Mass. At the same time, selected Christians should be invited to offer their prayers. When this approach is

implemented, the African image of marriage will be reflected in the Christian church. This approach will satisfy both the traditionalists and the Christians.

Model Two: Naming Rituals

In the traditional setting, the *Abamarachi* give an ancestral name to a new born. Such a name is derived from an ancestor of good repute that is one who lived a respectable life. The insights drawn from the decree of the Vatican Council II illustrates, thus

“So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.”

This compares favourably with the Christian choice of names of saints. A cock is identified for the naming ritual as discussed in Chapter Three. Assuming a child is named after an ancestor called Otiko, and at baptism in the Christian church she is called Lucy, she carries both names: Lucy Otiko.

Normally, during the Christian baptism a god-mother or god-father depending on the sex of the child, is present to witness the function. In the case of Lucy Otiko a god-mother, one baptized in the church is made available. It is suggested that a woman representing the traditionalists be available at the ceremony. Then the presiding priest emphasizes by mentioning that the candidate is henceforth called Lucy Otiko.

On the day of eating the cock of Lucy Otiko at the family residence, both Christians and traditionalists should be represented. On this occasion a cock is slaughtered by the eldest member of the family who invokes the ancestral spirit of Otiko for blessings of the child. During the meal the family eats the cock with the child Otiko as a participant, whereby a piece of the cock is symbolically given to the child. The occasion can be climaxed with songs and dance, invoking the names of Saint Lucy and ancestor Otiko. The traditionalists can sing a chorus such as: *Mwana wa mberi bayaye, Mwana wa mberi ne shikhoyero* (translated as: first born child indeed, first born child is admirable). The Christians, on the other hand, can sing a chorus such as: May the spirit of the Lord from heaven come down, may the spirit of the Lord come down.

The merger of the traditional and Christian approach in the naming practices will endear both the traditionalists and the Christians towards the same platform. When models such as these are put in place, inculturation of the *Abamarachi* traditions into Christianity will become more relevant.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings indicated that cock rituals exist. It is recommended that these rituals be integrated into the church. For example, both the *Abamarachi* culture and the church recognize the importance of a stable and permanent marriage union. So since cock rituals in marriage are meant to cement the relationship they should be made mandatory by the church.

It was established that a relationship exists between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices and the Catholic Church teachings. Both encourage reconciliation among people who have fallen apart. So, for example, a cock ritual should be incorporated into a function where prayers of forgiveness are being conducted to reconcile individuals in conflict.

Since cock rituals are used to promote the lives of the people just as evangelization aims to do the same, they should be incorporated into the church to enhance evangelization. This is in line with the Vatican policy contained in the document *Nostra Aetate* (see appendix). The document recommends that the church should use relevant cultural practices of those being evangelized to promote evangelization.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

This study was concerned with inculturation of Abamarachi cock rituals into the Catholic Church. The subject of rituals is very wide and it cuts across a large section of any given community. There remains substantial ground to be explored. The researcher therefore makes the following recommendations for further research:

1. That more African scholars and students of religion venture into studying and researching more on rituals with regard to non-Catholic Christians such as the Anglican Church of Kenya.
2. There should be other publications on topics relevant to rituals and how they are handled by the African independent churches.
3. Rituals are not a negative concept since in many areas they contribute towards the advancement of a society. Where the real challenge lies and should be an area for further research, is how to caution the rituals and the people involved in them from being viewed negatively. How to achieve this is still an area that needs further research.

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APPENDICES

APPEDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Moi University
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
P.O Box 3900-30100,
ELDORET
Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH IN RELIGION FOR MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

I am a student at Moi University doing a research on ‘Inculturation of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic Church in Busia County, Kenya.’ This is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of philosophy in religion.

The study aims at identifying potential areas for integration of Christian teachings and practices with the rituals of the *Abamarachi*. It also seeks to identify the relationship between the *Abamarachi* cultural practices and Christian teachings as well as to establish a positive approach of evangelization through inculturation of the *Abamarachi* culture.

I kindly request you to spare some of your time and answer the following questions truthfully. Your answers will be treated with great confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Your assistance towards the success of this study will be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

JOSEPH MULAA

**APPENDIX II: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CATHOLIC CHURCH
FAITHFULS**

The purpose of this study is to examine inculturation of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic Church in Busia County, Kenya. Instructions for completion:

- i. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- ii. Please answer the questions as objectively and honestly as possible.
- iii. Mark the spaces provided after each question to reflect your answers.

SECTION A: Background Information

1. Gender: Male [] Female []
2. Age: 20 – 40 [] 41– 60 [] Over 60 years []
3. Marital status: Single [] Married [] Divorced/Separated [] widowed []
4. Level of education: None [] Primary [] Secondary [] University/College []
5. How long have you lived in Marachi?
 Less than 5 years [] 5 – 10 [] 11– 20 years [] Over 20 years []
6. How long have you been a member of your church?
 Less than 5 years [] 5-10 years [] More than 10 years []
7. What position do you hold in the church?
 Lay Person [] Catechist [] Priest []

SECTION B: To Identify Areas for Integration of Abamarachi Cock Rituals into the Catholic Doctrines.

8. Have you ever participated in the *Abamarachi* cock rituals?

Yes [] No []

9. Are prayers conducted where cock rituals are involved?

Yes [] No []

10. What happens during the naming of a child?

Cock rituals are performed []

Prayers are conducted for the new-born []

Both cock rituals and prayers are carried out []

11. Which name do you attribute your identity to?

The African name [] The Christian/Western name []

12. How are burial and funeral rites conducted?

Cock rituals are performed for the dead []

Prayers are conducted for the dead []

Both cock rituals and prayers are carried out []

13. Besides consulting a doctor, what happens when you fall sick?

I seek the help of traditional healers []

Church leaders pray for me []

All of the above []

14. Who presides over activities such as payment of dowry, marriage celebrations and circumcision?

Abamarachi elders only []

Church leaders only []

Both *Abamarachi* elders and church leaders []

SECTION C: To examine the Relationship between the Abamarachi Cultural Practices Involving the Cock and Christian Teachings

15. For what causes are cock rituals performed?

Traditional causes []

Religious causes []

Both traditional and religious causes []

16. What cultural importance is attached to cock rituals?

No importance [] Little importance [] Much important []

17. Does the church find any fault in the use of the cock as a ritual during cultural events such as funerals, marriage celebrations and circumcision?

Yes [] No []

18. Which of the following do you value as a sign of reconciliation?

Verbal apology [] Performing a cock ritual [] Both []

19. How do you perceive Christianity and the *Abamarachi* culture?

They are the same []

They are related []

They are totally different []

20. What is your view regarding *Abamarachi* cultural practices such as circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance and payment of dowry?

All are outdated [] All are relevant [] Only few are still relevant []

SECTION D: To Establish a Positive Approach of Evangelization through Inculturation of the Abamarachi Cock Rituals.

21. Which language is used to conduct mass in church

English []

Luhya dialect/Kiswahili []

All of the above []

22. Is traditional dancing allowed in church?

Yes [] No []

23. Are cocks offered as offerings in church?

Yes [] No []

24. Any other relevant information _____

Thanks for Cooperating

**APPENDIX III: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ABAMARACHI
TRADITIONALISTS**

The purpose of this study is to examine inculturation of *Abamarachi* cock rituals into the Catholic Church in Busia County, Kenya. Instructions for completion:

- i. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
- ii. Please answer the questions as objectively and honestly as possible.
- iii. Mark the spaces provided after each question to reflect your answers.

SECTION A: Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: 20 – 40 41– 60 Over 60 years
3. Marital status: Single Married Divorced/Separated Widowed
4. Level of education: None Primary Secondary University/College
5. How long have you lived in Marachi?
Less than 5 years 5 – 10 11 – 20 years Over 20 years
6. What position do you hold in the community?
Chief Assistant chief Healer (Herbalist, midwife)
Rainmaker Elder Circumciser

SECTION B: To Identify Potential Areas for Integration of Abamarachi Cock Rituals into the Catholic Doctrines.

7. Are prayers conducted where cock rituals are involved?

Yes [] No []

8. What happens during the naming of a child?

Cock rituals are performed []

Prayers are conducted for the new-born []

Both cock rituals and prayers are carried out []

9. Which name do you attribute your identity to?

The African name [] The Christian name []

10. How are burial and funeral rites conducted?

Cock rituals are performed for the dead []

Prayers are conducted for the dead []

Both cock rituals and prayers are carried out []

11. Besides consulting a doctor, what happens when you fall sick?

I seek the help of traditional healers []

Church leaders pray for me []

All of the above []

12. Who presides over activities such as payment of dowry, marriage celebrations and circumcision?

Abamarachi elders only []

Church leaders only []

Both *Abamarachi* elders and church leaders []

SECTION C: To examine the Relationship between the Abamarachi Cultural Practices Involving the Cock Rituals and Christian Teachings

13. For what causes are cock rituals performed?

Traditional causes []

Religious causes []

Both traditional and religious causes []

14. Importance is attached to cock rituals?

No importance [] Little importance [] Much important []

15. Which of the following do you value as a sign of reconciliation?

Verbal apology []

Performing a cock ritual []

Both []

16. How do you perceive Christianity and the *Abamarachi* culture?

They are the same []

They are related []

They are totally different []

17. What is your view regarding *Abamarachi* cultural practices such as circumcision, polygamy, wife inheritance and payment of dowry?

All are outdated [] All are relevant [] Only few are still relevant []

SECTION D: To Establish a Positive Approach of Evangelization through Inculturation of the Abamarachi Cock Rituals.

18. Which language is used to conduct mass in church

English []

Luhya dialect/Kiswahili []

All of the above []

19. Is traditional dancing allowed in church?

Yes [] No []

20. Are cocks offered as offerings in church?

Yes [] No []

21. Do you engage in Christian religious practices such as baptism, partaking of the Holy Eucharist and attending Mass?

Yes [] No []

22. Any other relevant information _____

Thanks for Cooperating

APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CATHOLIC CHURCH FAITHFULS

1. What relationship do you see between Christianity and the *Abamarachi* cock rituals and cultural values?
2. Do you support *Abamarachi* traditional rituals to continue or be discontinued?
3. What do you think is the significance of rituals in the Christian contemporary society?
4. What are the guiding principles for inculturation?

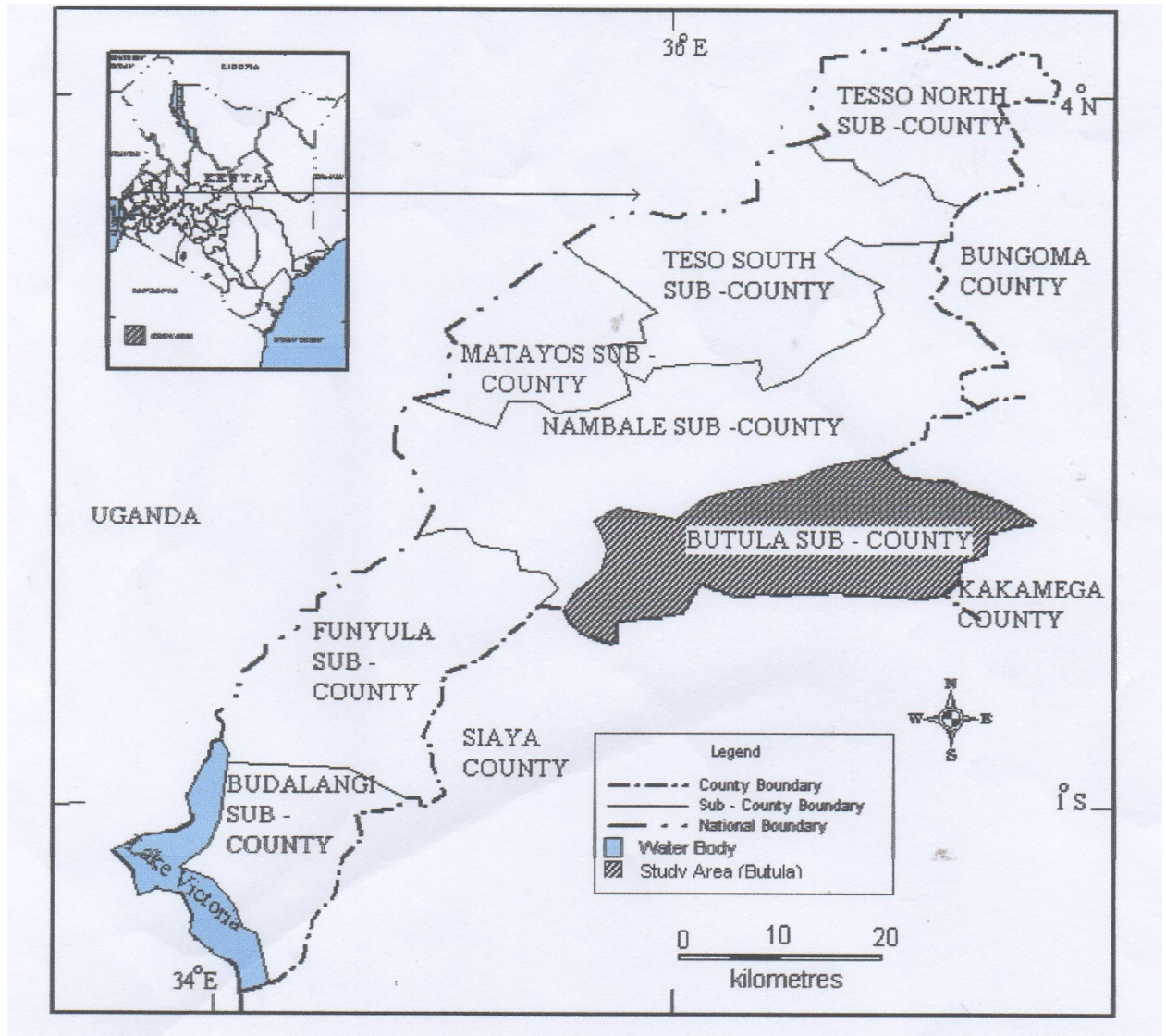
5. What are some of the existing challenges of inculturation?
6. If *Abamarachi* traditions were to be done away with completely, do you think Christianity would transform and experience major reforms?
7. To what extent does Christianity help to unite the *Abamarachi* as compared to cock rituals and cultural values?
8. How has papal pronouncement on inculturation been given life by the Catholic Church?
9. Any other relevant information?

**APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ABAMARACHI
TRADITIONALISTS**

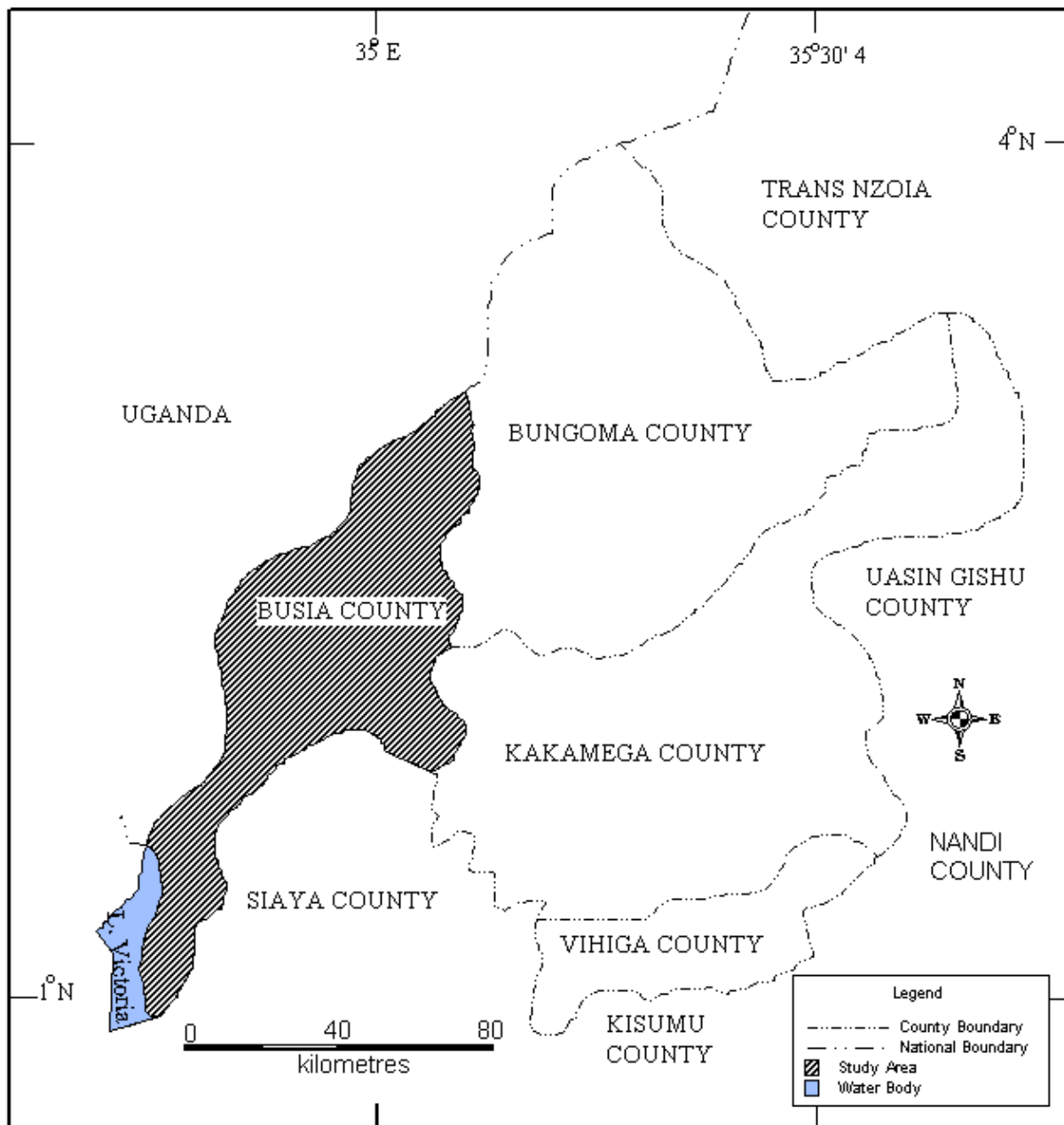
1. What cultural activities demand the performance of cock rituals?
2. Do you support cock rituals to continue or to be discontinued?
3. Why is it that *Abamarachi* cock rituals and cultural values continue to persist despite the fact that Christianity has been embraced by many people?
4. To what extent has the western culture played a role in the diminishing of *Abamarachi* traditions?
5. Do you think *Abamarachi* traditions and Christian practices can accommodate each other through inculturation?

6. When did inculturation start?
7. What are the guiding principles for inculturation?
8. What are some of the existing challenges of inculturation?
9. Any other relevant information?

APPENDIX VI: MAP OF BUSIA COUNTY



Map of Busia County Showing Butula Sub County as the study area



Map of Western Kenya showing Busia County as the study area

**APPENDIX VII: PICTURES SHOWING DIFFERENT SCENARIOS WHEN THE
COCK IS USED**

A groom's party is given a cock after payment of the initial dowry



Picture taken on December 9, 2008

A meal of a cock eaten with '*obusuma*' is an integral part of a ritual in dowry arrangement



Picture taken on December 22, 2008

**APPENDIX VIII: DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO
NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS: VATICAN II, NOSTRA AETATE, 28
OCTOBER, 1965**

1. In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions. Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.

All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1: Acts 14:17: Rom. 2:6 7: I Tim. 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God. and in whose splendor all peoples will walk(cf. Apoc 21:23 ff.).

Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of men are the same today as in the ages past. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?

2. Throughout history even to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life. At times there is present even a recognition of a supreme being or still more of a Father. This awareness and recognition results in a way of life that is imbued with a deep religious sense. The religions which are found in more advanced civilizations endeavor by way of well-defined concepts and exact language to answer these questions. Thus in Hinduism men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which men can with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 1:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.

The Church therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to

their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians also their social life and culture.

3. The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,¹ who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the bidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they worship Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

4. Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the Church, this sacred Council remembers the spiritual ties which link the people of the New Covenant to the stock of Abraham.

The Church of Christ acknowledges that in God's plan of salvation the beginning of her faith and election is to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all Christ's faithful, who as men of faith are sons of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:7), are included in the same patriarch's call and that the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people from the land of bondage. On this account the Church cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament by

way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws nourishment from that good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). The Church believes that Christ who is our peace has through his cross reconciled Jews and Gentiles and made them one in himself (cf. Eph. 2:14-16).

Likewise, the Church keeps ever before her mind the words of the apostle Paul about his kinsmen: "they are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom. 9:4-5), the son of the virgin Mary. She is mindful, moreover, that the apostles, the pillars on which the Church stands, are of Jewish descent, as are many of those early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's moment when it came (cf. Lk. 19:42) Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel; on the contrary, many opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God for the sake of the patriarchs since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.² Together with the prophets and that same apostle, the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9 cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32)

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. John 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from Holy Scripture. Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the Word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.

Indeed the Church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, her common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, she deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews.

The Church always held and continues to hold that Christ out of infinite love freely underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation. It is the duty of the Church, therefore, in her preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's universal love and the source of all grace.

5. We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says "he who does not love does not know God" (I Jn. 4:8).

There is no basis therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it.

Therefore, the Church reproveth, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion. Accordingly, following the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the sacred Council earnestly begs the Christian faithful to "conduct themselves well among the Gentiles" (I Pet. 2:12) and if possible, as far as depends on them, to be at peace with all men (cf. Rom 12:18) and in that way to be true sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:45).