

**THE EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON TRADITIONAL MARAKWET
FUNERAL RITES, ELGEYO-MARAKWET COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior permission of the author and/or Moi University.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother Salome Kobilu, my husband Kibet, mother Monicah, mother in-law Eunice and to my children: Jerotich, Jepchirchir, Jerono, Kipkoech and Kiplimo.

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ABSTRACT

Christian missionaries arrived in Marakwet land and introduced new funeral rituals different from the existing rituals. Western missionaries had negative perception of the Marakwet cultural rituals they termed them as backward and barbaric and viewed their culture as being superior. Thus, the bearers of the Christian message saw themselves as having the role of civilizing the Marakwet. This study was carried out in Marakwet West Sub-county, Moiben/Kuserwo Sub-location in Yemit and Jemunada Locations. The research was propelled by the persistent problems faced by Marakwet Christian in their attempt to be Christian and Marakwet at the same time. The study sought to establish the impact of western Christianity on Marakwet funeral rites. The objectives of the study were: to describe traditional Marakwet funeral rites before the arrival of western Christianity, the impact of western Christianity on Marakwet funeral rites and explores how the two cultures can mutually enrich each other. The study was guided by the cultural theory advocated by E. Barnnet, who points out that innovation of ideas due to invention or discoveries brings change in any society, that change is seen when ideas are shared either through dissemination or diffusion, and that the same ideas are prone to integration. Descriptive research design was used in this qualitative research and purposive sampling was used at two levels: first to identify African Inland church (A.I.C) first established in the area and to identify church elders and converted traditional religious specialists who are members of A.I.C. Other informants were identified through the church pastors of the identified church using snowballing. Tools of data collection included interviews, observation and focus group discussions. Data was analyzed qualitatively. This involved translating data collected from Marakwet language to English. Data was later compiled according to the objectives of the research. The findings revealed that western Christianity, coupled with other factors like westernization, has played a major role in the changes that funeral rites in the area have undergone. The changes include the abandonment of some rituals. The interaction between Christian funeral rituals and Marakwet funeral rituals led to abandonment of some rituals perceived to be against Christian teachings. Examples of these rituals are those performed to expel death from the society and those carried out with the belief that it would bring rain. However other rituals have been incorporated into Christianity. These include; cleansing the belongings of a departed Christian, cleansing the bereaved, night vigil, cleansing the corpse, burial in ancestral land and cleansing a murderer. The research recommends incorporation of Marakwet death rituals into Christian rituals and vice versa for the mutual benefit of the two cultures. This would be of particular benefit to the Marakwet Christians as they seek to be Marakwet Christians and as they seek answers and solutions to some pertinent problems that arise out of their encounter with death.

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