

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PERSPECTIVE OF IDUMI RITUAL AMONG
THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY**

BY

BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE

**A Research Thesis Submitted to the School of Arts and Social Sciences,
Department of Philosophy, Religion and Theology in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Religion**

Moi University

2025

DECLARATION

Declaration by the Student

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any University for examination.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Bonface Wanjala Ifire

PHD/REL/5376/21.

Declaration by Supervisor

This thesis has been presented for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dr. Simon Omare

Department of Philosophy, Religion and Theology, Moi University.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dr. Stephen Njure

Department of Philosophy, Religion and Theology, Moi University.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research Work to Entire Tiriki Community and All Christian
Evangelizers in Hamisi Sub – County.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my supervisors; Dr. Simon Omare and Dr. Stephen Njure who guided me into writing this doctoral thesis. I am also indebted to the academic staff of Moi University in the Department of Philosophy, Religion and Theology for their effort and guidance during my academic pursuit. I cannot forget to sincerely thank Prof. Koech, Prof. Kamara, Prof. Ndzovu, Prof. Choge, Dr. Omare and Dr. Rono for taking me through the postgraduate courses. I thank my classmates, Mr. Mohammad Ndaro, Fr. Austin Juma and Pastor Raphael Kimuge for the open sharing we had during the 2022/2023 academic year. I appreciate the role played by all the respondents and participants for their openness and willingness to share information. I am grateful to the research assistants who were involved in the process of collecting data to answer the research question through interviews and focus group discussions. I feel indebted to Rt. Rev. Joseph Obanyi, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega for giving me an opportunity for educational pursuit at Moi University. I owe him gratitude for his moral and financial support towards my education. May the Almighty God bless all who have contributed in one way or another in writing this thesis.

ABSTRACT

The conflict between religion and culture is a common global phenomenon in the world taking different forms such as spiritual, cultural, doctrinal and practical. Therefore, despite the wide spread of Catholicism in Western Kenya, some anti – Christian male circumcision rituals have persisted in some of the Luhya subethnic communities. An example of such ritual is *idumi* that is practiced by the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County. The purpose of this study was to explain the Catholic Church’s perspective of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki people in Hamisi Sub – County. Specifically, this study had the following specific objectives; to examine the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision ritual; to investigate the Catholic Church’s perception of *idumi* rituals and to explore the Catholic Church’s response to the socio-religious and cultural aspects of *idumi* circumcision rituals as a foundation of evangelization. The study was guided by Stuart Hall’s Cultural Identity Theory to explain the persistence of *idumi* circumcision rituals. It adopted phenomenological design with cultural constructivism as a philosophical paradigm. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Purposive sampling was used to select twenty – six (26) respondents who included; priests, lay persons, Tiriki elders, initiation chiefs, initiates, school teachers, catechists, sub – chiefs, ritual leaders and counselors. Data was collected using survey method through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Twelve (12) Key informants were selected for interviews and fourteen (14) respondents for focus group discussions. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic method and presented in narrative form. The study revealed that, the Catholic Church has influenced the traditional *idumi* ritual. The study also ascertained that, there has been an effort of the Catholic Church to understand *idumi* by singling out the contested rituals that are incompatible with Christianity. The study also revealed that, there is cultural, social-political, moral and religious significance of *idumi* that explains its persistence. The study further established that, there has been an effort by the Catholic Church to respond to the socio – cultural aspects of *idumi* by identifying the agreeable aspects that can be compatible with the Catholic teachings. The study recommended that, for successful evangelization, Catholic agents of evangelization, must understand the significance of *idumi* for effective evangelization of the people. The contribution of this research is the awareness that, although there is a conflict between the Church and culture, both can still coexist if ecumenical and interreligious approaches are adopted to ease the tension. In relation to the persistence of *idumi*, the research indicates that, the traditional way of induction of the young people is more convincing than the Christian message making people to leave the churches during *idumi* season. Therefore, the Church must wake up and adopt proper methods of catechesis. In conclusion, there are many socio – cultural aspects of *idumi* that are in agreement with the teachings of the church. However, the church has not taken enough initiative to convince the Tiriki on the contested aspects and their harmful effects to the community. On the other hand, the community has also been reluctant to let go some of these harmful aspect by not being open to dialogue, therefore, making it hard for inculturation to take place so as to bring about proper and effective evangelization in the region.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS	xiii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xvii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	9
1.4 General Objective	10
1.5 Specific Objectives	10
1.6 Research Questions	11
1.7 Scope of the Study	11
1.8 Limitations of the Study.....	11
1.9 Justification of the Study	12
1.10 Significance of the Study	12
1.11 Literature Review.....	13
1.11.1 The Moral and Normative Foundation of Circumcision Ritual	13
1.11.2 Christian Perception on Circumcision Rituals	17
1.11.3 The Church's Response to Socio – Religious and Cultural aspects of Circumcision Rituals in Africa	23
1.12 Theoretical Framework.....	29
1.13 Research Methodology	31
1.13.1 Research Design.....	32
1.13.2 Philosophical Paradigm.....	32
1.13.3 Area of Study	33
1.13.4 Target Population	34
1.13.5 Sources of Data	34
1.13.6 Sampling Procedures.....	35

1.13.7 Methods of Data Collection	35
1.13.7.1 In – Depth Interviews (IDIs)	35
1.13.7.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	36
1.13.8 Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments	37
1.13.9 Data Analysis	38
1.13.10 Data Presentation.....	38
1.13.11 Ethical Considerations.....	39
CHAPTER TWO	40
THE GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS	
SETTING OF THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI-SUB COUNTY	40
2.1 Introduction.....	40
2.2 Location of Hamisi Sub-County	40
2.3 Historical Background of the Tiriki People	40
2.4 Social Structure of the Tiriki People.....	43
2.5 Religious Life of the Tiriki people.....	44
2.6 Tiriki – Encounter with Christianity	45
2.7 Summary	50
CHAPTER THREE	52
THE MORAL AND NORMATIVE FOUNDATION OF <i>IDUMI</i> RITUAL	
AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY.	52
3.1 Introduction.....	52
3.2 <i>Idumi</i> Ritual	52
3.3 Myths of Circumcision Origin among Luhya Sub Tribes	53
3.4 Nandi-Terik Influence.....	55
3.5 Tiriki Wordview on <i>Idumi</i>	56
3.6 Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	60
3.7 Organization of the <i>Idumi</i>	64
3.8 The Stages of <i>Idumi</i>	68
3.8.1 Preparatory Stage	68
3.8.2 The Actual Circumcision	73
3.8.3 Seclusion Stage	75
3.8.4 Integration Stage	79
3.9 Taboos and Customs	82
3.10 Factors Determining <i>Idumi</i> Circumcision Season	84

3.11 Morality of Tiriki Circumcisers	86
3.12 Morality of the Counselor	87
3.13 <i>Idumi</i> and the Sacred Groves	88
3.14 Public Dancing of the Initiates.....	92
3.15 The Moral and Normative Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	95
3.15.1 Cultural Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	95
3.15.1.1 Tribal Identity	95
3.15.1.2 Tribal Unity	96
3.15.1.3 Cultural – Moral Preservation	97
3.15.1.4 Sense of Maturation.....	100
3.15.1.5 Personal Identity	101
3.15.1.6 Identity of Women and Children	104
3.15.1.7 Identity of Strangers	105
3.15.2 Moral Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	106
3.15.2.1 <i>Idumi</i> as School of Morality	106
3.15.2.2 Source of Moral Responsibility.....	108
3.15.2.3 <i>Idumi</i> as a Source of Moral Values	109
3.15.2.4 <i>Idumi</i> and Marriage	114
3.15.3 Social Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	115
3.15.3.1 <i>Idumi</i> as a Communal Entity	115
3.15.3.2 Age – Group and Social Interactions.....	117
3.15.3.3 Source of Social Responsibilities	119
3.15.4 Socio - Political Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	120
3.15.4.1 Administrative Structure.....	120
3.15.4.2 Political Leadership	121
3.15.5 Religious Foundation of <i>Idumi</i>	122
3.15.6 <i>Idumi</i> and Ubuntuism	123
3.16 Summary	126
CHAPTER FOUR.....	128
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH’S PERSPECTIVE ON IDUMI RITUAL	
AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY.	128
4.1 Introduction.....	128
4.2 Religious Foundations of Circumcision Ritual.....	128
4.2.1 Circumcision among Jews and Muslims	128

4.2.2 The Catholic Church's Perspective	129
4.2.2.1 The Biblical Perspective	130
4.2.2.2 The Catholic Perspective	132
4.3 Missionaries' Attitude towards African Cultures	134
4.4 The Tiriki Response to Christianity	137
4.4.1 Negative Tiriki – Christian Reaction	138
4.4.2 Positive Tiriki – Christian Reaction	140
4.5 The Effect of Christianity on Idumi	142
4.5.1 Tiriki – Traditional Ritual	143
4.5.2 Tiriki – Christian Ritual	144
4.5.3 Differences in Traditional and Tiriki - Christian Ritual.....	145
4.6 Catholic Contested Aspects of <i>Idumi</i> Ritual.....	149
4.6.1 Physical and Medical Dangers	150
4.6.2 Social Aspects	151
4.6.2.1 Disruption of the Learning in Schools.....	151
4.6.2.2 Prolonged Period of Seclusion	154
4.6.2.3 Discrimination against Women, Children and Strangers	155
4.6.2.4 Stigmatization of people	157
4.6.2.5 Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs	157
4.6.3 The Moral Aspects of Idumi Ritual	160
4.6.3.1 Indiscipline of Boys after Initiation.....	160
4.6.3.2 Sexual Immoralities	161
4.6.3.3 Unwanted Pregnancies	163
4.6.3.4 Early Marriages	163
4.6.3.5 School Dropout.....	164
4.6.3.6 Destruction of Property and Use of Vulgar Language	166
4.6.3.7 Inter – Faction Violence	167
4.6.4 Economic Aspects	169
4.6.4.1 Tiriki – Traditional Ritual.....	169
4.6.4.2 Tiriki – Christian Ritual.....	171
4.6.4.3 Laziness and Idling Attitude.....	171
4.6.4.4 Over Spending	172
4.6.5 Cultural Aspects	173
4.6.5.1 Fear of Witchcraft and Sorcery	173

4.6.5.2 Taboos and Customs.....	174
4.6.6 Religious Aspects	175
4.6.6.1 Problem of Religious Syncretism	175
4.6.6.2 Role of Ritual Leaders and Shrines	176
4.6.6.3 Place of Sacred Groves	177
4.6.7 Pastoral Aspects	177
4.6.7.1 Anti – Christian Practices	178
4.6.7.2 Effects to Church’s Activities.....	179
4.6.7.3 Effects to the Christian Communities.....	180
4.7 Summary	181
CHAPTER FIVE	183
CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO SOCIO – RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF <i>IDUMI</i>	
RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY.....	183
5.1 Introduction.....	183
5.2 The Concept of Inculturation	183
5.3 Concept of Culture.....	190
5.4 Evangelization.....	191
5.5 Inculturation in the Catholic Church.....	192
5.6 Models of Inculturation.....	194
5.7 Necessity of Inculturation Today	197
5.8 Richard Niebuhr’s approach to Culture	203
5.8.1 Concept of Christ against Culture	203
5.8.2 Concept of Christ of Culture	205
5.8.3 Concept of Christ above Culture	206
5.8.4 Concept of Christ and Culture Paradox.....	207
5.8.5 Concept of Christ as Transformer of Culture.....	208
5.9 Agreeable Aspects of Idumi.....	208
5.9.1 Cultural and Christian Values	209
5.9.1.1 Idumi Cultural Values and Sacramental Convergency.....	209
5.9.1.2 Value of Peace	210
5.9.1.3 Value of Respect.....	211
5.9.1.4 Virtue of Purity of body and Mind	212
5.9.1.5 Source of Cultural and Christian Identity.....	213
5.9.1.6 Source of Socio – Moral Responsibility	214

5.9.1.7 Virtue of Chastity	215
5.9.2 Pastoral Aspects	215
5.9.2.1 Offering of Sacrifices and Prayers.....	215
5.9.2.2 Use of Cultural Elements in Liturgy.....	216
5.9.2.3 Veneration of Ancestors	217
5.9.2.4 Admission of Christians from other Churches to Catholicism.....	218
5.9.2.5 Community Masses	218
5.9.2.6 Christian and Tiriki Concept of Heaven.....	221
5.9.2.7 Causes of Evil and Good	221
5.9.2.8 The Role of Sorcerers and Magicians.....	222
5.9.2.9 Role of Sponsors – Counselors.....	223
5.9.2.10 Community Participation.....	227
5.9.2.11 Funeral Celebrations.....	228
5.9.3 <i>Idumi</i> and Sacrament of initiation	231
5.9.3.1 <i>Idumi</i> and Christian Baptism	231
5.9.3.2 <i>Idumi</i> and Holy Communion.....	233
5.9.3.3 <i>Idumi</i> and Christian Confirmation.....	234
5.9.3.4 <i>Idumi</i> and Christian Confession	235
5.9.4 <i>Idumi</i> and the structure of Catholic Church	236
5.9.5 Catholic perspective on moral issues	237
5.9.5.1 Dignity of the Human Person	237
5.9.5.2 Teaching on Alcohol	238
5.9.5.3 Teaching on Gender Equality	239
5.9.5.4 Teaching on Sanctity of Human Body	240
5.9.5.5 Teaching on Sanctity of Work.....	241
5.9.5.6 Teaching on Human Culture.....	241
5.10 Summary	242
CHAPTER SIX	243
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	243
6.1 Introduction.....	243
6.2 Summary of the Study	243
6.3 Summary of the Findings of the Study	244
6.4 Conclusion of the Study.....	245
6.5 Recommendations of the Study	248

6.6 Suggested Areas for Further Study	251
REFERENCES	252
APPENDICES	261
Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction	261
Appendix 2: Interview Guide	262
Appendix 3: Profile of the Informants	263
Appendix 4: Focus Group Guide	264
Appendix 5: Map of Kakamega Diocese	265
Appendix 6: Map of Kenya Showing the Location of Vihiga County.....	266
Appendix 7: Map of Hamisi Sub County.....	267
Appendix 8: University Recommendation Letter	268
Appendix 9: Nacosti Research Authorization Letter	269
Appendix 10: Authorization Letter from the County Commissioner	270
Appendix 11: Authorization Letter from County Director of Education.....	271
Appendix 12: Picture of the Original Tiriki Initiates	272
Appendix 13: Picture of Initiates during Graduation	273
Appendix 14: Picture of Sacred Grove	274
Appendix 15: Plagiarism Test Certificate from Moi University.....	275

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Acculturation:	The cultural change and adptations that occur when different groups come in contact with one another.
Anti – Christian:	Anything that is contrary to the Christian teachings or gospel message. Something opposed or hostile towards Christianity.
Bukhulu:	Performing the elders or ancestors dance by the initiates.
Catechism:	A manual of religious instruction using simple language and a question and answer format.
Catechist:	Someone commissioned by the church to hand down its faith tradition.
Catechumen:	A person undoing catechism.
Catechumenate:	A second period in the process of Christian initiation after the initial period of inquiry about faith when catechumens publicly state their intention before the church to enter into the process of instruction and formation to become a catholic Christian.
Catholic Church:	A visible society of the baptized Christians professing the same faith under the authourity of the invisible head (Christ) and the authority of the visible head (the pope and the bishops in communion with him).
Catholic Perspective:	The outlook, point of view of things (idumi) according to the Catholic Church.

Catholicism:	A branch of Christian religion that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is the traditions and beliefs of the Catholic Church.
Christian:	A follower of Jesus Christ.
Christianity:	An organization that affirms the Lordship of Jesus Christ as son of God. It is a world religion that stems from the life, teachings and death of Jesus Christ.
Church:	The body of Christ / all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation.
Circumcision as a process:	Involves several stages like a period of seclusion, followed with instruction to the initiates, real physical impression, and integration.
Circumcision:	The surgical procedure of cutting of the foreskin of a boy's male organ.
Counselor/Guardian:	One who takes care of the initiates in seclusion.
Culture:	A way of life which includes the general customs of the people at a particular time.
Enculturation:	The process of learning the culture and value of the society group.
Evangelization:	It involves the preaching of the gospel aimed at converting people to Christianity.

Idumi rituals:	The established rites, proceedings, and ceremonies the boy goes through before graduating to adulthood.
Idumi season:	Entire period of circumcision.
Idumi:	Circumcision ritual of Terik origin or the whole cultural heritage/practice through which small boys graduate to adulthood through circumcision.
Incarnation:	To make Christ present in our historical existence.
Inculturation:	Adaptation of the Christian teachings and practices to culture.
Indigenization:	Localization and promotion of local church personnel and way of life.
Initiate:	One who is to be circumcised or has been circumcised.
Initiation chief:	A circumciser.
Lixula:	Age – Group.
Lumbaba:	Clan.
Lusambwa:	Ancestral shrine tree where supplications were done.
Lusomo:	Village.
Mavuno:	Harvest.
Maxula:	Age – Groups.
Msituni:	Forest or Sacred Grove.

Tiriki:	Tribe in Hamisi Sub – County and anybody who accepted the Terik Circumcision.
Vamasero:	Tiriki Traditionalists or those who put on animal skins after circumcision.
Vanusu:	Half – Tiriki or converted Tirikis to Christianity.
Zimbaba:	Clans.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC:	Africa Divine Church
AG:	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
AIC:	Africa Inland Church
AIDS:	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIM:	Africa Inland Mission
CCC:	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCM:	Consolata Catholic Mission
CMA:	Catholic Men Association
CMS:	Church Missionary Society
COG:	Church of God
CSM:	Church of Scotland Mission
CWA:	Catholic Women Association
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo
EN:	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
FAM:	Friends African Mission
FGDs:	Focus Group Discussions
GMS:	Gospel Mission Society
GS:	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
HIV:	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDI:	In – Depth Interview
KII:	Key Informant Interviews
KNBS:	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
LG:	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
MOE:	Ministry of Education

MHM:	Mill Hill Mission
MOH:	Ministry of Health
PAG:	Pentecostal Assemblies of God
PAOC:	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
SCC:	Small Christian Community
SA:	Salvation Army
SDA:	Seventh Day Adventists
STD:	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
U.M.C.A:	Universities' Mission to central Africa
UMM:	United Methodist Mission
UNAIDS:	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WHO:	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is an exploratory research that was conducted in Vihiga County among the Tiriki to unveil the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County, Kenya. This chapter presents the foundation of the study, by addressing the issues of conflicts between the Church and the cultures of the world, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and the purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, theoretical framework, literature review and lastly the research methodology.

1.2 Background of the Study

The conflict between religion and culture is a global phenomenon. There is also conflicts between different religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hindu and African traditional Religion. According to Uchenna (2008), he states that, whenever two or three cultures meet, there is a potential conflict. These conflicts can take different forms such as spiritual, cultural, doctrinal and practical.

While acknowledging the fact that, there conflict existing between religious groups and the secular authorities, there is also conflicts among the religious groups themselves (McClean, 2015). He talks of conflicts between the Catholic Church, Protestants and Orthodox. Among the Islamic groups we find conflict s between Shi'a and Sunni not forgetting that of Hindu, Muslim and Christianity. All these are conflicts that interfere with the peaceful coexistence among the community members. Therefore, the issues of conflicts are really in the contemporary world.

Globally in India, there has been an increasing conflicts between Hindu Nationalist Group and the Muslim community which led to the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 allegedly supported by the Hindu Organizations such as; Shiv Sena Party, Bharatiya Janata Party and the Hindu Parishad (Mclean, 2015). In addition to this, there is also the conflicts between the Hindu groups and the Christians referred to as “communal violence.” This is quite important to bring out the level of the religious conflicts happening around the world.

Another religious conflict that can be mentioned is about the Godhra train fire in India again where 59 Hindu pilgrims coming back from the disputed site of the Babri Mosque in a train fire perished in a train station in Gujarat and the subsequent Gujarat riots of 2002 where it is estimated that over a thousand Muslims were killed. This is violence and conflicts founded on different religions and beliefs (Mclean, 2015). Even the student’s Islamic Movement in India is believed by many to be responsible for the 11th July 2006 Mumbai train bombings in which nearly 200 people were killed (Mclean, 2015).

In Africa, Christianity have had conflicts with culture and more specifically with the African Tradition Religions which was the primary religion before the advent of Christianity. The early missionaries had to fight the traditional cultural beliefs of people in order to their civilized religion in the hearts of people. This was not an easy task to be carried out without serious confrontations from either side. Uchenna (2008) says that, even in regions where Christianity picked up, African traditional Religion continued to influencing the community at large. For instance in Nigeria, which is the most populous country in Africa, Muslims constitute about 90% and Christians 40% of the population and the remaining population belong to one form of African Traditional Religions but their impact felt by the society (Mclean, 2015).

In relation to circumcision, Christianity has had a problem with the elaborate circumcision rituals that accompany the circumcision ritual contravening Christian expectations. The cultural heritage involves the invocation of the superhuman, ancestral and spiritual powers contrary to the gospel message. It also involves the sacrifices to the ancestors with dances and music of anti – Christian nature. During circumcision, there is sanctioned destruction of property especially around the seclusion huts notwithstanding the rowdiness and the vulgar language during the circumcision period (Barasa et al., 2019).

In regions where elaborate circumcision rituals are allowed, then education and learning in general has suffered. The elaborate ceremonies interferes with smooth learning process by disrupting learning. There is a lot of destruction due to circumcision songs and dances in public places that interfere with the focus of the children in schools. It is like everything in the community comes to a standstill during the circumcision period. Nothing profitable to the community is done apart from making merry and feasting during the season. Even the church activities are automatically brought to their halt throughout this season. The reason why the Catholic Church and other Christian fraternities are opposed to these cultural ceremonies.

In African, some of the cultural practices such as marriage, circumcision, witchcraft have been common areas of conflict between the Catholic Church and the local communities. Therefore, in this situation, the Catholic Church, one of the biggest Christian denomination seem to have had its share of conflicts with host cultures as it tried to evangelize the Tiriki people.

Christianity was introduced in Kenya in 1844 by Johann Ludwig Krapf of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). He established a CMS station at Rabai, Mombasa (Owino

et al., 2017). Due to language barrier and influence from Islamic communities, which were both cultural and religious obstacles, he decided to move along with fellow missionary Johann Rebman into the interior parts of Kamba land and Taita. It was until the 1870s after conversion of freed slaves at Frere town near Mombasa that Christianity started spreading in the coastal parts of Kenya. Thereafter, in 1883, the CMS found its way into interior parts of Kenya leading to establishment of missions in Voi, Nairobi, Kikuyu and Ukambani.

Efforts to spread of Christianity in Kenya were boosted by the colonial masters and the Christian missionaries who took charge of places which were ruled by British (Omare & Kamaara, 2023). Wherever the British could establish their colonies, they ensured the missionaries were established in the areas. In the process mission centers were established as centers of development. Wherever they could go, they built schools, hospitals and churches. Therefore, it is clear that, Kenya is a predominantly a Christian country with the majority of Christians belonging to Protestant denominations. The mainline churches are Protestants 45%, Roman Catholic 33%, others including Evangelical confessions and African Inland Churches 2%, indigenous beliefs 10% and Muslim 10% (Baur, 2009).

In Western Kenya, the Luhya and Luo people were the first to embrace Christianity followed by the Abagusii people. Notably, Christianity is the main religion in Hamisi Sub – County. Hamisi Sub – County is the headquarter of four main Christian Churches namely; Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), Friends Church (Quakers), African Divine Church, Israel (Nineveh) Church and Catholic Church, whose headquarter is in Kakamega with two parishes at Buyangu and Erusui.

Hamisi Sub-County is located in Vihiga County and predominantly occupied by the Tirikis, a subethnic group of the Luhya. The two Catholic parishes in Hamisi Sub – County are Buyangu and Erusui. The other parishes in Vihiga County include; Hambale Catholic Parish, Chamakanga Catholic Parish and Lwanda Catholic parish. Buyangu parish has thirty-three small Christian communities while Erusui has ninety-one small Christian communities. Catholics are the minority compared with other Christian churches like Friends church and Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG).

According to the Tiriki people, *idumi* is a cultural practice through which the young men are initiated into adulthood by circumcision (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). This cultural ritual is alleged to have posed challenges to evangelization in Hamisi Sub – County. However, *idumi* is a valued circumcision ritual by the Tirikis and the Terik community, whose larger lineage is in Aldai in Nandi County. According to Sangree (1965), *idumi* is a ritual that involves a series of ceremonies performed when adolescent boys are circumcised before being initiated into *lixula* (an age group) in order to achieve adulthood and full tribal status for cultural and social identity (Sangree, 1965).

Amin El-Gohary (2015) gives etymological meaning of circumcision from the Latin word “circumcidere” which means to “cut around.” It is an ancient and common surgical procedure found all over the world that involves the cutting of the foreskin from the male sexual organ. As an act, “it involves cutting off the foreskin of the boy’s sexual organ” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 67). Circumcision as a process, involves several stages like a period of seclusion, followed by instruction to the initiates, real physical impression, integration and the covenant (Magesa, 1998). Mugambi and Kirima (1976) outlines stages of circumcision to include; a preparatory phase, actual operation and seclusion period. Circumcision as a ritual is meant to draw attention to the uniqueness

of the person bestowing a sense of worth to him, separating one from one state of being to another. Circumcision rituals “terminate a person’s status as a child and confer on him a status of adulthood” (Mbiti, 1969, p.132).

Historically, circumcision is widely practiced in many African societies. Natasha (2017) relates it to the Christian perspective as a sacrament that God gave to mankind and a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood (Hankins, 2006). Generally, it is estimated that, approximately 30% (670 million) of men in the world go through this ritual while 84% of men in Kenya are circumcised (Ministry of Health, 2007). Currently, circumcision has been embraced by initially non – circumcising communities for medical, hygiene and health purposes to lower risk of infections. Harriet and Kirsten (2012) state that, during the process of evangelization, missionaries attempted to do away with some cultural aspects such as polygamy, inheritance of widows, clitoridectomy and traditional circumcision with a claim that they were obstacles to evangelization (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012).

The Luhya ethnic tribe is based in the former Western Province which covers Kakamega, Bungoma, Busia and Vihiga Counties. Some of the Luhya people reside in neighbouring Counties like Nandi and Trans Nzoia. Luhya comprises of many different sub - tribes speaking different dialects such as; the Wanga, Bukusu, Banyala, Bunyore, Maragoli, Tiriki, Marachi, Gisu, Samia, Tachoni, Batsotso, Isukha, Kisa, Marama, Idakho, Kabras and Khayo (Mayende, 2022). All the foregoing Luhya sub – tribes practice circumcision as a rite of passage celebrated through cultural festivities songs and dances.

Sangree (1965) stated that, the Tiriki people value their *idumi* circumcision ritual in its indigenous elaborate form. It is usually held at four- or five-year intervals and it has

remained substantially unaffected even with the coming of the early Christian missionaries to some extent (Sangree, 1965). Seemingly, Christianity has led to the origin of two distinct groups in respect to circumcision namely; the Tiriki - Christian and Tiriki – traditionalists' factions. The traditionalists' ceremony is essentially the same as the *Terik* (a sub – tribe of Kalenjin – Nandi tribe) ceremony and the two groups of people continue to initiate their youths together in those parts of Tiriki and Nyang'ori location where they live as neighbours (Sangree, 1965). The *Terik* were the original occupier of the land before the coming of other Luhya sub – tribes in the region. Therefore, anybody who accepted the Terik cultural form of circumcision was referred to as a Tiriki.

It is alleged that, *idumi* was handed down to the Proto-Tiriki by a Terik elder man named Diligin who allowed a young Tiriki man by name Ambulavu Khwakhoba to be circumcised among his people (Simani, 2005,p. 209). After this circumcision of a Tiriki man in *Terik* traditional circumcision ritual, the Tiriki people adopted it and have been practicing it for a long time. One of the unique characteristic of Tiriki circumcision is the introduction of the age – group or age – set system. Since then, *idumi* has become the centre of their life and every other social function is conditioned by its altering customs and the lives of people revolved around this cultural heritage. Therefore, it is imperative that one ought to understand the nature of *idumi* in order to grasp the reasons why the Tiriki people resisted early Christian missionaries. Among other factors, *idumi* to a large extent conditioned the way the Tiriki people responded to external cultural stimuli in the later period of history especially Christianity as seen section in chapter four.

Seemingly, for Tiriki people, group circumcision system is mportant to an extent that a man without an age – group is socially disadvantaged. It is only through circumcision

that one acquired and belonged to a particular age – group. According to the focus group discussions, lack of identification with an age group prohibits one from participating in normal social life, hence termed as an outcast. Without age – group, one could not share a meal with those who have been initiated, meaning that he has no brother and therefore, not allowed to address the initiated. In addition, *idumi* circumcision ritual is a foundation determining all leadership positions in the community. Any Tiriki man who has not been initiated is considered cursed, hence, risks losing privileges which other adult men get in their status, and he cannot take part in communal rituals such as burial rite because he is not sanctioned through *idumi*. This means that circumcision ritual *idumi* give initiates responsibilities in their community. It is the tradition of the community that, uninitiated men are not allowed to marry or have carnal knowledge as they are taken to be impure. Therefore, circumcision lays the foundation for marginalization and discrimination between the initiated and uninitiated, the women and strangers.

The entire circumcision ritual has affected evangelization to some degree as it leads to reduction in church attendant during the circumcision period. Notably, the Church functions and celebrations are affected by the ritual ceremonies. It is claimed that, there are anti – Christian practices involved in the community's functions such as burial rituals of initiates and elders of *idumi* who may die during the circumcision period. According to Sangree (1966), he explained that, the whole circumcision ritual is coloured with feasting and alcohol consumption. It is alleged that, the initiate's human dignity is undermined as they dance naked for three days in public before proceeding to the forest for circumcision. In addition, initiates are subjected to inhuman conditions while in the sacred groves after their circumcision and during seclusion period. For instance, they must just withstand the outpouring of the rain and cold weathers during

this time. They are not allowed to look for shelter outside the sacred groves especially during the occasion of the beer festivals. During this time, school programs are affected negatively and young initiates become indisciplined to female teachers and women in general.

The response of Africans towards Christianity is influenced by many factors such as the historical context, cultural and social beliefs, religious aspects and motivations of those who brought Christianity in Africa. Therefore, this study was set to understand why the Tiriki circumcision ritual has persisted and valued by many despite being discouraged by Catholic Christianity? Consequently, it is good to note that, *Idumi* was and remains the source of moral, social and religious significance among the Tiriki and therefore, raises a pastoral dilemma on whether to inculturate it for Christian evangelization in the region. Notably, for proper evangelization to be established, Christian contextualization and inculturation with African culture is inevitable for Christianity to penetrate to the bone marrow of the Tirikis of Hamisi Sub - County. This study was set to answer questions on; what is the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision rituals? How does the Catholic Church perceive *idumi* circumcision rituals and how has the Catholic Church responded to the socio-religious and cultural variables of *idumi* circumcision rituals as a foundation of evangelization among the Tirikis of Hamisi Sub - County?

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The conflict between religion and culture is a common phenomenon globally taking various forms such as spiritual, cultural and doctrinal. In Hamisi Sub – County, the conflict between the Catholic Church and Tiriki culture over *idumi* male circumcision rituals has persisted for many years. Despite many members of the Tiriki community being Christians and in particular Catholics, the practice of *idumi* ritual persists creating a

dilemma among the community members between religious beliefs and traditional teachings that is yet to be resolved, becoming a source of social – religious conflicts and cultural disharmony. For instance, during *idumi*, people are extremely involved into the ritual, the community is divided into two factions leading to quarrels, fights which have contributed to injuries and deaths. This has also distracted Christian life and worship by Christians overlooking their obligation, church attendance reduced, Small Christian Community activities paralyzed and the local communities left in a dilemma. The concern of this study was to create an understanding on why *idumi* persists in a community that is highly Christian and provide the Catholic Church's perspective to *Idumi* circumcision rituals as a strategy towards peaceful coexistence among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County.

1.4 General Objective

The main objective is to examine the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County, Kenya.

1.5 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study sought:

- i. To explain the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County.
- ii. To explore the Catholic Church's understanding of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County.
- iii. To investigate the Catholic Church's response to *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was set to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County, Kenya?
- ii. How has the Catholic Church understood *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County, Kenya?
- iii. How has the Catholic Church responded to *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County?

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was limited to the residents of Hamisi – Sub County in Vihiga County which comprises of Tiriki West and Tiriki East divisions and predominantly inhabited by Tiriki people (Kassilly & Tsingalia, 2009). The study further limited itself to the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* circumcision rituals and the factors contributing to its persistence despite the introduction of Christianity in the region. It limited itself to the rituals surrounding *idumi* practice in view of integration of some cultural aspects of *idumi* into Christianity.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Scanty secondary data and language barrier were a challenge but research assistants were used to interpret the Tiriki language. The Tiriki cultural ritual of circumcision is coded with a lot of secrecy to non-community members and so, research assistants were used to explain the rituals. Limited access to data and respondents was another factor especially accessing traditional elders, initiation chiefs and counselors. This was sorted out through the social networks of the respondents that enabled the researcher to identify initiation chief, Tiriki elders, counselors and initiates.

1.9 Justification of the Study

This research is crucial because it explored the possibility of inculturation of some of the aspects *idumi* into Christianity. It also helps in the integration of Christian message with culture, which is used as a way of promoting the spread of Christianity and peaceful coexistence of the Tiriki people. The research findings will help in reducing conflicts and tension between Christianity and Tiriki cultural heritage and improving the relationship between traditionalists, those whose initiates use hides or animal skins (*Vamasero*) and the Christian or converted (*Basomi*) factions. Research findings will be used by evangelizers in their apostolate to improve their understanding and rapport with local people. It will help Christians and traditionalists to value culture and Christianity which enrich each other. Other researchers interested in the same topic may utilize some of the findings for their future research. Finally, the findings can be of value to pastors and priests for future dialogue between Christianity and African Religion and cultures.

1.10 Significance of the Study

This study is quite important since it fills the gap of knowledge about *idumi* circumcision ritual specifically about the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* as a strategy towards peaceful coexistence between the church and the community members. It explores the question of why the cultural practice has persisted for along time despite the efforts of the Christian missionaries in the region by bringing out its moral and normative foundation. The research examines the Catholic Church's understanding of *idumi* by giving the Christian teaching on circumcision, identifying some of the contested variables conflicting with the Christian teaching and agreeable variables instrumental for the process of inculturation of Christianity and Tiriki culture. The research is very importance since the knowledge will be used to harmonize the

Christian teachings and the local culture leading to peaceful coexistence between people of diverse regions and beliefs in the nation avoiding discrimination based on religion and culture (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Primarily, the research knowledge is resourceful in improving the relationship between the traditionalist (*Vamasero*) and the Christians (*Basomi*) promoting a peaceful and an inclusive society by reducing all forms of violence, exploitation and abuses (Sustainable Development Goal, 16). The research equips the agents of evangelization in the region with the requisite knowledge to overcome the cultural challenges in the process of evangelization by identifying both the contested and agreeable aspects of *idumi* circumcision ritual. Still, this study is vital since the knowledge gained can be employed in the process of inculturation. This study is also important for the future researchers who may use this knowledge to advance in their academic search of knowledge in the same area. Lastly, the research knowledge can be instrumental in national policy making especially in matters related to culture (Republic of Kenya – National Policy on culture and heritage, 2009).

1.11 Literature Review

This section is about the literature review gathered over the topic of study. The first part explains the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision rituals. It is followed by Catholic Church's perception of *idumi* and the Catholic Church responded to socio-religious and cultural aspects of circumcision rituals.

1.11.1 The Moral and Normative Foundation of Circumcision Ritual

Circumcision is practiced in many countries for various reasons. Harriet and Kirsten (2012) opined that, despite the medical concerns about the safety of and the efficacy of the traditional male circumcision, especially in reducing the H.I.V prevalence among the people, many men in Africa continue to practice because of its social value, cultural and religious considerations. Eldar (2014) brings out the arguments for moral

and normative justification of neonatal circumcision a part from the argument of therapeutic circumcision (circumcision should only be allowed for medical reasons) which was brought about by controversy over neonatal circumcision within Jews and Muslim families in Germany. The moral question raised is about the child's bodily integrity and the child not having reached the age of reason and physical maturity for self – determination and therefore, parents decide for them what is good. Apart from medical reasons, circumcision could also be morally justified for non – medical factors such as; social, cultural and even religious benefits of the child. He continues to say that socio – cultural benefits include communal integration, genital hygiene, fulfilment of a religious duty and conformity with the tradition. Circumcision benefits the person by satisfying his desire to remain in covenant with God, communal interest by integrating one into community and allowing one to conform to his culture.

In Kenya where infant circumcision is not common, therapeutic circumcision is practiced in non-circumcising communities for medical reasons. Narulla (n.d) talks about medical significance of circumcision as a solution for a litany of health problems (Narulla, n.d). Masumbuko et al., (2013) put emphasis on the role of circumcision in the prevention of infectious diseases like H.I.V/AIDS, cervical and penile cancer, inflammation of glans penis and foreskin, reduced risks of sexual infections and for hygienic purposes (Masumbuko et al., 2013). Harriet and Kirsten (2012) confirmed this by noting that:

During 1990s, difference prevalence of H.I.V. across Africa were linked to the patterns of traditional male circumcision and after randomized clinical trials conducted in early 2000, it was clearly established that male circumcision was linked to significantly reducing H.I.V risks among the male population who undergo it.

The above assertion is confirmed by the fact that, in Western Kenya, for instance, where less than 20% of men are circumcised, has much higher H.I.V prevalence than in other

areas where all men are circumcised. The uncircumcised men in Kenya have a four – times higher H.I.V prevalence compared to the circumcised men (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012).

Egesah et al., (2014) demonstrate the Bukusu elaborate circumcision ritual. Other Luhya communities refer to their circumcision as *eshishebo* but Bukusu refers to theirs as “*embalu*” and to those who take Christian circumcision as *shikhebo*. There are two unique characteristics that come out clearly about the circumcision of Bukusu people as compared to other Luhya sub – tribes namely the elaborate nature of the ritual and the systematic categorization of initiates into age – sets common among the Tachoni, Pokot and Nandi of Kalenjin tribe. The age-groups are Kolongolo/Golongolo dating back in 19th century, Kikwameti early 20th century, Kananachi 1920s – 1934, Kinyukeu 1936 -1944, Nyange 1948-1958, Maina 1960 – 1970, Chuma 1972 – 1986 and currently Sawe from 1988 to date.

Other moral justifications, apart from therapeutic consideration can attest for the wide spread of circumcision practice worldwide. Masumbuko et al., (2013) discussed the prevalence of circumcision among boys aged fifteen and above is about 30-33% worldwide (Lauman & Masi, 1997; WHO, 2007 as cited by Masumbuko et al., 2013). About 70% are Muslims in Asia, Middle East and North Africa and non-Muslim male circumcision contributes only 13% (WHO, 2007). Prevalence in Africa is highest in Madagascar, Ethiopia, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with (>90%) of male circumcision rate. In East and central Africa, Kenya has the highest male circumcision prevalence of about 80% followed by Tanzania 70% while Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda have the lowest male circumcision prevalence (WHO, 2007).

Barasa (2018, p. 246) brings out the cultural foundation of circumcision. Through *idumi*, initiates are incorporated into the tribe with special identity, personal identity for the initiates is acquired with rights, obligations, responsibilities and duties in the community. Circumcision binds all the initiates together as belonging to one and the same community (Magesa, 1998). Barasa (2018, p. 246) noted that “traditional male circumcision differentiates between young and mature person.” Mbiti (1991) explains that one who is not circumcised is “a child” and “an anguished man” in Tiriki community. Mandela (1994, p. 62) states that in a Xhosa community, a man could only inherit property, marry and officiate ethnic rituals after circumcision ritual. The educational benefit of circumcision, is that, it makes a boy responsible and a caring man in the society due to the instructions received during the seclusion period. Male circumcision is taken by many boys as a passport to sex and is usually associated with becoming sexually active man within a very patriarchal society (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012).

Kimani (2010) talks about moral foundation of circumcision a part from traditional or cultural foundation of *idumi*. She says that, in pre-colonial times, rites of passage were equivalent of formal schools in African societies (Anderson, 1970 as cited by Kimani, 2010). Circumcision rite was seen as “a school of learning” where initiates were inducted into ethnic knowledge (Njiru, 1981 as cited by Kimani, 2010). Initiates are empowered with moral teachings pertaining mysteries of life and death, religion, domestic and social virtues, sex and sexuality and lastly the absolute value of life in general and the community (Mbachi & likoko, 2013). According to Papu & Verster (2006) stated that, the initiates are instructed on how to behave “as men” after circumcision. Initiates new state of being demand change in moral behaviour of the person and outlines the new responsibilities of the initiates (Barasa, 2018).

Papu and Verster (2006) bring out the social foundation of circumcision, which makes a big difference between the initiated and uninitiated young men. Initiated young men are not culturally allowed to partake a meal or drink with uncircumcised men. Same prohibition is made clear in social gatherings where the uncircumcised man cannot address the congregation of circumcised men. Relationships within the community are determined by circumcision ritual especially the horizontal relationship of how initiates relate with members of family and community. Social significance clearly understood by analyzing the role of age – sets within community on which social relationships were based. Through mingling and sharing of their blood by one knife, initiates became brothers (Magesa, 1998).

Magesa (1998) connects circumcision with a religious foundation by which the initiates are connected with the past generation, present community and future generation. Ancestors are also invoked during circumcision and seclusion period. With a successful circumcision ritual, initiates become part and parcel of the community of the living, living dead and those yet to be born (Magesa, 1998). Circumcision ritual is a very important aspect in the lives of people in African communities. Therefore, it is acknowledged that, male circumcision remains so significant that one who refuses to go through the ritual does harm and abuse to oneself. Without it, the child's ability to participate fully in religious life of community is removed and being uncircumcised undermines the child's right to cultural heritage and identity (Freeman, 1999, pp. 74-77 as cited by Narulla, n.d).

1.11.2 Christian Perception on Circumcision Rituals

Both Old Testament and New Testament provide justifications for circumcision ritual. Morrison (2023) remarks that, biblical origin of circumcision is basically grounded on sacred scriptures where it is taken as outward sign of covenant between Abraham and

Yahweh. Abraham, his sons and slaves together with servants were to undergo the circumcision ritual (Genesis 17:11ff) and it was the responsibility of Jewish priests to enforce circumcision theory. Moses and his progeny were also subjected to the ritual of circumcision (Exodus 4:25). Abraham was the father of both Ismael an ancestor to Arabs and Isaac an ancestor to Jews whose circumcision was considered to have commenced the practice by Muslims and Jews (Narulla, n.d).

Goodman (as cited by Narulla, n.d: 95) explains that, Jewish and Muslim male circumcision was a cultural pre-requisite for one to fully participate in religious and cultural life. Goodman noted that “most of the 613 biblical commandments were ignored by the Jewish people, leading him to construe the continuing circumcision of baby boys not due to a sense of divine command but because of the fear of not belonging to Jewish community” (Goodman, 1999 as cited by Narulla, n.d: 95). Abraham circumcised Ismael, father of Arabs at the age of thirteen and likely, Mohammed must have been circumcised at the same age. Circumcision is required for any Muslim to take Hajj, a holy pilgrimage to Mecca (Amin-El-Gohary, 2015) without which one is not allowed to get involved in this holy pilgrimage.

From the early Church’s tradition, circumcision became a source of controversy between Gentiles and Jews which started with gospel spreading to the Gentiles. Jewish believers were astonished when Gentiles also received the Holy Spirit and the controversy worsened when more Gentiles were converted to Christianity (Acts 15:1ff). The controversy resulted into the Jerusalem conference (council 49 AD) which concluded that circumcision was not required for the Gentile believers. It led to reinterpretation of the law by focusing on spiritual meaning rather than physical custom or meaning (Morrison, 2023).

James (as cited by Timothy, 2015) brings out the conflict that arose in the early church due to the practice of circumcision. The early church suffered conflicts from within since circumcision was a requirement of Jewish tradition and those who believed it as part of the covenant. The greatest challenge came from Judaizers, Jewish Christians who belonged to the circumcision party but believed in Jesus as Messiah and followers of the “way” (Timothy, 2015). Judaizers to partake in God’s promise made to Abraham, circumcision was enforced on new converts in the early church of Galatians (James Dunn, 1993 cited by Timothy, 2015).

The teaching of Paul on circumcision helps us understand the transition from the old law of circumcision to the new one. Wayne (as cited by Timothy, 2015) brings out a new understanding of circumcision and baptism to curb conflict in the early church where circumcision and baptism became two signs of being in the Old and New covenant respectively. In Jewish tradition, justification before God was through Circumcision which was a sign of the covenant with God. But in Paul’s teaching, circumcision obligated the person to observe the entire Torah. Circumcision is the standard for the final judgment and if one was unable to fulfill the Torah, he was referred to as uncircumcised (Horst & Schneider (eds), 1990 cited by Timothy, 2015). Disciples are sons of God through faith and circumcision of heart is the most important for converts. Circumcision is no longer a means of justification as in the Old Testament but one is justified through faith which is manifested outwardly through baptism (Timothy, 2015).

Sundukwa et al., (2021) agree that Hamisi Sub – County has been under the influence of Christianity for a reasonable time and therefore, we can bring in the Christian (Catholic) perspective of *idumi* among Tirikis. Prevalence of Christian churches has had a great impact on the circumcision ritual *idumi*. Just like in the early church, there is a

controversy between those who have converted to Christianity and those who remained traditional in the practice of circumcision. With the coming of Christianity, Tiriki community was divided into two distinct factions in relation to circumcision practice namely; Tiriki - Traditionalists and Tiriki – Christian circumcision rites.

The differences between the two is well illustrated by Sitawa (2019), who acknowledged that, the Bukusu encounter with other different faiths affected their traditional circumcision rituals. The outcome of this encounter was manifested in two ways by the local people, those who after embracing Christianity cut themselves off from their old cultural religion and are totally Christians in a full sense and others who ended up blending and combining Christian ideals with cultural way leading to a form of syncretism. Those who blended the two circumcisions rites, their boys begin with traditional way but later taken to hospital for the circumcision cut rather than facing the traditional knife known as *embalu*.

Looking at the Tiriki circumcision ritual, then, it is clear to see the difference between what Sitawa (2019) proposes for Bukusu – Christian circumcision and Tiriki - Christian type. Bukusu - Christian adopted clinical circumcision done in hospital while the Christian – Tiriki circumcision is not clinical. Both Tiriki - traditional and Tiriki - Christian circumcision take place from sacred groves. Tiriki - traditionalist is very elaborate while Tiriki - Christian rite is simple (Sitawa, 2019).

In Tanzania, Father Lucas of Universities' Mission to Central Africa (U.M.C.A) attempted to replace the traditional circumcision ceremonies with a Christian alternative called *jando*. Christian *jando*, is a solemn initiation ritual for adolescent boys entering into adult membership of the community as a result of early efforts to bridge between Christianity and African traditions in Tanzania (Anderson, 1977).

Moywaywa and Akaranga (2017) differentiate between pre-modern and modern circumcision rituals. With modern circumcision, initiates are circumcised from the hospital. This kind of circumcision was popular among Christians and affluent members of the society. Pre-modern or traditional circumcision is commonly observed among those who have not embraced Christianity and the poor population in the region. In general, there is a cultural conflict between pre-modern and modern circumcision in Tharaka region, creating tension since those who opted for hospital circumcision are scorned at, deemed to be soft - minded individuals who could not defend the community in times of need.

Those who adopted the Bukusu – Christian type of circumcision wanted to do away with the elaborate rituals that accompany circumcision. Therefore, Sitawa (2019) states that, Christian converts opted to avoid elaborate rituals and ceremonies such as; songs and nude dances, beer drinking making the youth chaotic, use of vulgar language, promotion of promiscuity and immorality, early marriages among the youth, school dropout, fear of spread of H.I.V/AIDS, indiscipline of the initiates towards women – teachers, disruption of the school learning, economic burden to the poor families (Sitawa, 2019). Christian – Tiriki circumcision has abolished dances of the naked initiates, allowing the initiates to use modern clothes, for example lesos, modern utensils such as; spoons, knives and plates for serving and eating their food. The aim of Tiriki – Christian faction was not to abolish *idumi* but suggested it to be done in open with only a few necessary rituals and avoid the accompanying secret initiation rites.

Moywaywa and Akaranga (2017) further noted that modern circumcision is normally done secretly denying initiates the joy of being in seclusion and instructions delivered during healing period. Initiates are regarded as outcasts and discriminated by others

who consider them cursed since they missed toughening process of becoming warriors through the traditional circumciser's knife.

Harriet and Kirsten (2012) explain the belief that during circumcision period, initiates were in a dangerous and vulnerable state and susceptible to witchcraft and influence of evil spirits and so, they must be kept into seclusion to avoid contact with women commonly accused of witchcraft. The same is observed by Sitawa (2019) that, in this elaborate circumcision ritual, ceremonies included invoking and sacrifices to ancestors and Supreme Being, and this was the reason why the Bukusu and Tiriki who adopted Christian circumcision deviated from typically traditional circumcision.

According to Egesah et al., (2014), these elaborate rituals invoke superhuman beings such as ancestors and spiritual powers. Again, sacrifices are offered to superhuman beings and ancestors. There is also a dilemma due to physical and medical dangers initiates are subjected to during seclusion period and the stigmatization of those who go through Tiriki – Christian circumcision by the traditionalists leading to “buying traditional circumcision” by the converts to be fully accepted.

Sangree (1966, p.124) explains how the encounter between Christianity and Tiriki culture brought about conflicts leading to the origin of the Tiriki – Christian faction (*abasomi* or half-Tiriki circumcision rite). *Abasomi* is the Tiriki word for those who have adopted the less elaborate way of circumcision among the Tiriki people over the traditional one. Tiriki factionalism was brought about during Amiani's rule as Christian chief. After his conversion, “he fan into flame the smoldering resentment over mission attitude towards Tiriki circumcision and a full blown Tiriki – Christian factional split quickly came into being” (Sangree, 1966, p.124). Amiani became both a Christian leader and a tribal chief in Tiriki community. But even with this Tiriki- Christian rite,

things were not clear and so some Christian parents still allowed their boys to be taken by elders for traditional circumcision and initiation, others encouraged sons to be circumcised at mission hospitals and other group had their sons circumcised in a shortened public ceremony, for example the Maragoli type of circumcision who are the neighbours of the Tiriki people (Sangree, 1966, p. 129).

1.11.3 The Church's Response to Socio – Religious and Cultural aspects of Circumcision Rituals in Africa

It is a global phenomenon that, any meeting of two different realities incur the risk of conflict and, it is common to experience conflict between the cultural heritage of black Africans and the Christianity religion (Mulagu, 1991, p. 128 cited in Uchenna, 2008). Sarpong (2006, p. 1 as cited in Uchenna, 2008) stated that, traditional religion, which should be employed for its potentially salutary effects, has been misunderstood and misrepresented such as:

The misconception is amply evident from the many wrong names by which traditional religion has been described. It is difficult to understand the tenacity with which African Traditional religion has been termed as primal religion. Evidently the use of the term is to distinguish it from the so – called great or world religions. A primal religion is supposed to have no founders. It is without literary sources. This understanding of African religion and culture must have created a nother problem to evangelization by the early missionaries.

Therefore, it is necessary to have a Catholic response to these socio – cultural aspects since whenever two or three cultures meet, there is potential conflict and misunderstanding. It is true that, spiritual conflicts exist between the traditional cultures and Christianity all over the world (Uchenna, 2008). In Africa, it is quite difficult to separate the culture from religion since African religion is embedded in African culture. It is hard to distinguish what belongs to religion and to traditional cultural community. Both religion and culture are intertwined (Uchenna, 2008).

Ugwukah and Ohaja (2019, p. 20) noted that, missionaries' approach to African cultures was not encouraging, hence misguided. Scholars such as Edward, B. Taylor created a picture that "African indigenous religion is at the bottom of religious evolution. Further, they used derogatory terms to refer to religion as fetish, idolatry, superstitious, heathenism to describe the religious practices and the way of life of ... all Africans" (Ugwukah & Ohaja, 2019, p. 20). It seems the foregoing attitude makes the process of integration and dialogue difficult to take root in African communities since the Europeans were not ready to accept and understand the people the way they were with their cultural heritages.

In this situation, the modern African in search of self – determination and self – assertion finds himself in a dilemma where his or her culture is at crossroad with alien cultures and religions. Some of the African people have been brain – washed into disowning their own culture to embrace alien cultural values, some of which they do not understand (Aya, 2000, p. 12 cited in Uchenna, 2008). It is also noted that, African people have been enculturated to atleast two cultures, and as a result, they lose the richness of their culture and causally pass it on to the next generation creating a problem of African identity for those who have embraced Christianity. This creates a need for the church to respond in order to integrate culture and the Catholic teachings so that, faith could be rooted in the hearts of the people. (Uchenna, 2008).

Anderson (1977) states that the early Christian missionaries had universally negative views about the African traditional initiation rituals. Accordingly, they tried to stamp it out in many of the East African communities either by directly or through the converted Christians. Most of the early Christian missionaries did not have any problem with the circumcision per se but with the heathen rituals associated accompanying it. Consequently, this was the reason why "Christian jando" originated in Southern

Tanzania among the Maasai people. About Africanizing Christianity, Father Lucas, the advocate of Christian jando circumcision rite, argues that, the Christian missionaries should retain all that can be tolerated in African traditions with some Christian transformation. Therefore, he maintained that witchcraft in Africa should be condemned but never treated as unreal by the white (Anderson, 1977, p. 100).

Natasha (2017, p. 251) stated that, confrontations over initiation resulted from complete missionary condemnation to substantial accommodation within the mainstream Christianity because of the African Christians who openly engaged missionaries on the value of initiation in South Africa. It is important to note that, African people's response to Christianity has been complex and varied due to many factors such as historical context, social and cultural beliefs. While some African communities resisted Christianity, some adapted it to their cultural and social context incorporating it into their existing religious practices leading to syncretic form of Christianity which blended African and Christian elements. In addition, the entire African worldview had a great influence to the way African people responded to Christianity. The shared beliefs and values both in Christianity and African tradition shaped the way Africans received and interpreted Christian teachings such as communalism and ancestor veneration. In short, the differences between the African and Christian worldviews led to tension and resistance between the local people and early Christian missionaries.

There is a good example of this clash between culture and religion in Nigeria, where there was a gifted choirmaster in one of the town's Anglican Church and also taught in its primary school. This choirmaster was quite appreciated until he composed a Christmas songs in which he introduced *bata* (is a beloved music of Sango, one of the Nigerian tribe Yoruba god of lightening and thunder) and *dundun* drums (dundum ensemble belong to the masquerade cult). The introduction of these elements into

liturgy brought a lot of problems to the church. The Choirmaster was condemned by the Church leadership. We are told that, this profanity led to this choirmaster to leave the church and became a full – time actor, composer, director and producer. This is an example of what the conflict between religion and culture can result into (Uchenna, 2008).

Therefore, Doyle (2012) stated that, the tension between Western-centered and other-centered approaches to diverse cultures create a need for integration of Christian message and other cultures. Catholics and other Churches employ the term inculturation to signify a process of engagement between the Christian message and a particular culture (Doyle, 2012). Generally, the relationship between theology and culture was at the core of Vatican II Council (1962) which valued particular churches and the contributions of diverse cultures (Doyle, 2012). He explains that the “journey of magi to witness the birth of Jesus to symbolic presence of twelve and tribes of Israel at Pentecost are integral dimension of the story of Christ and the Church in relation to different cultures. Therefore, Knitter (1988, p. 33 cited in Uchenna, 2008) calls for more depth to the indigenization process since there has been a misdirected desire of African Churches to dress in African clothes without giving thought to European soul in which Christ is presented to them in a manner acceptable to the African mentalit, Christianity will remain alien and irrelevant. Therefore, to benefit from the new religion, integration is not an option but a must. Knitter (1988, p. 33 cited in Uchenna, 2008) categorically stated that:

Christ must have an African soul, a soul that understands the realities of the African cosmos before he can respond to our lyrics, dances and customs. He must first be liberated from the grip of Europeanism before he can be embraced by Africans in their quest for self – realization and liberation.

The process of engagement of Christianity with diverse cultures of the world, inculturation was key during the Vatican II Council (1962-1965) especially in *Gaudium et Spes* which emphasizes the element of development of cultures of the world. It is also captured in the *Lumen Gentium* dealing with positive relationship between the gospel and whatever good that is found in the religious practices of diverse cultures of the world. In addition, the *Ad Gentes* brings out the connection between culture and evangelization of the world (Doyle, 2012). In response, theologian Karl Rahner and John Paul II on Vatican II Council agree that, there is a need to protect the integrity of the gospel but still be sensitive to diverse cultures (Doyle, 2012). John Paul II's, approach to evangelization describes three approaches; initial evangelization, pastoral care and re – evangelization, and in each, there is an attempt to consider the agency of local people in the process of evangelization. (Doyle, 2012).

Therefore, any Christian approach to any culture cannot be explained and understood outside the same culture (Bediako, 1992, p. 30 as cited by Gumo, 2009). Gumo (2009), he explained that, the gospel is transformative when it is transmitted within the same culture. Hence, the Christian message cannot be understood outside cultural setting of people through which the message is communicated.

Mugambi (2002) opines that within modern missiological debates, the approach of missionaries towards African culture was misguided. They were highly concerned with their culture working hard to destroy African culture they did not understand. They equated Christian identity to western culture and religious heritage. Conversion meant abandoning African culture and customs to adopt Western ones (Aduro et al, 2008). Therefore, African converts were forced to live by double standards, making it hard to appreciate Christian identity. Muzorewa (1985) suggested that, to overcome this dichotomous way of life, then, an African theology could be a solution by constructing

a biblically – based and relevant theology that address the needs of the people. Therefore, linking Christianity and African culture is the ideal but the process also brings about another challenge of syncretism. Mokhoathi (2017) states that the purpose of contextualization of Christianity in Africa is to link them together but the problem is how Christianity can fully be expressed within a cultural context and many a times, contextualization seems to permit syncretism.

Scholars have come up with three perspectives regarding the amalgamation of Christianity and African traditional religion or culture. First is a conservative Christian perspective which does not permit inclusion of African beliefs and customs that are in conflict with revelation of God in the bible and therefore, converts must renounce their cultural beliefs (Jarvis, 2009, p. 44 as cited by Mokhoathi, 2017). Second is African rigorist perspective which preserves African culture as handed down to the present generation and therefore, no mixing with other faiths (Mbiti, 1975). Third is a moderate African religionists which assumes the middle ground allowing the amalgamation on Christianity and culture (Mlisa, 2009, p. 9 as cited by Mokhoathi, 2017).

Moywaywa (2020) explains three main ways by which African responded to Christian missionaries. First is cultural egocentrism approach manifesting pride for one's culture and therefore, anything in Christianity that can be identified with Western culture must be done away with. Second is a pro – Western approach, where Africans were comfortable with western cultural mindset to disregard their indigenous cultures. Third is a hybrid approach putting emphasis on message communication rather than on cultural orientation build on principles of intercultural dialogue.

Adamo (2011) brings out the need for inculturation of traditional aspects of circumcision rituals and Christian teaching for proper evangelization. It is easy to notice

that, the Christianity accepted by African is not deep rooted since some of the African Christians still patronizes indigenous religions in times of crisis and go back to their culture and tradition for solutions (Adamo, 2011). Katoke (1984) states that, there is a need for the Church to identify cultural elements that are inconsistent with Christianity and adopt those that are compatible with Christian message. This dilemma creates a dichotomy of an African Christians (Mugambi, 2002, p. 519-520).

Related literatures reviewed indicate that there are gaps of knowledge in this study in the following areas: the moral and normative foundation of *idumi*, the Catholic Church's understanding of *idumi* and the Catholic Church's response to *idumi* among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County.

1.12 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Stuarts Hall's Cultural Identity Theory (Yang et al., 2021) to explain the persistence of the Tiriki – traditional circumcision ritual *idumi* despite the introduction of Christianity. Hall, believed that cultural identity is meant to manifest who people are. People means a group of a particular race or an ethnic group that has the same language and religious culture (Yang et al., 2021). Cultural identity is that communal identity obtained from awareness of person's in-group membership to an extent that one finds his being embedded within the group (Yinger, 1988, p. 21 as cited by Hanh, 2018). The theory implies that a person's cultural identity is achieved when one is harmoniously merged with the collective identity of the group offering the foundation on which one stands in the community.

This study found that, for the Tiriki, *idumi* circumcision ritual differentiates them from other Luhya communities hence, the foundation of their cultural identity. It was observed that, the cultural identity of the Tiriki revolves around *idumi*; it is a reference

for acceptance of boys to be recognized as full members of the Tiriki community. This cultural identity is responsible for the cultural continuity manifested in many traditional African communities. For Kirmayer *et al.* (2016), cultural continuity means the potentiality of culture to remain despite the processes of historical transformation and changes. In short, cultural continuity means the ability of any community to preserve and carry forward into the future their historical - cultural traditions. Krieg (2016) used this concept to reclaim the identity of young indigenous women in Canada by going back to their cultural foundations.

Auger (2016) describes cultural continuity as the incorporation of people within their culture and the means through which traditional knowledge is preserved and passed on. Therefore, for successful evangelization in Hamisi Sub – County, genuine integration must take place between Christianity and the Tiriki culture. This integration will enable the people to be true Tirikis who are also true Christians. To minimize the differences and hostility between Tiriki culture and Christianity, the study adopted consultative/dialogical critical approach to cultural transformation by H. Richard Niebuhr's (1975) book entitled, *Christ and Culture* and used by Nyuyki (2018) and Sitawa (2019) in his Bukusu-Christian initiation rite with five approaches to culture.

First approach is the most radical, where Christian faith is seen as antagonistic to culture presenting the concept of Christ against culture (Gaze, 1998, pp. 4-13 cited by Nyuyki, 2018) by rubbing out all cultural activities. This approach sees nothing good in African cultures. This is one-way in which early missionaries approached African cultures and which made it very difficult for evangelization. Second approach presents the concept of Christ of culture (Gaze, 1998, pp. 4-13 cited by Nyuyki, 2018) where Christ is the fulfilment of all cultures by affirming both Christ and culture and no opposition between the two. Third is concept of Christ above culture (Gaze, 1998, pp. 4-13 cited

by Nyuyki, 2018) where cultural practices are accepted but understood as being subject to Christian faith. Fourth is the concept of Christ and culture paradox affirming that a lasting conflict between Christ and culture cannot be achieved at any moment and so the struggle between the two will continue calling for a dialogue between Christian faith and African cultures. Fifth is the concept of Christ as transformer of culture (Gaze, 1998, pp. 4-13 cited by Nyuyki, 2018) where Christ adopts African cultural practices and transform them to achieve a Christian goal.

It was observed that, Cultural Identity Theory influenced the people on selection of the nature of cultural aspects that should be maintained and transmitted to future generations in the current society. Consequently, the theory helped to identify areas that would bring conflicts between Christianity and Tiriki cultural heritage. It was unveiled that, traditional nude dances, indigenous songs, traditional beer, drinking ceremonies, prolonged period of seclusion sacred groves, dressing of initiates in skins, indiscipline, interference with school learning, early marriages, school dropout and other which are morally un acceptable behaviour. Generally, respondents felt that we have some good cultural values that Christianity can utilize to enhance evangelization. This is where cultural continuity and consultative/dialogical critical approach for cultural transformation adopted in integration of Christianity and Tiriki culture. For instance parallelism between circumcision and the sacrament of baptism, circumcision confession rite and the sacrament of confession in the church, the phases of circumcision and the stages of catechumenate (catechetical instructions) in the church.

1.13 Research Methodology

This section covers the research design, the area of study, sources of data, sampling procedures, methods of data collection, validity and reliability of data instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations.

1.13.1 Research Design

This study adopted the phenomenological design in collecting data to understand the phenomenon of *idumi*. The researcher sought to answer open-ended research questions using in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). It allowed the researcher to comprehend the experiences, perspectives and behaviour of individuals or groups and to identify patterns or themes within data (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The design helped the researcher to gather rich and detailed data to explain the phenomenon.

It utilized the phenomenological design since the research is about beliefs, practices, teachings, opinions, behaviors and attitudes. The study sought to capture the reality of *idumi* from peoples' experiences and feelings to produce an in-depth description of some cultural aspects in relation to Christianity. It studied the phenomenon as embodied in live experience, perception and feelings of the people (Yokself & Yildirim, 2016). It explored the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon (Yokself & Yildirim, 2016:4). It aimed at understanding, describing Catholic perspective of *idumi* circumcision ritual in view of inculturation of some cultural aspects into Catholic teachings among Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County, Kenya.

1.13.2 Philosophical Paradigm

Any qualitative research can be located in any of the two paradigms namely; positivist and interpretivist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003 cited in Shahid, 2014). A philosophical paradigm refers to the underlying framework or set of beliefs that shapes and guides the researcher's approach to understanding the world and conducting investigations. It provides a lens through which researchers view and interpret phenomena. The choice of a philosophical paradigm has profound implications for the design, methods, and interpretation of research.

This study adopted constructivism as a research philosophy which emphasizes the active role of individuals in constructing their own understanding of the world. It suggests that reality is not something objective and external but is socially constructed through experiences, interactions, and interpretations. In the context of research, constructivism influences the researcher's approach to knowledge generation, inquiry, and the interpretation of findings. Constructivism in research encourages a focus on the subjective and context-dependent nature of knowledge. This study sought to understand how individuals construct meaning and interpret their experiences. Constructivism acknowledges the fact that reality is not one but multiple, the knowledge about reality not objective but subjective and knowledge about reality is socially constructed or decided by people's convention and by the peoples' experience of the phenomenon. Therefore, to understand the reality, individual's opinions, narratives and their attributed meaning to reality is important in the development of any knowledge or research (Saunders, 2009, p.128).

1.13.3 Area of Study

The area of the study was Hamisi Sub – County in Vihiga County, Kenya. The region is predominantly occupied by the Tiriki with two Catholic parishes, namely; Buyangu and Erusui. The Catholics are minority group compared to other members of Protestant and Pentecostal denominations. Hamisi has two administrative divisions: namely Hamisi West and Hamisi East. The former is made up of Gisambai, Banja, Tambua and Jepkoyai wards or locations. The latter comprises of Shamakhokho, Shiru and Muhudu wards or locations. The areas was considered since the majority of the population are Tiriki who still practice *idumi* in its traditional and elaborate form. In this region, desoite the fact that Christianity was introduced more than hundred years ago, the institution of

idumi is still very traditional in nature compared to other Luhya communities like the Wanga of Mumias Sub – County.

The study was carried out in two Catholic Parishes comprising people who practice Tiriki – traditional circumcision and those who have adopted Tiriki – Christian Circumcision rite. This diversity of people was instrumental in understanding the significance and symbolism of *idumi*. Buyangu Parish has 33 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) with a total population of 2000 Christians (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). Erusui parish has 91 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) with a population of about 4000 Christians (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

1.13.4 Target Population

Research population was Tiriki in Hamisi Sub – County. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2019) estimated the population of this area at 159, 258 people with a population density of 843.1km². The research population includes all the Tiriki – Christians in Hamisi Sub – County while target population applies to a section of people within the population that is the focus of the study or analysis, specifically, the Christian - Catholics in the region such as the priests, Tiriki elders, lay persons, school teachers, Catechists, local administrators, counselors/guardians, initiates, ritual leaders and initiation chiefs.

1.13.5 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data was collected. Primary data was collected directly by the researcher from respondents during the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) in Hamisi Sub-County. Secondary data included both unpublished and published data from libraries and documented resources.

1.13.6 Sampling Procedures

Phenomenological framework requires a relatively homogenous group of participants having had the experience of the same phenomenon or reality with significant and meaningful experience of the reality under investigation (Creswell, 2006). The study started with cluster sampling by selecting the target area, which is Hamisi Sub – County, one of the five Sub- Counties of Vihiga County. While at Hamisi, purposive and snowball sampling were employed in selecting the respondents of the study. Purposively, the researcher selected participants who were perceived to understand *idumi* circumcision rituals for in – depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Other respondents were selected through snowball sampling technique where a member propose an extra member he/she thought could provide significant information (Lipa, et al.,2021) especially those with the knowledge about the Tiriki *idumi* circumcision ritual. The sample size was 6000 comprising of the Christian – Catholics in Hamisi Sub – County. This is the population of the Catholic faithful in the region. A total of 26 respondents were purposively sampled for the study.

1.13.7 Methods of Data Collection

The researcher employed a variety of techniques to elicit information from the respondents. The main tools for collecting data were interview schedules and FDGs guides (appendices 3 and 4). It used triangulation for the purpose of validity and reliability of data instruments (Yokself & Yildirim, 2016).

1.13.7.1 In – Depth Interviews (IDIs)

An interview is a procedure for data collection that explores the views, experiences, beliefs and motivation of individuals on specific matters (Gill & Kate, 2008). Interviews help in obtaining representative information which is more personal than that from the group interviews and is likely to reveal conflict with the community since

the respondents feel they can speak more freely without their neighbours (Upreti, n.d). An opportunity sample on individuals, purposely selected are conducted in interviews (Upreti, n.d). It provides a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon that quantitative method with closed-ended questions cannot be used. It was appropriate where little is already known about the phenomenon under study or where detailed insights are required from individual participants. Interview was appropriate in exploring sensitive topic that participants may not be able to talk about in a group (Gill & Kate, 2008).

For key informant interviews (KII), a total of twelve key informants were purposefully sampled and interviewed. The 12 comprised two priests, two lay persons ((one man and woman), two initiates, two Tiriki elders, two teachers (one man and woman) and two initiation chiefs. All the respondents were interviewed about all the questions pertaining to the three objectives of this research (see appendices 3 and 4).

1.13.7.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A FGD generates information on collective views and meanings underlying these views (Gill & Kate, 2008) and beneficial in generating of participant's experiences and beliefs. FGDs are primarily employed to discuss a particular topic of study in detail. Therefore, a group of six to twelve members who are vast in knowledge or interested in the area of study are sampled to participate in the discussion (Upreti, n.d). It is important to have a facilitator so that, the discussion does not diverge from the topic of study. A note taker is also required during the FGDs (Upreti, n.d). For this study, fourteen respondents were purposefully sampled and exposed to two focus group discussions of seven each. Each group was composed of one Tiriki elder, two lay persons (one man and a woman), one catechist, one counselor, one sub – chief and one

ritual elder. The FGDs addressed questions pertaining to the three objectives of this research.

1.13.8 Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

The two concepts express different properties of measuring instruments but closely related. Lutfi and Maslakci (2020) state that the measuring instruments maybe reliable without being valid but if they are valid, then they are likely to be reliable. This means that, in any research, researchers must test the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments they expect to use. Whiston (as cited by Lutfi & Maslakci, 2020) define validity as obtaining data that is appropriate for the intended use of the measuring instruments. Anastasi and Urbina (as cited by Lutfi & Maslakci, 2020) state that validity refers to whether the measuring instrument measures the behaviour it is intended to measure. Therefore, validity can be taken as the measure of how the measuring instrument performs its function and so determined by the meaningful and appropriate interpretation of the data obtained from the measuring instrument as a result of the analysis. On the other hand, reliability is understood as the stability of the measuring instrument used and its consistency. According to Lutfi and Maslakci (2020), reliability is the ability to measuring instruments to give similar results when applied at different times.

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were determined in various ways by the researcher. First the researcher discussed the items of the instruments with the supervisors as experts in the field of study to establish the validity of the instruments. Secondly, a pilot study was carried out in Kapsengere village in Nandi County, which is the neighbouring County of Vihiga to ascertain both the validity and reliability of the research instruments. This place has both the members affiliated to traditional and the Tiriki – Christian factions. This study was instrumental since it helped to determine the

reliability of the interview schedule and focus group discussion guides by interviewing some respondents about the topic of study and judging their responses to the questions. Thirdly, the research instruments were developed in consultation with my supervisors. Fourthly, steps to ensure that the study yielded comprehensive findings were undertaken by employing different data collection instruments such as interviews, focus group discussions.

1.13.9 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis method which involved reviewing of the primary data collected, identifying patterns and themes and categorizing data into meaningful segments. Thematic analysis was used to help analyzing of different ideas discovered from interviews and focus group discussions on the Catholic perspective of *idumi* circumcision rituals. The process of analysis was possible using thematic tool. It began by transcribing of the collected data where the audio recorded during research was converted into word was coded. Codes were applied to the data according to the themes where words that were mentioned repeatedly used by the respondents were categorized based on the objectives of the study. The categories created were later interpreted by making a comparison with existing literature to draw conclusions based on the patterns and themes identified from the data.

1.13.10 Data Presentation

Qualitative data is conventionally presented in narrative form by illustrative quotes. These quotes entail raw data gotten from the participants and therefore, they need to be compiled and analyzed by the researcher and not just listing them. These raw data was taken during the interviews and focus group discussions either by note – taking as the respondent speaks or by audio recording by the researcher. Therefore, the first thing to do once you have these data is to transcribe by putting them in words and texts. Then

the data from both interview and focus group discussions was coded according to the objectives of the study and presented as a story. The data was presented simply by descriptions and narrations under each main theme using appropriate verbatim quotes to illustrate the findings (Burnard, et al., 2008). Coding is simply the process of converting what was recorded during the interview and focus group discussion into words or texts to discover some kind of patterns by attaching labels to these utterances in line with your objectives.

1.13.11 Ethical Considerations

All the participants in this research were not coerced in any way to participate in data collection. The researcher secured a voluntary consent from each of the respondents and other participants. The names of the respondents were not disclosed to enhance the confidentiality of the participants. At the same time, the respondents were assured that the information gathered was supposed to be used for academic purpose only. Lastly for one to carry out the research, the recommendation letter from Moi University, the licence from NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation), the letter from the County director of Education and the County Commissioner were sought for permission as shown in appendices 8,9,10,11.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SETTING OF THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI-SUB COUNTY

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the background information about the Tiriki people, location, settlement patterns, their culture and religious practices. The second part explains the Christian missionaries' effort in evangelizing the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County.

2.2 Location of Hamisi Sub-County

Hamisi Sub - County is located in Vihiga County in the Western Region of Kenya which lies in the Lake Victoria Basin between longitudes 34°30' and 35°0'E and latitudes 0° and 0°15'N and covers an area of 531.0 km² (Vihiga County integrated development plan 2018-2022). Hamisi lies at a latitude of 0.09°N and a longitude of 34.85°E. The area has an average altitude is 1500 m above sea level and a mean annual precipitation of 2000 mm (Kassily & Tsingalia, 2009). Hamisi is one of the sub-counties of Vihiga County and famous for its administrative purposes. Hamisi has two divisions namely Tiriki West and Tiriki East. Tiriki West has four locations with twenty sacred groves with a total area of 22.8 ha and Tiriki East has two locations with sixteen sacred groves with a total area of 26.9 ha (Kassily & Tsingalia, 2009). Hamisi is occupied by the Tiriki people, among the 17 sub – tribes of the larger Luhya community of Western Kenya. Hamisi Sub – County is found in Vihiga County which is bordered by Kakamega County to the Northeast, Nandi County to the East, Kisumu County to the southeast, and Siaya County to the South (Appendix 6).

2.3 Historical Background of the Tiriki People

According to Ng'ang'a (2006), the original home of the Luhya people is Western Kenya. The Luhya occupy Western part of Kenya and part of Uganda such as the Samia,

Bukedi, Bagisu, and Busoga district. Today western Kenya region is divided into four counties namely; Kakamega, Busia, Vihiga and Bungoma.

Historically, the Luhya consider Egypt (Misri) as their original homeland (Ng'ang'a, 2006). The earliest Luhya immigrants arrived at Western Kenya before 1000 A.D from Egypt (Were, 1967). It is argued that they migrated from Misri due to drought, domestic dispute, overcrowding and quest for land for farming (Were, 1967).

The Luhya ethnic group has many sub –tribes. Some of the Luhya sub – tribes found in Western Kenya are; the Wanga, Bukusu, Banyala, Bunyore, Maragoli, Tiriki, Marachi, Gisu, Samia, Tachoni, Batsotso, Isukha, Kisa, Marama, Idakho, Kabras and Khayo. In Western region, Were (1985, p. 29) notes that, apart from the Luhya people, who are the majority, “other occupants of the area are the “Nilo-Hamitic” Teso to the West, Nilo – Hamitic Kalenjins to the North in Elgon area, the “Nilo – Hamitic” Nyang’ori –Terik to the South East, and small pockets of Nilotic Luo, mainly in the Southern part. These people have not only interacted but also borrowed culturally and socially from one another. In relation to circumcision practice, it is observed that some of the Luhya sub – tribes adopted the Luo culture and therefore, they do not circumcise their boys like Marachi, Samia and the Banyala of Port Victoria. On the other hand, despite the fact that Tiriki people are Luhya, with an elaborate initiation rites for boys. The *idumi* Circumcision ritual originated from the Terik community who are of Kalenjin and Nilotic origin.

Sangree (1962) stated that, the Tiriki people are one of the twenty-two culturally similar but politically discrete Bantu sub - tribes living in North Nyanza and are collectively called as Luhya. They are commonly referred to us as *Abatirichi*. *Abatirichi* are not consolidated like the other Luhya communities such as the Wanga and Bukusu but

made of people of different Luhya origins who migrated to this region in those early days. The majority of them were the Maragoli people and the Banyole who were among the first to settle in this place. Abatirichi as a sub - tribe refers to those people who adopted the customs and circumcision habits of the people called Terik and made it their own way of initiating boys into adulthood.

From the above description, then, the Tiriki does not refer to a particular tribe but a combination of all those immigrants who accepted the Terik circumcision ritual as they settled in the region. All the people who mixed with the Terik and circumcised boys in the Terik way became to be known as the Abatirichi. Among the clans of the Tiriki people are after Abalukhoba, Abamuli, Abalula, Abamohia and Abakhatiri. In short, Abatirichi are a collection of clans; Nyang'ori, Maragoli, Idakho, Banyole and others (Ng'ang'a, 2006, p. 27) and any Luhya person who accepted the Terik circumcision a Tiriki automatically.

Abatirichi traditions show that apart from the *Terik* who originally came from the area of Mount Elgon, the rest of the Abatirichi clans migrated from Misri to a place in Jinja in Uganda where they lived for some time (Ng'ang'a, 2006, p. 27). Later, they moved to eastwards to the Lake Victoria from where they migrated to Asembo and then to Gem before migrating northward to Butere. From here they separated from the group that was being led by Muwanga the future ruler of the Abashitsetse of Wanga and spread in the area now known as Tiriki and Maragoli. By this time the Maragoli had not arrived in the area (Ng'ang'a, 2006, p. 27). According to Ndeda (2019), the ancestors of Tiriki people came from Western Uganda and settled near Kavirondo Gulf on Lake Victoria and at one time, they were closely associated with the Wanga people of Mumias.

The majority of the Tiriki people live in Vihiga County comprising of Hamisi, Emuhaya, Luanda, Sabatia and Vihiga Sub – Counties. Kenya census (2019) estimated the population of the County to be 590,013. The origin of the name Hamisi was associated with the first shopkeeper in this region whose name was Hamisi. Later, the town adopted his name and since then, the place has been known as Hamisi. Hamisi is also one of the constituencies in Vihiga County with seven wards: Shiru, Shamakhokho, Banja, Muhudu, Tambua, Gisambai and Jepakoyai. The National census (2019) puts the population of Hamisi Sub – County at 159, 241 people.

Tiriki is also the word that is used to indicate their geographical location of these people. As noted earlier, the people who settled in this area adopted a strict circumcision ritual from the Terik and commonly referred to as the Tiriki people. Notably, the Terik influence on the people made them very distinct from the other Luhya communities as regard to traditional circumcision practice making them unique. *Idumi* is the most conspicuous ritual where the entire community is involved. It forms the centre and the foundation on which the life of the Tiriki people is based. Seemingly, *idumi* is like the nerve of the entire community where all members of the community are called upon to participate. *Idumi* is quite significant as a rite of passage since it helps young boys to graduate to adulthood. The actual circumcision of boys is carried out in the sacred forest where only elders and the initiated are allowed to attend. Women and those who have not gone through the ritual are not allowed to witness the circumcision in the forest (Gibbs, 1965).

2.4 Social Structure of the Tiriki People

Like other Luhya communities, the Tiriki people have their social structure in place. This structure was typically founded on three elements namely; the clan referred to as *lumbaba* and *zimbaba* in plural (Gibbs, 1965). The clan was the structure after the

family setting. Another social structure was created through what we can call *lixula* (age – group) in singular and *maxula* (age – groups) in plural for the age groups. This *lixula* is the social categorization gotten by the boys who undergo *idumi* circumcision ritual together. Those who share the knife together during the circumcision. The blood they shed bind them together in one brotherhood. At the top of these we find the village *lusomo*) and in plural (*zisomo*) standing for the territorial unit (Gibbs, 1965). The administration and organization of these social structures were left in the hands of the Tiriki elders chosen out of the traditional circumcision practice *idumi*. The age groups are founded in the institution of circumcision in Tiriki community and so, *idumi* plays a great role in the formation of these tribal social organization.

2.5 Religious Life of the Tiriki people

The larger Luhya ethnic group recognize their creator as “*Were*” (Wagner, 1954: 20-28). Their understanding of the Supreme Being, is similar to Christianity, the nature of the supreme being is described as all knowing, omnipotent, benevolent, loving, caring, the provider and omnipresent. The Tiriki believe in spirits, believed to influence the living community. The said spirits are believed to be the souls of elders who died recently and they are commonly referred to us as ancestors. Ancestors are generally, deceased relatives who are also known as *baguga* or *misambwa* (Gibbs, 1965).

Ancestral cult was a common phenomenon organized within Tiriki clans and was the tribe’s principal indigenous religious system. These ancestral cult supplications were replete with beer – drinking ceremonies (Sangree, 1962). Ordinarily, ancestral supplications were carried out in the homestead ancestral shrines commonly called *lusambwa* where the keeper was the homestead head. The ancestral supplications were common during the time of community trouble, stress and moments of transition and community celebrations. For instance, after the harvest of the grains, victory over the

enemies and even a successful raid by the warriors. Supplications could also be performed due to illness among the community members. The homestead head, assisted by a diviner could hold supplications to ascertain if the illness is due to the ancestral spirits having been forgotten and therefore disinterested with people of the community. Other occasions where supplications were done was during weddings, funerals and at the conclusion of a youth's initiation. Sangree (1962) notes that, ordinarily, the traditional way people showed friendship and hospitality was to serve food followed by beer and so, this cultural act was extended to the ancestral spirits to restore the lost favours and aid to the people. For Gibbs (1965, p. 63), the Tiriki people believed that the ancestral spirits were the source of power and so "if the *misambwa* are indifferent.....you will not receive their strength and therefore, fall on bad times" (Gibbs, 1965, p. 63).

2.6 Tiriki – Encounter with Christianity

In East Africa, Kenya was the first country to receive Christian missionaries at its coast region (Baur, 2009). Surprisingly, the early missionaries got into the interior parts of Tanzania and Uganda faster than in Kenya. One reason for this occurrence is that, Kenya did not have proper trade routes until the construction of the Kenya - Uganda Railway. The railway network reached Nairobi in 1899 and later in Kisumu in 1901 (Baur, 2009) that was followed with the flood of mission in Nyanza region. Since then, Kenya is Christian dominated country with the majority of Christians belonging to Protestant denominations. Baur (1990) puts the Protestants 45%, Roman Catholic 33%, others including Evangelical confessions and African Inland Churches 2%, indigenous beliefs 10% and Muslim 10%.

Baur (2009) explains that, out of the twelve mission societies that arrived in Kenya after the building of the railway line, nine were Protestant, led by the Church Missionary

Society (CMS) a wing of the Church of England whose headquarter was at Kabete by 1900. They came from Uganda and settled at Western Kenya at Maseno in 1906 (Baur, 2009) and were accompanied by the Presbyterian Church through the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM). Later, from England came the United Methodist Mission (UMM) which settled in Meru by 1910. There were American societies, including; the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) out of which grew the Africa Inland Church (AIC) founded by Cameron Scott concentrated in Ukambani region. The Friends Quakers through the Friends Africa Mission (FAM), the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) and Canadian Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) became dominant in Western Kenya (Baur, 2009).

Amatsimbi (2013) noted that, Christian missionaries responsible for spreading Christianity in Kenya included CMS, SDA, FAM, CSM, Mill Hill Missionaries (MHM) of the Roman Catholic, Consolata Catholic Mission (CCM), Gospel Mission Society (GMS), the Church of God (COG), the Africa Inland Church (AIC) and Salvation Army (SA). Notably, Willis Hotchkiss was among the first missionary to lead the FAM band North from Kisumu and settled at Kaimosi (Anderson, 1977). The Mill Hill fathers and CMS came from Uganda and Bishop J.J. Willis of Church Missionary Society (CMS) started the Maseno School (Anderson, 1977).

The Catholic Mill Hill were responsible for the introduction of Catholicism in the entire Western Kenya region. The MHM Fathers belong to the missionary society of Saint Joseph founded by Cardinal Herbert Vaughan in 1866 in England. The Catholic Church established itself in Vihiga County, in 1950 spearheaded by this Catholic MHM. Faupel (1969) stated that, earlier on, the MHM arrived in Uganda in 1895 after an invitation by the White Catholic Missionaries (Holy Ghost Fathers) before extending their missionary work in Western Kenya (Burgman, 1990). The Upper Nile vicariate

was created in 1894 and put under the leadership of Bishop Henry Hanlon a MHM (Barrett, et al., 1973). Bishop Henry Hanlon, the new Bishop of the Upper Nile, led the first group of MHM across Kenya in 1895 with his companions; Fathers James Prendergast (England), Thomas Mathews (Scotland), Luke Plunkett (England) and Gregory Kestens (Netherlands).

The White Fathers were from France and Buganda which was a British Protectorate territory as from 1894 and therefore, they invited the missionaries from Britain to Evangelize Buganda. The White Fathers were disadvantaged being predominantly a French Society working in a British territory and so, they invited the MHM to show that Catholic Church was not synonymous to French nationalism (Barrett, et al., 1973, p. 31).

When the MHM Fathers landed in Uganda, the White Fathers handed over the Catholic stations they had already founded. The MHM Fathers began aggressive Catholic evangelization and established more Catholic mission stations. By this time, both Kisumu and Mumias were still part of Uganda territory. The MHM Fathers started Catholic missions in trading centers along the caravan route beginning with Kisumu at a place known as Ojolla in 1903 and Mumias in 1904 (Burgman, 1990). Mumias Catholic mission was meant to spearhead Catholic evangelization in the entire Luhyaland. Burgman (1990, p. 32) stated that, by 1904, Kisumu was the centre of the entire Luoland while at the same time, Mumias was the centre of Luhyaland. These two centers were to blossom in different directions, setting up two churches and several dioceses among the two major tribes of Kavirondo or Western Kenya (Burgman, 1990).

In Vihiga County, 97.5% of the people are Christians, forming the majority of the population in the region with 34.4% Protestants, 41% Evangelicals, 18.3% other

Christians, 3.8% Catholics (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This is equally true for Hamisi Sub – County, where Christianity remains the dominant religion and is headquarter of four main Churches: PAG, the Friends Church (Quakers), the African Divine Church (ADC), the Israel (Nineveh) Church and Catholic Church, whose headquarter is in Kakamega with two parishes at Buyangu and Erusui.

The Catholic missionaries came to counter the Protestant influence to save the natives from “Protestant errors” (Burgman, 1990). After the two parishes Mumias and Mukumu established in Luhyaland by the MHM, they became the springboard for further evangelization in this region. The Bishop, Henry Hanlon appointed Fathers Van der Agt and Arnold Witlox to Mukumu and Grimshaw and Rogan at Mumias by 1908. Meanwhile, Fathers Brandsma and Stam were serving the Luo people in Kisumu. Burgman (1990) states that, with these MHM in the region, the church of Kavirondo was born.

The Catholic faith reached Vihiga County through the effort of Father Arnold Witlox in 1908, who was working at Mukumu Parish and felt the urge to go to different places in order to spread the good news (Burgman, 1990, p. 72). He could not go to the West and North since Mumias Parish was already established. Looking at the East, there was the great Nandi Escapment with a different tribe of people and so it could not work. The only option he was left with was the Southern direction where he saw a densely populated region extending down to Kisumu but occupied by the Luhya people and the entire region referred to as “Maragoli.” Father Witlox found a suitable place in Idakho and informed the D.C. Mr. Home who gave a greenlight to him to approach the land offices (Burgman, 1990). This was the place where Eregi Catholic Parish was established to serve the people of Maragoli region (Personal communication, August, 20, 2023).

Meanwhile from Kisumu side, Father Wall, after the government abolished the “Apostolic Faith Mission” and wanted work of evangelization to be carried out “by a responsible mission society,” the MHM society applied. If the government responded in the affirmative, Father Wall wrote that “the Nyang’ori would altogether be ours” (Burgman, 1990, p. 74). The Nyang’ori region was the most suitable since it linked up to Eregi Parish towards the North and paved way to the Nandi region. Father Wall liked the place but Father Witlox from Eregi Parish informed him that he had already started two catechumenates in nearby region Tiriki. But with the First World War in 1914, all the world went of fire, and with it the beautiful plans for Nyang’ori mission (Burgman, 1990).

Buyangu Catholic mission was the first to be established in the entire Vihiga County or in Maragoli land as it was being referred to by then (Personal communication, October 24, 2023). It was officially opened and dedicated to Our Lady of Fatima in 1956 by the MHM. As mentioned above, it was originally under the larger Eregi Catholic Parish for a long time since 1938 when the pioneer priests used to make pastoral visits. The first station was at Jepseri where a temporal church and school was built but 1949-1954, it was relocated to the present site in Buyangu (Personal communication, October 16, 2023). A Christian narrated how they used to have mass in the village Jepseri with the visiting priests from the Eregi parish until the church at Buyangu was established as a Catholic Parish independent from Eregi. This move was a relief to many Christians who used to trek to Eregi for any religious function. The first parish priest was Father J.B. Rostron from a Mill Hill Society of St. Joseph in England (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

When the MHM left around 1960, Buyangu Catholic Parish was put under the management of the Guadalupe Fathers from Mexico and Father Sabastian Mesa was

made the first parish priest of Buyangu after the MHM Fathers who had been managing the parish (Personal communication, October 24, 2023). It became to be known as the Guadalupe Parish in Kakamega Catholic diocese by the local people since it was served for a long time by the Mexican Fathers before they left for local clergy (Personal communication, October 23, 2023).

Due to the good work of these missionaries, the parish grew and led to the creation of other three Catholic missions in Vihiga County namely; St. Paul's Erusui, St. Ursula Chamakanga and St. Charles Lwanga Hambale Parish (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). Presently, Buyangu Parish has a total of eight outstations including; Mwema, Hamisi, Chepsaga, Musoywa, Hamune, Masawa, Mulundu and Chepnyunyu plus Buyangu outstations. Earlier on, three outstations, Kipchemwon, Soy and Kapkenda were surrendered to Eldoret Diocese since they all belong to Rift Valley for administratively (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

2.7 Summary

This section has outlined the geographical and socio – religious background of the Tiriki people in Hamisi Sub – County. Historically, the Tiriki are one of the 22 culturally similar but politically discrete Bantu Sub – tribes in North Nyanza collectively known as Luhya. The Tiriki Sub – Tribe was not well consolidated as most of the other Luhya sub – tribes. Their current location was originally inhabited by the Terik who were of the Kalenjin origin. Through immigration of other Luhya communities into this region, inhabited by Terik, the Tiriki sub – tribe was established. Most of the people who migrated to this region were Maragolis and Banyore people of the Luhya ethnic group. It comprised of all those immigrants who accepted to be circumcised in the Terik way and therefore, referred as Tiriki in Terik language.

Therefore, *idumi* as we have it today was borrowed from the Terik community and adopted by the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County. Generally, the social structure of the Tiriki people was made up of three pillars namely; the clan, the age – group or age set and the village at large. At the centre of this structure was idumi circumcision ritual through which boys who are circumcised together are made to belong to the same age – group known as *lixula* in singular and *maxula* in plural. Idumi forms the foundation on which the entire life of the Tiriki people is anchored.

This area has also been under Christianity for more than hundred years since the inception the Friends Quaker missionaries. The region is Christian dominated with the Protestant churches taking the lead. The Catholic church is the minority in the region. The Catholic faith was introduced in this region by the MHM as early as 1938 when the priests from Eregi used to make some pastoral visits. Officially the Catholic Church was established in Vihiga County in 1950 and Buyangu was the first Parish to be established. Other Catholic Parishes in Vihiga County are Luanda, Hambale, Chamakanga and Erusui.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MORAL AND NORMATIVE FOUNDATION OF *IDUMI* RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY.

3.1 Introduction

This section addresses the first objective about the moral and normative foundation of *idumi*. It begins by explaining *idumi* ritual, the stages of *idumi*, the factors considered before declaring *idumi* season and then, followed by the cultural, social, moral, political and religious foundations of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki.

3.2 *Idumi* Ritual

In western Kenya, most of the communities circumcise their boys as an initiation rite to adulthood and this cultural practice is zealously upheld. Every man is expected to go through this initiation rite and if not, one is taken not to have matured socially and culturally. The Luhya people circumcise their boys for various reasons. These include giving them that cultural identity, according them social status within the community and share the moral responsibilities with the other community members.

There are different forms of circumcision all over the world, but in Western Kenya, the cutting of a man's foreskin is the predominant form of initiation (Mabonga, 2022). The process is normally followed by several rituals and secrets that prepare the initiate for adult life. For instance, the Tiriki initiates have plenty of life skills and teachings gained during and after the seclusion period. Traditionally, *idumi* was likened to a school of morality meant to educate boys into the Tiriki traditions. It is a unique school that moulds boys into well-behaved gentlemen enabling the initiates to exhibit new etiquette after the ritual (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

For the Tiriki of Western Kenya, circumcision goes far beyond the surgical procedure. It is a prolonged procedure manifested in ceremonies at different phases. For the Tiriki, there is a symbolic meaning deep-rooted in *idumi* ritual. Seemingly, what the Tiriki people know as *idumi*, the other Luhya ethnic groups such as Wanga and Banyala call it *shikhebo* while Bukusu and Bagisu call it *embalu* which literally means knife. In Luhya community, young men of about sixteen to nineteen years are supposed to go through the circumcision ritual.

3.3 Myths of Circumcision Origin among Luhya Sub Tribes

The present-day Luhya circumcision ritual can be traced back to *Mango*, son of Bwayi and omukhurarwa by clan (Makila 1978, p. 170) who lived at Mwiala. *Mango* had two sons whom he loved. According to oral traditions, there lived a notorious serpent called *Khuruwe ya bebe* at Mwiala which used to devour beasts and human beings that came along its way (Mayende, 2022).

At that moment, the Luhya did not practice circumcision as seriously and systematically as their *Barwa* (Kalenjin stock) neighbours. Moreover, circumcision was not compulsory for Bukusu men apart from those who were to take up leadership positions. The snake was feared even by the *Barwa Bakinis*, yet they claimed to be men because of their circumcision.

One day, *Mango's* sons became victims of the serpent while they were grazing cattle. He was so enraged that he swore to kill the murderous monster single-handedly (Mayende, 2022). People were amazed by *Mango's* solemn declaration. The *Barwa* people laughed at him saying; “*Mango*, if you can kill that serpent, we will circumcise you and give you our daughter for a bride...” (Makila 1978, p. 171).

Determined to kill the snake, *Mango* sharpened his sword (*embalu*), took his shield and went straight into the cave where the snake stayed. He was aware of how the serpent entered the cave and how it coiled itself resting the head at the entrance of the cave. Mango cut a piece of log and placed it at the exact spot where the snake used to rest its head. He stripped naked and then entered a cave hiding in a dark corner of the cave (Lo Liyong, 1972, p. 69).

Meanwhile, crowds of people gathered around, observing from a distance of three kilometers or even more and they were all alert lest the serpent descend upon them unawares (Mayende, 2022). After a long and frightened wait, the serpent appeared. It took notice of the log but then turned without looking in the nooks of the cave. Those who waited from far thought that Mango was already dead [The Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/EN/3/2/4:1929-1935]. The snake curled its body into a heap and rested its head on the log. Mango tightened his grip on the *embalu* and lashed out a blow with the sword severing the serpent's head. In less than five minutes, the notorious and murderous snake was dead. Mango was a hero. He then moved out of the cave, gesturing and beckoning to the unbelieving crowd that the serpent was dead. However, this call had mixed reactions from the spectators. Some took to their heels thinking that *Mango* was running away from the snake while others thought he was crazy (Mayende, 2022). A few reasonable and curious people wanted to know what happened. They rushed to congratulate him for being alive.

When they reached the cave, they saw for themselves and they carried *Mango* shoulder high and started singing jubilantly. This did not sound well with the Barwa. Makila (1967, p. 174) records how they murmured: "How can omusinde achieve such an incredible feat? We, the circumcised ones, have been scampering from this thing like frightened chicks. Mango must be circumcised now." So, *Mango* agreed

to be circumcised and when he was being escorted home for circumcision, his old mother burst into tears and cried:

“Wooeii, woeii! Mango my only son. Ahaaa, hooh, Mango, did I not tell you that this circumcision is painful? You have chosen it yourself. There you are.”

The *Babukusu* turned these fateful words of Mango’s mother into a song, thereby composing the famous *sioyaye* chant which is sang when escorting the candidate home from the mudding place to face the knife (Mayende, 2022). After this heroic act, circumcision was made compulsory in *Bukusu* land and it became a public ordeal where a real man was to face the knife outside his father’s house and in full glare of everybody. The age-set system which was almost being forgotten was revived (Were, 1967, pp. 172-173).

3.4 Nandi-Terik Influence

The Terik people originally came from Mount Elgon and they were pastoralists and with a severe drought, they moved south of Lake Victoria to an area called Asembo where they found Abalukhoba and other clans of the *Abatirichi* with their ruler Chisanya (Ng’ang’a, 2006, p. 28). The Terik people were the earliest inhabitants of Hamisi Sub – County before the other people migrated into this region. The larger lineage of the Terik people are now in Aldai in Nandi County and only a few are left in Vihiga County. The Terik mixed with the local population and exchanged food stuff for meat since they were pastoralists. After the interaction, one of the Luhya clans which had come from Misri was given a Terik name, becoming known as the *Abatirichi*. The Terik are Nilo – Hamitic by origin and of a Nandi offshoot. They were originally and traditionally herdsmen inhabiting the region presently occupied by the Tiriki who are Bantus.

Presently, there is only a small number of Terik remaining in this region since the majority have migrated into the nearby Nandi region. Although almost all the Luhya people circumcise their young boys as a rite of passage to adulthood, the one of the Tiriki people is very unique and specific. It is totally different from that of other Luhya communities in terms of the rituals involved. The uniqueness is due to the influence the Tiriki people acquired from the Kalenjin (Nandi – Terik) community. In fact, the foundation of *idumi* circumcision practice is totally of the Nandi origin and even the Tiriki are in agreement that the age – group organization is not indigenous to them but borrowed from the Terik community (Gibbs, 1965).

Like the Tiriki, the Terik people also circumcise their boys in the sacred groves and their ritual is more secretive and elaborate than that of the Tiriki people. They have the beer festivals at every stage of their circumcision ritual. Unlike the Tirikis, their beer and alcohol is prepared in the forests. There are quite a number of similarities between the Terik and Tiriki circumcision ritual.

3.5 Tiriki Wordview on *Idumi*

The *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘worldview’ as a set of fundamental beliefs, attitudes and values determining or constituting a comprehensive outlook of life and the universe. Worldview whether African, European, Asian or American; ancient, modern or contemporary; scientific or non-scientific; religious or secular can be understood as the way individuals or a group of people view reality around them. African traditional worldview would therefore be how an individual or group of people would view reality as an African or Africans. This view is determined by their traditional cultural values, beliefs and practices, which also created it. Therefore, there is an intricate but intertwined relationship between a worldview and factors that created it. One cannot divorce the two from each other. Thus, when one

discusses traditional African worldview, one will be discussing its traditional religious beliefs and philosophy as well. The traditional beliefs and philosophy is manifested in a people's culture. Summingly, a worldview is a way of perceiving reality among a group of people.

The Luhya have a worldview explaining about origin of circumcision, why people circumcise, how to circumcise, rules of circumcision and the correct rites. Many of the Luhya communities circumcise their young ones as a rite of passage into adulthood and so to the Tiriki community. What the other Luhya communities such as the Wanga and Banyala refer to as *shikhebo* and *embalu* by the Bukusu people is what the Tiriki people refers to as *idumi*. *Shikhebo* is the entire traditional cultural ceremony through which a young man graduates into adulthood equivalent of *idumi* among the Tiriki people although not elaborate in nature (Tiriki elder, personal communication, August 24, 2023). It is not a single act but a series of events performed to ensure that the young men graduate into adulthood. Therefore, *idumi* is not an act but the entire Tiriki cultural process and ceremony through which boys become adults. *Idumi* includes all the aspects involved in the cultural ritual of circumcision of the young people in Tiriki community. One of the elders who was interviewed narrates how *idumi* is not a single act but a process with a series of cultural practices that the community and the boys go through during the circumcision rite involving several stages (Personal communication, October 25, 2023). Therefore, *idumi* is the entire cultural ceremony through which the young men are initiated into adulthood without which one is regarded as a child in Tiriki community (Personal communication, October 23, 2023).

Idumi season is the period dedicated for the initiation of the young ones into adulthood and it normally takes place after four- or five-year's intervals. The entire year is referred to as the year of *idumi* or the year of circumcision. For instance, according to one of the

elders interviewed on when will the next *idumi* occur, he categorically stated that, the year 2025 will be the next year of *idumi* if something extraordinary does not happen like the case of COVID 19 in 2020 (Personal communication, October 23, 2023). The exact period when the young people go through this cultural practice of circumcision within the year of *idumi* is what is referred to as *idumi* circumcision season which begins by August to December of the year of *idumi* (Personal communication, October 25, 2023).

Idumi as a cultural practice entails all the stages the initiates go through before being declared a mature person among the Tiriki community. *Idumi* involves the preparatory stage where the candidates are carefully chosen and made ready for the rite. This is directly followed by the real circumcision ordeal that all the initiates face in the sacred graves. After the circumcision, the initiates are led by elders into the seclusion huts where induction into the culture and the Tiriki traditions is done through the moral teachings. When the initiates have healed completely, what follows is the incorporation stage or integration of the initiates back into their families with a new status of being. Therefore, *idumi* pertains all these different stages through which the initiates go through before they graduate to adulthood (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

Among other cultural practices, *idumi* takes precedence for Tirikis. The entire life of the community is bound in this cultural practice. It becomes the source and the summit of life among the Tiriki people. Those who go through the practice are very proud to be called Tirikis and despise those who have not gone through the same rite. For them, *idumi* circumcision ritual makes them superior to the uncircumcised and those not initiated in the Tiriki way (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

For the initiates, *idumi* gives them that tribal and cultural identity to rightly belong to the Tiriki community. One is endowed with both moral and social responsibilities after being initiated into adulthood. For instance, one is now allowed to engage in sexual relations that lead to marriage and establishment of the family. According to Tiriki elders, those who have gone through the ritual take upon themselves a responsibility to protect and defend the community in case of any aggression (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). There is also social responsibilities acquired through the social categorization of age – groups where the bond of brotherhood is formed. For instance, circumcision connect the initiates with their ancestors and community through the shedding of blood in the sacred groves (Personal communication, October 25, 2023).

Presently, *idumi* is still valued among the Tiriki people and young men feel proud to be initiated into this cultural practice. Although we have heard the influence of both Christianity and modernity, *idumi* is still practiced among the Tiriki people. The outside influence has resulted into two distinct factions regarding *idumi* circumcision ritual as we will see in Chapter Three of this research. There are those who firmly remained holding on their Tiriki culture and traditions - the traditionalist and those who embraced Christianity - Tiriki – Christian faction (Personal communication, October 26, 2023). With the Christian influence, today, many people are moving from the original Tiriki or traditional faction to Christianity.

The members of one of the FGD were in agreement that, generally, the act of circumcision per se is not bad but the rituals that accompany this circumcision rite (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). The cultural rituals have been a source of contention between Christianity and the Tiriki culture. As mentioned in Chapter Four, such practices like dancing of the initiates' nude, prolonged seclusion interfering with school learning, economic burden, and immoralities form the basis of why *idumi* was

condemned by the early Christian missionaries. Still, there are good cultural and moral values in *idumi* circumcision ritual that Christianity can learn and even use in its process of evangelization as explained in Chapter Five.

3.6 Foundation of *Idumi*

The Tiriki people are a sub – tribe of the Luhya community. Shilabukha (2006) reckons that, Tiriki is located in the formerly larger Kakamega area and closely related to the Idakho and Isukha people of Shinyalu and Ikolomani divisions respectively with the circumcision practice ritual totally distinct from the other Luhya communities. Generally, the origin of the cultural circumcision ritual of circumcision is not clearly known and therefore, different from community to community depending on the history and specific culture of the community in point. But most of African communities have some kind of myths of the origin of circumcision ritual while others have oral tradition regarding the same (Kimani, 2010).

The Tiriki people are renowned for their love of cultural traditions especially that of *idumi*, which is an elaborate male circumcision ritual (Shilabukha, 2006). They acquired this *idumi* practice through the interaction and influence from their neighbours the Nandi community or the Terik people. Among the Luhya communities, other sub – tribes also acquired there circumcision ritual *idumi* from the Nandi such as the *Abatachoni* ethnic group. Kakai (1995) states that, although the circumcision in Tachoni has a long history from antiquity in Misri where they originated, they agree that, while they were staying at Sirikwa and Mbayi in Uasin Gishu Plateau, the Tachoni ancestors formed a section of the *Kalenjin* communities residing in this region. Therefore, the members of the Abahabiya and Ababichu clans of Tachoni, who were circumcisers claim to have inherited the circumcision art from their Kalenjin ancestry (Kakai, 1995).

The Tachoni circumcision and that of Tiriki people have many things in common including the age – group categorization. Mwanzi (1977, p. 107) stated that, the Kipsigis kind of circumcision was only learnt accidentally after habitual offender was punished through circumcision. For the community, they thought that this act of circumcision would kill the offender but he survived. Apart from surviving death by circumcision, he instead prospered. The Kipsigis oral tradition maintains that this led to other people adopting the ritual of circumcision in view of the progress and success deemed from it (Mwanzi, 1977).

Since then, although circumcision was not originally a cultural practice of the Kipsigis, it was adopted and treasured to date (Mwanzi, 1977). Wanyama and Egesah (2015) explained that, the myths about the Bukusu people about their traditional circumcision traces its origin to the heroic of one ancestor named Mango who killed a notorious serpent called *khururwe-Yabebe* which used to kill beasts and human beings. The community of Barwa told him, if you kill that serpent, we will circumcise you and give you one of our daughters for a bride. For you shall have proven yourself an indomitable warrior, whose honour should be circumcision (Wanyama & Egesah, 2015). Mango the hero killed the serpent single handedly and therefore, circumcised and rewarded with a bride from Barwa community. Henceforth, circumcision was adopted by the Bukusu community (Kimani, 2010).

Like the Tachoni and even Bukusu, the traditional circumcision practice *idumi* is of Nandi origin and therefore different from the other Luhya communities. During their settlement, the Tiriki people encountered the Kalenjins with their cultural circumcision rituals. Simani (2005, p. 209) explains that *idumi* was handed down to the Proto-Tiriki by a Terik elder man named Diligin who allowed a young Tiriki man by name Ambulavu Khwakhoba to be circumcised among his people. After this circumcision of

a Tiriki man in Terik traditional circumcision ritual, the Tiriki people adopted it and still practice to date. The Tiriki people were not very distinct group like other Luhya communities but comprised many different people of different ethnic groups who managed to migrate and settle among the Terik people. The Teriks accepted these immigrants but with their own conditions in exchange with the land on which they settled.

The Tiriki people practice *idumi* as an initiation ceremony where the young boys are graduated into adulthood. This practice among the Tiriki people comes every after five years during the month of August except when there is a disaster, calamity and epidemic like it happened in the year 2020 with the Covid 19 pandemic (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). As stated earlier that Tirikis include all immigrants who settled in this region and accepted the Terik circumcision ritual. Therefore, according to a Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 15, 2023), after the immigrants settling in the region, the Teriks asked them to give them their sons to undergo the Terik circumcision ritual.

Those sons whose parents accepted were circumcised according to the Terik tradition. After this circumcision, the children were fully accepted as the Terik and the parents given land to farm. To the parents who had already been circumcised before their migration, they went through a special ritual of re-admission into the Terik community called *shigongo* or buying the Terik circumcision after which they were fully accepted as belonging to the Terik community. Majority of these immigrants were Maragoli and the Banyole people who settled in this region and accepted the Terik circumcision and therefore, referred to as the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – county.

Notably, the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi* has been in existence for a long time and its origin dates back to time immemorial since the days of their ancestors and has survived to date albeit with some changes related to modernity and Christianity. The Tiriki people border the Nandi of Rift Valley and so their *idumi* ritual borrows a lot from their neighbours who practice circumcision in the same manner (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). The main idea why the Terik type of circumcision was adopted by the Tiriki people was to initiate young boys of certain age group into adulthood and at the same time instill into them values of being responsible members of the community. Other values such as self-reliance and being industrious were also inculcated into the young men to enable them face the challenges of life as adult members of the community. Apart from these essential values imparted into the young ones, *idumi* ritual left a permanent mark of identity to the initiates that enabled them to totally identify themselves with the Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 30, 2023).

Originally, the Tiriki circumcision ritual with the age –group organization was not indigenous to the Luhya community but a cultural practice that was received from the Terik. Gibbs (1965) noted that:

During the last 150 or 200 years, the Luhya segments and family groups have been migrating from the North and West into the region now known as Tiriki, which was already thinly inhabited by the Nilo – Hamitic Terik who were herdsmen and an offshoot of the Nandi tribe. The Terik allowed the Luhya to settle in the region provided they agreed to become incorporated into the Terik military organization. The Terik age – group supply the principal organizational framework for their military regiments.....and so every Luhya immigrant was obliged to undergo initiation into an age – group of military age.....and accept post – puberty circumcision and age – group initiation for his sons.

This shows that *idumi* was not part of the Luhya customs but only borrowed from the Terik community which used it for its military organizational purpose.

Therefore, as the Luhya people settled in this region, they were influenced and adopted the new Kalenjin way of initiation to adulthood with a unique characteristic of grouped circumcision system. Through this special circumcision ritual, all the Luhya immigrants who were converted into full – fledged members of the Terik tribe were referred to as the Tiriki – *Batirichi* the Bantu linguistic rendering of Terik (Gibbs, 1965).

3.7 Organization of the *Idumi*

Idumi is a well organized and defined cultural practice with well-defined roles for each member. *Idumi* is at the core of the entire Tiriki people's lives and everything rotates around this cultural practice. It is described by the Tiriki elders as something spiral that keeps on rolling and once it begins, everything else is brought at standstill (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). It is like when the termites start coming out (*khuduma*) during their season where the whole community is full of them because of their spreading (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). The season of *idumi* brings to standstill almost all other activities in the community such as S C meetings, funeral celebrations, businesses and even to some extend education.

A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 16, 2023) explained that, in Hamisi Sub - County, the cultural ritual of *idumi* is well organized starting with the planning committee at the Sub – County level and at the village level which is the implementation committees of each circumcision sacred groves. Due to the two distinct factions pertaining to this circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people, the committee at the Sub – County level must also reflect this diversity with members of both the traditional and the Christian faction (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). The organization of *idumi* ceremony involves various individuals and groups with specific roles. For instance, there is an administrative body which consists of elders and community

leaders. Their role is overseeing and coordinating the entire *idumi* ceremony in the region. They ensure that, the necessary preparations are made and that the *idumi* circumcision ritual is carried out smoothly (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

It is the same group of elders that form the Sub – County committee with the chairperson, secretary, treasurer and other coopted elders most preferably every chair of each sacred circumcision grove or forest (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). With two Tiriki circumcision factions, then it means that if the chairperson is from the Tiriki traditional faction, then the vice is from the Tiriki – Christian faction also considered at other levels of leadership at the Sub – County level. Before the commencement of *idumi* circumcision seasons, the *idumi* sub – county committee summons all the leaders at the village level for briefing. These will include all the leaders in charge of the various circumcision groves. It is necessary that the two opposing *idumi* factions are represented by their leaders in this meeting for the preparation of *idumi* ceremonies. This meeting is necessary since all the planning of *idumi* for both the groups is arranged and finalized. To avoid conflicts and in fighting between the groups, the program of the activities of each group is given.

Generally, the Sub – County committee is fully responsible for everything that happens during the *idumi* circumcision season (Personal communication, August 17, 2023). The functions of the Sub – County committee include the following:

To declare that *idumi* is officially launched; to declare the dates when *idumi* circumcision ritual is to begin; to come up with rules and regulations pertaining to entire *idumi* circumcision ritual, to resolve the conflicts and disputes over *idumi* circumcision ritual, provide the link between the Tiriki community and the government to access the permit, security and even medical assistance during the *idumi* circumcision season (Personal communication, 18th August 18, 2023).

Therefore, at the top we have the council of sub – tribal leaders who are charged with the responsibility to decide whether to have the circumcision or not based on the harvest

of the grains and other factors like diseases and famine. Their decision is only made known by the ritual leaders through a special cultural song - *lwimbo lyu baxulu* familiar to all the community members (Gibbs, 9165). Once the song is sounded, all the people know that the season of *idumi* has come and people start preparing for it seriously. After the launching of the *idumi* season by the sub – county committee, the various committees at the village levels now implements the decision of the sub – county committee. These are the committees drawn from every sacred circumcision forest who are normally summoned for briefing before the *idumi* circumcision ritual commences officially (personal communication, August 19, 2023).

The commencement of the season of *idumi* is made public or announced by the community elders to inform the community about the beginning of *idumi* circumcision season. This can take various forms including visiting the households and making announcements in public places (Personal communication, August 20, 2023). The onset of *idumi* season can also be officially announced by drumming and singing, usually done by young men who move around the community to deliver and spread the message to the entire community (Personal communication, August 20, 2023). In modern times and especially today, the commencement of *idumi* is done through the radio and the Television which relay the information about the commencement of *idumi* season to the public. For instance, through the Vuuka FM, a famous radio station in Vihiga County (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

The structure of *idumi* circumcision ritual institution is the same as that at the sub – county level with a properly constituted committee. Their work is to implement the decisions of the higher committee at the sub – county and follow the given guidelines strictly depending on with Tiriki faction (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). Therefore, immediately, the tribal chief and his council of elders (*basaxulu*) of each

community or village take up the decision and begin the preparation by selecting, putting the initiates into groups and assigning a counsellor (*mudili*) to each group.

The responsibility of the counsellor (*mudili*) involves building of the seclusion (*shirumbi*) hut for the initiates and caring of them during the entire seclusion period. Traditionally, because of the many customs and taboos surrounding *idumi* circumcision ritual, they preferred a counselor who was not married, to be specific, a bachelor so that, they are assured he will not engage in sexual activities during the entire season of circumcision (Personal communication, August 20, 2023). This was because, sexual involvement interfered with the healing process of the initiates. Today, the selection of a counselor is done with a lot of caution, the community goes for individuals with wide experience and more probably elders who provide guidance and support to the initiates during the initiation period. They give advices to the initiates by inculcating in them some of the Tiriki cultural values before transition into adulthood (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

In the entire *idumi* circumcision ritual, the initiation chiefs or circumcisers were quite very important people. They were well – skilled individuals in matters of circumcision and most probably the elders or traditional healers. Their main function was to perform circumcision during the *idumi* circumcision ritual (Personal communication, August 29, 2023). This is the man who was responsible in carrying out the circumcision operation, ensuring that the initiates are safe and not prone to any dangers or mishandling (Personal communication, August 29, 2023).

At the community level, the village elders assist in the selection of the initiates before handing them over to the forest elders or the community council of elders. At the family level, the parents of initiates have a responsibility to engage a sponsor who will provide

the grain and food to their son throughout the period of seclusion. The parents of the initiates play a very important role for the success of the entire *idumi* circumcision ritual. They prepare their sons prior to the circumcision season and provide all the material and financial support to their son throughout the circumcision period. They give remote preparation to their sons before facing the ordeal of circumcision to graduate to adulthood (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

3.8 The Stages of *Idumi*

Idumi is not something that happens once at the interval of five years and is a prolonged cultural ceremony that takes a reasonable period of time. Formally, it used to take six month, then it was reduced to three but today, it takes one month. The stages of *idumi* include the preparatory phase where the initiates are selected and directly followed by circumcision itself in the sacred groves. After circumcision, the initiates are led to their seclusion huts where they stay until they graduate into adulthood before joining their families.

3.8.1 Preparatory Stage

This pertains to all that happen to the initiates before they are subjected to the real circumcision act. It could be taken as a stage of preparation of the candidates for the circumcision. Before the actual circumcision time, there is normally prior planning almost for a year and every step is observed meticulously by all. *Idumi* circumcision committees start the preparation through their meetings and briefings. The government is well informed of the commencement of the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies by the Sub – County committee officials who also obtain the permit to sanction the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). The permit is essential to allow the community and those families of the initiates to prepare and brew beer for the circumcision ritual throughout the season without police interference

(Personal communication, August 24, 2023). During the entire period of circumcision, beer and beer brewing is legalized and even the police restrain from arresting anybody drunk or making beer (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

During the focus group discussion, most of the members were in agreement that, the initiates are identified through a traditional process by the Tiriki elders or community leaders who have the knowledge and authority to carry out the initiation ceremony. At the village level, the village elders recruit the initiates in good time and also check their health status which is necessary for budgeting both at the village level and sub – county level. The process of identification involves several stages and people. First, the community members especially the elders, observe the behaviour and character of the young men within the community looking for qualities such as maturity, responsibility and readiness to undergo the initiation process (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). Typically, boys between the age of twelve and fifteen years are chosen by the community elders based on various factors such as physical and mental readiness, family background and moral character (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

Once the potential candidates have been identified, the elders now engage the families to ensure their consent and support. The family plays an important role in the initiation process, giving guidance and support to the initiates throughout the season of circumcision. After identification, the candidates are officially informed of their selection and guided through the necessary preparation for the initial ceremony including physical and mental preparations as well as acquiring the required knowledge and skills for their transition into adulthood (Personal communication, August 16, 2023).

The number of initiates is important before declaring *idumi* circumcision season (Tiriki elder, personal communication, August 22, 2023). However, the most important thing is that, the initiates are well prepared to face the knife courageously. It is meant to psych the initiate to build up courage. In most of the Luhya communities, this is achieved through singing songs of courage around the village (Ministry of State for National Cultural Heritage, n.d).

Most of the respondents were in agreement that, different people are involved in the preparation of *idumi* at different levels. But before the commencement of *idumi* circumcision ritual, the elders across the region gather under a tree on a hilly area called *Kapkoros* and perform certain rituals to usher in the circumcision season (Personal communication, September 2, 2023).

On this very day, the fire is lit traditionally commonly known as *kusegera* in the local language. Together, a blemish lamb and cockerel are slaughtered and a trumpet is blown to signify that all is well and circumcision can begin. Afterward, each group disperses to their respective areas to begin the arrangement of *idumi* circumcision ritual as scheduled by the sub- county committee (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). Things happen like this because the Tiriki people adopted this cultural practice from the Terik community and therefore, the final decision to have *idumi* depends on the Terik ritual elders who must pronounce themselves on the matters of *idumi* (Gibbs, 1965). Their decision is procedurally passed on to all sub – tribal ritual leaders who really deliberate at length and give their final decision about the same to the ritual leaders. If the decision of the sub – tribal leaders is in the affirmative, the ritual leaders make this decision known to the sub – tribal chief and his council of elders (*basaxulu bi idumi*). The sub – tribe is divided into some communities with council of elders. The

Community or village elders are the ones directly involved in selecting the initiation candidates (Gibbs, 1965) and the counselor (*mutiri*).

Before the initiation, the parents and the guardians of the initiates must be adequately prepared to provide for the initiates during seclusion period. *Idumi* circumcision ritual ceremony is quite involving in terms of preparation and economic implications (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). During this preparatory stage, the candidates are selected and gathered in one of the homes of one elder of the community where they will spend the night. The initiates are prepared well to meet the knife during the circumcision with courage. This is a time where the initiates are given the vital instructions by the elders before circumcision (Personal communication, September 15, 2023).

The members of the FGD at Buyangu (Personal communication, August 23, 2023) were in agreement that, the elders have a responsibility to check out the initiates for some disabilities among them but for the initiates, the process is an exciting moment for them. Some of the instructions given pertains to how the initiated young men will relate to women, the respect to the elders and especially those of senior age group, the initiates being self-reliant after graduation, cleanliness and courage during the real circumcision time (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The following day in the morning, all the initiates gather at one of the hills in the community. Here all the initiates are shaved to signify leaving behind of all childhood behaviour and progressing to adulthood after the circumcision ritual (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

For the Tiriki traditional faction, the counselor or *mutiri* has an essential role in the entire ritual of *idumi*. The counselor of each initiation group takes the initiates' clothes and gives them headdresses made from special creeper known as *isenende* a name of

Terik origin. Naked with only headdresses, the initiates gather and dance in public places and are joined by the community members (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). The process is different with those Tirikis who have embraced Christianity known as *Vasomi* or the converted.

For them, their initiates are assembled on the eve of the circumcision day in one of the elder's home where they will spend the night with some elders giving them some moral instructions (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). But there are also common aspects in both the factions like the shaving of the initiates' hair on the eve to make them ready for circumcision the following morning. The Christian faction do not subject their initiates to naked dancing in the public squares or public places. Instead of going on hill like the traditionalists the following day, they are taken in the sacred groves at dawn for circumcision directly (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). The two factions in Tiriki land undergo the same circumcision but what differs is the processes and rituals that accompany this circumcision rite for both the groups.

For the traditionalists, after dancing naked in the public place, in the evening, the initiates are taken in a home of one of the venerable ritual elder. That night, all the initiates are supposed to make a sincere confession of all traditionally forbidden acts (*mijilo*) before the real circumcision (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

Gibbs (1965) observed that, the confession of the initiates touches on whether one has stolen someone's property, killed totemic animal, had sexual activities with animals, sodomy that are contrary to culture. Sometimes this confession is made under a threat of death if one is not ready to confess. After confessioning, the initiate is absolved by the elders to assume behaviour appropriate to man but with some violation of cultural norms, he may pay a chicken or a goat based on the gravity of violation. Finally, the

elders encourage the initiate to be brave and not cry or run away during the circumcision (Gibbs, 1965). Comparing this preparatory stage in other Luhya communities, the Tiriki one is quite elaborate than what is witnessed in the neighbouring communities.

3.8.2 The Actual Circumcision

What follows is the real circumcision cut of the initiates which is normally done in the sacred groves for both of the two Tiriki factions. Even the Tiriki – Christian faction prefer to take their initiates for circumcision in the forest like the traditionalist one (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The sacred groves are essential for the *idumi* circumcision ritual. This is different from the other Luhya communities such as the *Bukusu* and even *Wanga* ethnic groups where their initiates wake up naked in the wee hours of the morning and led to the sacred river where they have a cold bath. From here they leave on precession with songs and dance to the venue of circumcision most probably in the father's compound but traditionally in an open field next to one of the sacred trees like *shirembe* or *lusiola* (a sacred tree where the shrines were located in most Luhya communities) where the circumcision is done (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). There was no modern medicine applied to the wound apart from the medication from special herb known as *ingoi* which is a medicinal herb used to cure the circumcision wound (Ministry of state for national heritage and culture, n.d). The Luhya people could proudly sing that if you fear this painful herb, then you should go to the Luo Land where they do not circumcise the young men into adulthood (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

For the traditional Tiriki, the initiates are assembled in a home of a ritual elder where they sleep. The following day, the initiates return to their homes where they are feasted and ceremonially blessed by homestead head. But around mid-morning, the counselor of each initiation group leads them into the sub –tribal circumcision grove where

women and non-circumcised are restricted from entering (Gibbs, 1965). The procession of the initiates is arranged according to the seniority of the fathers of the initiates according to their age groups or based on the age of their parents (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Once the initiates are in the sacred grove, the circumcision leader offers supplications and benedictions for initiates. The process of circumcision is well ordered and systematic in nature in that, it is not done randomly but based on the esteem and status of the initiate's father. The circumcision is normally carried out by the initiation chief assisted by other younger circumcisers (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). Still in the sacred grove, the initiates are served with eleusine gruel (porridge) which is fermented to help the initiates recover their strength (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

The vine headdresses which they were given after shaving of their hair is normally taken by counselor and given to the initiates' mothers outside the grove. The initiates are given leather apron to wear and led out of the sacred grove by counselor to the seclusion huts surrounded by the older initiated men to chase away the uninitiated and women along the way (Gibbs, 1965). Remember the initiates of the Christian faction do not put on the headdress, they do not dance naked and do not put on skins after circumcision as they proceed to their seclusion huts. Even after the circumcision, they do not appear in public for the dances like the traditionalists ones. These rituals differentiate between the two Tiriki factions from each other (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

3.8.3 Seclusion Stage

After circumcision in the sacred groves, the initiates are led out to their seclusion huts where they will be taken care of by the counselor or *mutiri* (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). For Kasomo (2009, p. 157), seclusion is a period through which an individual from the earlier group is separated or separated from the rest of the community members. This separation could be in terms of the initiate being taken to a different place for some time alone or with others as in the case of initiates in the seclusion huts. The rite may include the shaving of the hair to set apart the initiates from the rest of the community members but also symbolically manifesting the separation of ties with the earlier condition (Kasomo, 2009).

For the Tiriki people, the seclusion hut is known as *itumbi* (Personal communication, August 12, 2023). *Itumbi* becomes a home of the initiates throughout the seclusion period. It is in *itumbi* where the initiates are inducted into their traditions and customs. The counselor or guardian also known as *mutiri* plays a significant role by being in charge of the initiates until graduation (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). *Itumbi* is a special place, a house of a reputable old person in the community where the initiates are going to stay together with the counselor. Traditionally, the seclusion period lasted for a long period of about six months. The initiates eat, sleep, sing, dance, bath and do some handcrafts during the seclusion period. Initiates are prohibited to eat using their fingers and so, they are given sticks instead for the same purpose (Personal communication, August 13, 2023).

Generally, during the seclusion, boys are kept in designated areas called *itumbi* in Tiriki language for seclusion hut away from the community, families and public. They are closely monitored by experienced mentors called *vadiri* or counselors who guide them

in the transition to adulthood in matters of discipline, respect, leadership and traditional values (Personal communication, August 13, 2023).

Owing to the nature of Tiriki circumcision which is quite elaborate, the seclusion period has four significant stages marked with beer drinking provided by the initiates' parents. The festival beer is at core of idumi circumcision ritual and almost every stage *idumi* circumcision ritual is marked by ceremonies where beer is taken. This is what makes the Tiriki circumcision different from the other Luhya communities' circumcision rituals.

Traditionally, after five to six months after circumcision, there was the beer of clothing (*malwa gi zingubu*) which marked the end of initiates' convalescence period (Gibbs, 1965). This was when the *idumi* circumcision ritual could take a long time before the introduction of Christianity in the region. Today, this period has been shortened to two weeks set aside for the healing of the initiates' wounds (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). During this beer festival, only the elders and circumcised young men are allowed to share the beer but not the initiates at this stage. Now that the initiates have healed, the families buy them new leather clothing to replace the short apron given after circumcision. But currently, the seclusion period is not prolonged as before and therefore, the beer of clothing comes almost after two weeks (Personal communication, August 25, 2023).

Until then, the initiates have been using the skins or hides they were given immediately after circumcision. Within this first two weeks after circumcision, the initiates are inactive and it is primarily a period of healing. They are not involved in any work or much activities in the seclusion huts (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). There is no contact of those initiated with outside world or people (Personal communication,

August 23, 2023). These two weeks could be taken as a time of real seclusion and is time for initiates' healing. During this time, only the elders are allowed to visit the seclusion huts but they must avoid sexual act with their spouses and not visit when drunk of alcohol (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The taboos and customs relating to *idumi* are observed for the good of the initiates. Formally what could take place after five weeks is done after two weeks due to the changing times of modernity and influence of Christianity (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Traditionally, three months later, there was the beer of the fires (*malwa ga masambu*) but today, after three weeks, where the initiates are now very active and they start singing after supper on the hills around the seclusion huts (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). This singing is quite important since it is a clear indication and communication that all is well and that the initiates are doing well. The singing of the initiates give hope to the parents after the two weeks of total silence that follow circumcision (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). The singing of the initiates is a total relief to their mothers back at home. The singing gives a clear indication that the initiates have healed and that life is good in the seclusion huts. These are normally the songs of victory for the initiates for having conquered the circumcision knife. The initiates have gained there strength and energy and can now be involved in some skilled work by the counselor and the elders. The time for total rest is now over and so, the initiates can now live an active life within the seclusion places (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

Now the elders visit the seclusion huts and assist the initiates to make the masks and also teach them songs and how to dance with the masks (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). Not only the elders but the circumcised young men are allowed to

visit the initiates in the seclusion huts so long as they abide with the taboos and customs surrounding idumi circumcision ritual (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

Now that the healing has taken place, the initiates are allowed to make the first public appearance for the traditionalist faction but putting on masks at the sub – tribal meeting place where the relatives, friends and parents are gathered for a dance. At dusk, as the initiates go back to their seclusion huts, the parents go home, light the fire and burn the headdresses (*isenende*) hanging at the cooking place. While destroying the headdresses, the group gathered at the beer drinking speak of the advantage of burning the headdresses since circumcision is past and it would not be good for the initiates to find the headdresses (*isenende*) still hanging at the cooking places (Gibbs, 1965). *Isenende* is the headdress the initiates were given before circumcision after shaving their hair. The initiates continue meeting at the sub – tribal ground for dancing every day especially the traditionalists' faction with a multitude of people joining them for a dance (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

Traditionally, what followed was the beer of the back (*malwa gi shigongo*) although nowadays it comes earlier almost the fourth week before the initiates graduate from the seclusion huts (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). On this day, the initiates gather at public meeting ground wearing a big headdresses (*bugoxwi*) made of branches in their masks and clothing. While the initiates dance at this public place, the beer is delivered by the initiates' parents to the circumcision groves where the counselor, elders and initiates will gather throughout the night together with all the initiates. This ritual involves the oath taking of the initiates before the elders. The initiates are called forward in the order in which they were circumcised and are made to kneel before the initiation chief – never tell the initiation rites (*uxabola idumi dawwe*), the initiation leader begins

(Gibbs, 1965, p. 58). The elders continue giving admonitions to the kneeling initiate as follows:

The elders tell the kneeling initiate, first everything you learn during *idumi* you must obey and remember forever. Secondly, you must never tell a person not initiated in the Terik – Tiriki way what you learn and see. Thirdly, if someone threatens to kill you in order to find out let him kill you, but do not tell. Fourthly, if someone offers you a cow to tell, remain silent. Last, if you ever tell the *idumi* to the uninitiated you shall develop a terrible itching and die (Gibbs, 1965, p. 58).

The oath makes the young men who have gone through the ritual to be very secretive about matters of *idumi* to anybody who is not a Tiriki. Finally the initiate agrees to abide with all that the elders have told him and so, he is dismissed and the next initiate comes. The initiates leave the circumcision grove staggering back to seclusion huts as if very weak and hardly able to walk (Gibbs, 1965). This oath binds the initiate in conscience never to share anything about *idumi* to an outsider or even a woman. A true Tiriki man will be unwilling to share what really happened during *idumi* circumcision ritual apart from with his fellow Tiriki men (Personal communication, September 20, 2023).

3.8.4 Integration Stage

The last stage of seclusion is celebrated with the beer of leaving (*malwa gi shyaluxu*) which is taken to sacred groves and marked the end of the seclusion period for the initiates. This comes after the fourth week after circumcision bringing to the end the seclusion period and initiates incorporated back into their families. This important stage is also marked by beer festival by the traditional Tiriki faction. The initiates go back to the sacred groves where they were circumcised. While in the sacred groves, the circumcision chief informs the initiates that his work is now over but he reminds the initiates of the oath they took, not to reveal anything related to *idumi* to women and strangers and anyone who does the contrary, will be cursed, experience body itching,

infected by ailments, will not be able to father children and will be like a barren cow, women, like an impotent bull and will die badly (Gibbs, 1965). From now henceforth, the initiates will not put on the masks and the leather clothing used during seclusion. The seclusion huts, the wattle fence built around the huts, branches and leaves used as bedding are destroyed by burning and the initiates are no longer referred to as *baxulu* but bride (*mwiha*). Therefore, we conclude that, the whole seclusion period is full of traditional activities to guarantee the healing process.

This stage coincides with the time of graduation of the initiates and is a time of graduation into adulthood. It is also called the stage of incorporation which is very important for both the community and the initiates since those who have been successfully initiated are incorporated back into the community. According to Kasomo (2009), he says that the rites of initiation are actions the initiate formerly made to enter the sacred world which include ceremonies like acquiring of a new name, changing of abode and changing of dress. This is exactly what happens after the seclusion period (Kasomo, 2009).

The seclusion huts are finally destroyed and this marks the end of seclusion period, the initiates are provided with new clothes in the morning singing a special song known as the song of departure and begging girls and anybody they meet to give them bracelets, trophies or blessings (*migasa*) to hang on the end of their baton sticks (Gibbs, 1965). The initiates are no longer called *muxulu* as during the seclusion period but referred to as the brides (*beha*). The initiates are now ready to change their place of abode (irumbi or seclusion huts) back into their families with a new status acquired through the circumcision period. The actions experienced by the initiates are supposed to effect the transition they have gone through by circumcision ritual.

During a focus group discussion, most of the members acknowledged that, in the Tiriki community, the graduation of initiates is a very important occasion for both the initiates and the family members. It is the final stage of the *idumi* circumcision process. It marks the end of the seclusion period and the boy's official entry into manhood normally referred to as *charuko* (literally meaning hatching). The ceremony is a grand celebration attended by the entire community involving traditional dances, songs and rituals performed by the newly initiated men. The boys showcase their newly acquired skills and knowledge demonstrating their readiness to take on adult responsibilities (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

After this ceremony, the initiates are absorbed back into their families with a lot of joy and celebrations. This celebration is also marked with beer taking known as *malwa gi shyaluxu* (Personal communication, September 20, 2023). *Shyaluxu* literary means hatching and the initiates are hatched from the seclusion to join their families. This time, the initiates and their siblings are required to go back at the edge of sacred groves where they were circumcised. The initiates are anointed with oils by the female siblings and left in their company for the rest of the day (Personal communication, August 12, 2023). At night the elders go back to give more instructions to the initiates in the sacred groves to prepare them for the future as adults. From there, the initiates go back to their seclusion huts and demolish them by burning. The following day, at dawn, they go to the river where they take a bath after which they put on the new clothes the parents have bought for them and then, there is a procession of the initiates to the public square where all the people are gathered to celebrate the graduation of the initiates into adulthood. The prayers offered to the initiates are interdenominational in nature before they can go back to their homes (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

In conclusion, all that the initiates go through during the entire circumcision period is meant to effect the changes the community desires in the initiates and therefore, all the actions are regulated by the society at large. Analyzing the phases of circumcision from the preparatory, circumcision itself, seclusion to the moment of incorporation, all the actions are performed in such way that they leave a lasting imprint, either on the body or the mind of the initiate. For instance, the oath taking of the initiates, the confession before circumcision, the circumcision itself, the period of seclusion and the coming out as a new creation after *idumi*, all these leave an indelible mark in the lives of the initiates. Kasomo (2009) states that, all that the initiates go through should assist them to comprehend the fact that he has in fact crossed the gulf separating him from his earlier condition or position to a new one. The initiate are no longer children but adults and must understand that the ritual is part of growth which is irreversible in nature (Kasomo, 2009).

3.9 Taboos and Customs

A taboo is a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing. A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 12, 2023) confirmed that, the Tiriki circumcision ritual is surrounded with many taboos and customs ranging from those related to the initiates and other people involved in this ritual. For instance, the worst offence you can do to your children is to take them to the hospital for circumcision. This will attract the total rejection from the entire community and the coming generations (Personal communication, August 10, 2023).

Those circumcised from hospitals have no peace and are not respected. They are ridiculed during *idumi* through circumcision songs for betraying their culture. The initiates apart from those of the Tiriki – Christian faction are prohibited from eating the

food using their bare hands but instead use sticks as forks (Personal communication, August 14, 2023). After circumcision in the sacred groves and on the procession to seclusion huts, the initiates are not to get in contact with women and uncircumcised; therefore, they are guarded by elders and circumcised youths. They are not to be seen by women since it may affect the healing process of the initiates due to the normal male reaction towards people of opposite sex. It is also for the safety of women since, if they dared to come closer, the the elders and young initiated youth will beat them up. The uncircumcised are normally treated as strangers in the community and therefore, it is not acceptable for them to be part of the procession. Ultimately, the real reason of guarding the initiates against the outsiders and even women was to con seal the secrets and the practice of *idumi* only to the elders and those already initiated so that whatever happens remains within their confines. For the traditionalist, during the procession, they put on masks whenever they come out of the seclusion to dance in public places so that they may not be recognized even by their mothers (Personal communication, August 13, 2023).

Idumi ritual is sacred, it is a period where peace should reign; therefore, family quarrels and fights are discouraged. This is similar to the Kalenjin community from where *idumi* ritual originated. It is true, those involved in their care are discouraged from attending funeral ceremonies. According to one of the key informant (Personal communication, August 13, 2023) stated that, during this period, parents of the initiates are not allowed to engage in sexual affairs. It is also a taboo to have sex within the vicinity of the seclusion hut.

The initiates only eat, drink with other initiated men eschewing or avoiding the company of women and children. Again, the mothers of the initiates are not allowed to cook or take meals to the seclusion hut in case they have gone against the taboos and

customs of having sexual affairs with their husbands while their son is in seclusion. This also applies to men who have their sons in seclusion (Personal communication, August 13, 2023). After initiation, the young men may actively court and attempt to engage in sexual activity with women of different clans (Gibbs, 1965). In general, the community and especially the families of the initiates are under obligation to observe and maintain strict discipline and fidelity to the practice such that nothing distracts the initiate's healing and stay in seclusion. Therefore, any form of distress is discouraged and where it is done, one is heavily fined by the elders of *idumi* circumcision ritual (Personal communication, August 3, 2023).

3.10 Factors Determining *Idumi* Circumcision Season

Although *idumi* circumcision season is declared by the Sub – County committee but there are factors to be considered before it is officially opened by the leaders. A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 20, 2023) stated that, the decision is basically based on the yearly harvest of the grains. The leaders will never declare *idumi* season if there are no enough grains or food for the initiates to eat after the circumcision. Therefore, a good harvest is a factor to be considered by the community before the initiation ceremonies. This is because, the Tiriki circumcision ritual is marked by beer brewing and a lot of food consumption both by the initiates and the local people. There is a lot of merry making in the entire community. During the beer festivals, each family of the initiate is supposed to prepare beer for the people to drink. Depending on the number of initiates, this festival can last even for three days since the people move around taking beer (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

The other factor to be considered is the Tiriki culture where the traditional calendar for circumcision must be followed. The Tiriki people are not like the other Luhya communities that circumcise every after two years. For the Tirikis, their *idumi*

circumcision ritual comes every after five years. For instance during field work, it was discovered that *idumi* circumcision ritual was performed in 2020; therefore the next one will likely take place in 2025. Normally, circumcision ritual took place at an interval of five years (Personal communication, August 20, 2023). Therefore, the traditional calendar for Tiriki circumcision can only be interfered with incase of calamities that may befall the community such as Covid 19 in 2020 that affected the timing of *idumi* circumcision season (Personal communication, August 21, 2023).

We have already stated that the *idumi* circumcision season is primarily determined by the availability of abundant food especially grains. Therefore, scarcity of food could also be a factor worthy considering before *idumi* circumcision ceremonies are declared. Therefore, famine could make the elders of the community consider otherwise against the traditional circumcision calendar. Famine could make the *idumi* circumcision ritual to be postponed to the next year when there is plenty harvest (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

The prevalence of war could also affect the traditional circumcision calendar of the Tiriki community which may be postponed. This is because, for the Tirikis, circumcision season is a sacred and peaceful moment where violence, war and fights are greatly discouraged. Therefore, when there is war, the Tiriki people are likely not to declare *idumi* circumcision ritual to commence (Personal communication, August 21, 2023).

Before the *idumi* circumcision season is declared, there is the scouting of the initiates in the region by the village elders. This number is of great importance in considering whether *idumi* circumcision is viable or not. The Sub – County committee would like

to know exactly the total number of initiates to be circumcised (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

After the official traditional *idumi* circumcision ritual time in the community, there is always a provision for any eventualities that may occur in the community giving a second chance to those who could not be circumcised at the ordinary time. This may be for late comers who would still want to be circumcised or children of parents who stay abroad or outside Tiriki community. Therefore, a provision for circumcision to happen later in the course of the year is to accommodate the late comers. This is called $\frac{1}{2}$ (a half season) circumcision or *chuvwe* in Tiriki language. These are factors that could determine whether *idumi* circumcision ritual will be performed or not in Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 25, 2023).

3.11 Morality of Tiriki Circumcisers

Morality is the human attempt to define what is right and wrong in thought and behavior, resulting in a system or set of ideas about good vs. bad action, and the basis of any individual or community belief in what constitutes good behavior or proper conduct. *Idumi* ritual leaders are part and parcel of *idumi* circumcision ritual. They are held with high esteem especially during the circumcision period. They make public the official launching of *idumi* season. Their role is not only to circumcise the young but also give them lessons on good virtues (Kakai, 1995).

In Tachoni, a circumciser was a man of integrity since they believed that a circumciser with bad past is likely to influence negatively the initiates. Generally circumcisers are traditional men who had a knowledge of surgery on the male organ (penis). However some people in Tiriki claim that the circumcisers possess the capability of imbibing bad and socially abominable tendencies in their lives to younger generations (Kakai, 1995).

According to the Maragoli tradition, the circumcisers were drawn from either the clan or the family where one inherited from his parents. The circumcisers are many in the community but during the circumcision period, it is the village elders who chose a particular circumciser for their initiates (Personal communication, August 19, 2023) of a good repute in the society.

Therefore, the choosing of a circumciser is the task of the parents of initiates to decide who among the circumcisers presented by the elders to perform circumcision on their boys. In Tiriki community, circumcisers are toughly vetted and approved to have the required skills and courage to circumcise the boys. They must be men of good repute and sometimes originating from the household or lineage of circumcisers who are inducted well before they can be allowed to perform the circumcision rite (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). Many of the Luhya communities rejected a circumciser with bad records and avoided them to circumcise their boys. The circumciser is a very important person to the initiate since he takes a role of a teacher, counsellor and a guide (Kakai, 1995).

3.12 Morality of the Counselor

The counsellor plays a very significant role during *idumi* as mentioned above. The counselor or guardian is normally known as *mutiri* and is chosen by the sub – tribal chief and the community council of elders. During the interview, a Tiriki elders stated that, the counselor or *mutiri* was chosen carefully to ensure that he observed taboos strictly. The community preferred somebody who was not married or somebody aged. The guardian should have little interaction with other neighbouring communities. Among other things, his main role is to organize and build the seclusion hut and care for the initiates throughout the seclusion period. He is directly the one to receive food and water. He is held responsible for serving initiates in the seclusion huts. Notably, the

responsibility accorded to him is noble; therefore he must be a good man in character and from a senior age – group (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

There are things that the counsellor must do and avoid before fulfilling his duties faithfully. During the entire period of seclusion, it is a taboo for the counselor to enjoy his conjugal rights with his wife or any other woman which is observed in order to enhance quick healing of the initiates. The reason why long time ago, the counselor was supposed to be a man who is not married but today things have changed (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The foregoing is in line with Magesa's (1998) argument that sexual intercourse of all those involved in guarding the initiates like the counselors, sponsors is prohibited throughout the initiation period. Violating this rule might affect the initiates or even be the reason for their death. To safeguard *mutiri* from the danger of having sexual contacts, he is restricted from visiting his home and interacting with women in general. Therefore, the *mutiri* must focus himself to the duties the community has bestowed on him to take care of the initiates zealously and faithfully with all his commitment (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

3.13 *Idumi* and the Sacred Groves

During the focus group discussion, the members said that, the Tiriki initiation ceremony has two distinct separate groups in relation to circumcision namely; *Vamasero* or the traditional group and *Vasomi* or the converted. The former group wear animal skins during *idumi* and the latter wear lesos (artificial clothes) as some of the distinctive marks (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). Therefore, Barbara and Jürgen (2007) states that, the cultural forests or sacred groves take center stage in the traditional and Christian Tiriki circumcision ritual. The sizes of these sacred groves vary from 0.5 to 4 Ha consisting of indigenous trees only of over 100 years old. Traditionally, the Tiriki people had sub – tribes made up of several communities. These sub tribes had

men of warrior age organized into offensive military divisions (Gibbs, 1965). Each traditional sub – tribe had a hilltop sacred grove and a valley circumcision sacred grove. The elders gathered in these sacred groves for community ceremonies involving supplications to the ancestors. Although the traditional sub – tribal units are defunct except in connection with the circumcision ceremonies.

During the focus discussion group, the members were in agreement that, in Tiriki community, the initiation of the young men is capped by their stay in the forests which measures the bravery and the maturity of the initiates. So sacred are the forests such that, anyone intruding on them to cut down trees may suffer dire repercussions which include madness and eventually death. Generally, circumcision cannot take place in the absence of the forests for both the traditionalist and the Tiriki – Christian factions. The community protects the forests to ensure the next group does not lack “homes” after circumcision (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

The sacred groves or *muritu* or *kivanda* for the Tiriki people is a sacred place taken as a shrine for the community. These sacred groves are preferably natural forests with indigenous trees and a river flowing across it (Personal communication, August 14, 2023). Regarding *idumi*, the Tiriki groves or cultural forests still have spiritual significance and are distinctly identical with the Tiriki people. These cultural forests play a very important role in Tiriki community and serve different purposes. These sacred groves also stand at the centre of the Tiriki Circumcision practice *idumi* (Gibbs, 1965). The sacred groves have specific tree species that are revered for *idumi* ritual ceremonies. The sacred grove becomes the epicenter of the *idumi* circumcision ritual and makes a distinction between the traditionalists and the betrayers of tradition such as those circumcised in hospital (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

Most of these sacred groves were situated near river valleys since water was a required during the circumcision ceremonies. The groves were densely stocked to provide shelter and a hiding place for the initiates during circumcision time (Barbara & Jürgen, 2007). Currently, these sacred groves are held as trust land administered by the County Councilors in close cooperation with the village elders. In every village, there is a village elder who takes care of the sacred grove supported by the customary rules protecting these cultural forests. According to Barbara and Jürgen (2007), some of the customs surround sacred groves in Tiriki Community include the following; no woman is allowed to enter into the sacred grove either just for a walk or to collect firewood. Therefore, according to one of the respondents, the sacred groves are restricted from women and strangers (Personal communication, August 13, 2023).

Ordinarily, people are not permitted to harvest wood from these sacred groves. However, they are allowed to plant trees in the sacred groves (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). In special circumstances, the herbalists and initiated men can enter and harvest herbs from the sacred groves. The sacred groves, especially during the *malwa gi shyaluxu* festival, offer avenues for unveiling secrets regarding initiation rituals which are told by elders to younger ones with a commitment never to share them out with women, children and strangers (Barbara & Jürgen, 2007).

It is totally against the Tiriki custom to make love in the sacred groves and even to have sexual feelings around them (Personal communication, August 14, 2023). Usually, once circumcision is over, the sacred groves are restricted from the local population apart from the elders in charge and the herbalists. The sacred groves are considered as holy places where circumcision take place and cutting a tree in the sacred grove attracted a death penalty to the culprit (Personal communication, August 14, 2023).

Being a sacred site, certain measures are taken to safeguard and protect it such as restricted access by anybody apart from the elders who are charged with the responsibility to maintain it. Any form of defilement of the sacred grove through charcoal burning, cutting of trees and timber harvesting are considered as a taboo. For the Tiriki, without the forests, there is no circumcision that would take place (Personal communication, August 5, 2023). Some of sacred groves include the following; *Gimude* in *Jepkoyai*, *Jepsanyi* in *Galona*, *Gisoywa* in *Givole*, *Gidagadi*, *Vugende*, *Hamisi* and *Munzatsi* (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

During a focus group discussion in Buyangu, it was revealed that, in Tiriki community, men who are circumcised under non – Tiriki way, uncircumcised and boys are forbidden from accessing these forests during and even after the circumcision season. It is commonly believed that, non – Tirikis access to these sacred groves might uncover their cultural secrets and so cause trouble to the entire community (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

During the focus group discussion, most members were of the idea that, the significance of the sacred groves among the Tiriki people are varied in nature. The sacred groves are regarded as sacred places where ritual takes place. They are endowed with spiritual powers and have a connection with the ancestors. They are understood as the natural sanctuaries where the young people can undergo their transition into adulthood. The sacred groves also represent the natural world and its cycles symbolizing growth, transformation and renewal. Just as the boys are transitioning from childhood to adulthood, the forest represents their journey to personal growth and development (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). In addition, the sacred groves provide the privacy and secrecy required during the *idumi* circumcision ritual. It allows the community to maintain the secrecy and exclusivity of the ceremony, ensuring that only

those involved can witness and participate in the event. The sacred groves also create the connection between the people and ancestors. The forests are believed to be the places where the spirits of the ancestors reside. During the circumcision ritual, the boys are not only initiated into adulthood but also connected to their natural lineage. The forests serve as the bridge between the living and the spirits of the ancestors (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

3.14 Public Dancing of the Initiates

Tiriki people have a special myth regarding *idumi* music and dance. According to a Tiriki elder (interview, August 24, 2023) he explained that:

Idumi was introduced to the Tiriki people by a mythical figure bearing the name *idumi*. *Idumi* was a powerful and a wise spirit who came down from the heavens to teach the Tiriki people about music and dance. *Idumi* as a spirit possessed extraordinary musical skills and had a deep understanding of rhythm and melody. He taught the Tiriki people how to play various musical instruments including drums, flutes and other stringed instruments. Under the influence of *idumi*, the powerful spirit, people began to develop their own unique style of music and dance.

Therefore, *idumi* is a traditional dance which is a lively and energetic dance performed during cultural events and celebrations. The dance involves rhythmic movements, foot stomping and hand clapping accompanied by traditional music played on drums and other instruments. *Idumi* is not only a form of entertainment but also serves as a way to preserve and showcase the Tiriki culture and heritage (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). After the introduction by this mythical spirit, it became a culture of people to meet in the evenings around a bonfire, playing their instruments and dancing to the rhythm of the music frequently and regularly. After some time, the music and dancing became an integral part of their culture which was believed to bring joy, unity and the spiritual connection to the community.

One of the Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 25, 2023) stated that, the myth of the origin of *idumi* serves as a reminder of the importance of music and dance in the Tiriki culture. The myth highlights the belief that music has the power to bring people together, express emotions and connect with the spiritual realm. The myth also emphasizes the role of *idumi* as a cultural hero and teacher, who brought the gift of music and dance to the Tiriki people (personal communication, August 23, 2023).

Currently, the Tiriki community is rightly divided into two factions in relation to *idumi* to the circumcision ritual. There are the original traditional circumcisers known as *vatirichi* or *Vamasero* and the modern Tiriki circumcisers known as *Vasomi* or *vanusu*. This differentiation is what brings out those who have embraced Christianity and those who are still embracing the Tiriki cultural heritage of circumcision adopted from the Terik (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

The original Tiriki are proud of themselves and refer to themselves as full Tiriki while the other group of converted Christians are identified as a half Tiriki since they do not embrace Tiriki culture regarding *idumi* in totality. These divisions have created a lot of conflicts among the Tiriki people which has even extended to the church.

As regards to dancing in public, only the original Tiriki faction value it and take their initiates out for public dancing every afternoon. Public dancing forms part of the *idumi* circumcision ritual for the traditional faction. It starts from the preparatory stage assembling the initiates to spend the night at one of the reputable elders in the community. The following day, all those to be circumcised will meet at one of the hills where they will be shaved and given headdresses made of a creeping plant which they wear on their heads. Then during the afternoon hours, all the initiates will proceed to the public square for dancing naked where the community gathers to participate before

they retire back at the elder's home for the night (Personal communication, August 29, 2023). These dances will continue until after the third week and after their healing where every afternoon, the initiates will come out in public places for the idumi dance. The dancing will go on until the end of seclusion period for the Tiriki traditional faction (Personal communication, August 28, 2023).

The modern or Tiriki – Christian initiates ones do not involve themselves in this traditional practice of dancing. They are only assembled in a home of a reputable elder the eve before the circumcision where they are also shaved. The following morning, they just proceed for circumcision to the sacred groves without the dancing in public places. Once they enter the seclusion huts, they will remain there until when the seclusion period is over and will only come out during their graduation (Personal communication, August 26, 2023). During this time, the initiates are trained to dance in a straight line differently from the traditional one who dance in a circular manner by the counselor or mutiri and the elders who visit the seclusion huts more frequently.

For the traditional Tiriki faction, the ceremony of the initiates dancing naked and in public prior to circumcision has a significant symbolism to the initiates and the community. Asitiba (2017) categorically states that, when the young men or boys are about to undergo the real cut or circumcision, they are made to dance naked in public meeting places, markets and in the open fields. This dancing clearly symbolizes that the young men are still children and therefore, not ashamed to show their nakedness publicly but soon they will graduate to adulthood. The initiates dance without a sense of shame since they have not matured enough to understand the implications of showing their nakedness publicly. But still, this public dancing gives them the confidence they need to face the knife of a circumciser (Asitiba, 2017).

3.15 The Moral and Normative Foundation of *Idumi*

This section treats the cultural, social, moral, religious and political foundation of *idumi* circumcision ritual.

3.15.1 Cultural Foundation of *Idumi*

The cultural foundation of *idumi* can be explored by understanding the effects it has for the Tiriki people. Through it, the cultural identity, tribal unity and a sense of maturity is acquired by the initiates in Tiriki community. *Idumi* is important since the cultural identity is maintained and passed on to the younger generations.

3.15.1.1 Tribal Identity

Cultural identity is acquired through the circumcision practice of *idumi*. To fully identify oneself with Tiriki community, then boys must go through this ritual. By the very fact of having gone through the same ritual with other community members, then you are directly identified with the Tiriki community. You become a true and pure Tiriki through *idumi* circumcision ritual as a man. Through *idumi*, even the immigrants who accept this type of circumcision are regarded as Tirikis. The uncircumcised are considered as strangers by the Tirikis even if they were born in Tiriki land (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

For this reason, the cultural ritual of circumcision incorporates all the initiates into an ethnic community by uniting them in a special way with the ancestral spirits and the current living community. It establishes the initiate's identity within the larger community and give some rights and duties as the member of Tiriki community (Magesa, 1998). Without circumcision, a man is not fully identified with the community. Circumcision incorporates the initiate into the community and therefore, he can gladly say that he is a Tiriki. Therefore, *idumi* circumcision ritual marks the

individual with a very unique identity that makes him totally accepted by the other members of the community as one of them. For this reason, any male child who is born out of wedlock and does not go through this Tiriki ritual is never accepted as a Tiriki per se (Personal communication, August 14, 2023).

3.15.1.2 Tribal Unity

The cultural identity achieved through *idumi* circumcision ritual is also responsible for the tribal unity (Personal communication, September 23, 2023). While in most of the Luhya communities like the Wanga people, a clan was a very important cultural structure in the entire community. The clan was the center of unity after the family. In Tiriki community, the clan unity was of secondary importance. According to Tiriki people, the age – group social categorization is the most important institution that unified and bonded the initiates together (Barbara & Jürgen, 2007). The age – groups include the warrior, the senior warrior, the judicial, ritual and aged elders which forms the basis on which the Tiriki community operates (Barbara & Jürgen, 2007). According to the Tiriki community, there are seven age groups namely; Sawe, Nyongi, Juma, Maina, Jimigeyi, Ngurunguru and Ndaro (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

The cultural heritage of *idumi* is the source of cultural unity since all those who share the blood during circumcision are totally united beyond measure through the age group. The different functions of members were also based on these age – group categorization for instance, the traditional religious leaders who performed the community rituals and even the homestead leaders. For the religious ritual celebrations, the blessings were normally sought from ancestors of a certain age – group or age - set. This brings out the vital role the age – group played in the community. At the family level, the homestead head was supposed to be the eldest member of the family according to age – group

categorization and a symbol of unity in the family (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

The unity of the community is also witnessed during the preparation and the entire *idumi* circumcision season where everybody in the community was involved. During circumcision, everything is organized by the community and not the clan (Barbara & Jürgen, 2007). The ritual leaders, the counselors, the village elders, the parents, the circumcisers and even the administration have a role to play. This brings out the unity of purpose during *idumi* circumcision period. It is also true that, through the initiation rite, all the initiates are completely bonded together by the act of sharing their blood and circumcision knife or shedding blood at the same time. Through initiation, the initiates regard one another as brothers who must defend each other (Magesa, 1998).

Asitiba (2017) confirms that, in many of the African communities, the rite of initiation to adulthood, the rite of marriage and the rite of death were quite very important rites of passage that managed to bring almost the whole community together to celebrate or mourn. According to FGD Buyangu (Personal communication, August 24, 2023), the members were in agreement that, *idumi* circumcision ceremony brings the entire community together. The community is united as one in the traditional dances that precede the actual circumcision and those following after the boys have been circumcised. Other aspects that brought about the community unity are the songs and the singing, the eating together, the drinking and the act of celebrating together as a community (Asitiba, 2017).

3.15.1.3 Cultural – Moral Preservation

Idumi circumcision ritual plays an important role in cultural continuity of the Tiriki cultural heritage. The treasure of any culture is to be passed on to the younger

generation. This can be done in various ways including *idumi* circumcision ritual where the cultural heritage is normally passed on to the younger generation by the elders who devote their time to teach the initiates during the seclusion period (Personal communication, September 24, 2023). Since *idumi* circumcision season is a solemn period among the Tirikis, important and vital moral and cultural induction is normally done during this time to the young ones.

With this understanding, Asitiba (2017) acknowledges that one of the ways through which culture is passed on to the younger generation is through their participation in the dance before the real circumcision known as *vukhulu*. This is understood as the dance of the community ancestors. The term *vukhulu* means old and is used to refer to the old traditions of the Tiriki community where all the community members are called upon to participate consciously and fully. For the traditionalist group, the initiates dance in public naked wearing the headdresses before circumcision and masks after the circumcision. The understanding is that, the young people going to be circumcised are participating in the dance of their forefathers or ancestors (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

The actual circumcision takes place from a sacred grove within the community that has been in existence from time immemorial of their forefathers providing an essential link between the living initiates and ancestors or the living dead since these sacred groves had a religious significance to the community (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). Therefore, shedding of the initiates' blood in these sacred community groves is symbolic in nature and a unifying aspect of *idumi* circumcision ritual which brings about a reunion with their forefathers. This can help us understand why even the Tiriki – Christian faction also take their initiates in the sacred grove for circumcision (Asitiba, 2017). There is that desire for the initiates and the community to establish the link with

the ancestors who have gone before them. Through this celebration of the *vukhulu* and the circumcision in the sacred groves of their forefathers, it is a clear indication that the community has accepted and approved the old Tiriki traditions. The initiates vow to uphold these old traditional values about *vukhulu*. The term *vukhulu* means old referring to traditions that should not be discarded by the community. Through this dance and circumcision in sacred groves, the cultural continuity is safeguarded (Asitiba, 2017).

Therefore, through *idumi* circumcision ritual is retained and at the same time passed on to the younger generations. *Idumi* is very significant ritual appealing to the community and ancestors. This conception of *idumi* should help us to understand why circumcision season literally brings all other activities to a standstill to allow everybody to focus on *idumi* celebrations and rituals. During *idumi*, people working in diaspora come back to join the rest in these cultural celebrations (Asitiba, 2017). *Idumi* circumcision season is considered as a sacred moment where the community's solidarity and commitment of preserving their treasured cultural circumcision heritage is realized by passing it to the young generation. Because of its significance to the entire community, circumcision ritual of *idumi* brings together all people of different ranks and all concerting recourses and effort to ensure it is perfectly accomplished (Asitiba, 2017). All these are done carefully so that the cultural heritage is handed over to the new generation without distortion.

In many of the African communities, the initiation ceremonies created an opportunity for the elders to pass and impart vital community knowledge to their young ones. The initiates are taught about the community values and life skills that will help them in their future lives (Personal communication, September 1, 2023). Kirwen (2008) asserts that, circumcision period is a moment in which the entire community pulls together to pass special community knowledge, skills and attitude to the boys going through

initiation. Mbachi and Likolo (2013) confirms this by saying that, during circumcision ceremony, the majority of the youth are taught norms, values and dos and don'ts of the community in a way that instill in them a sense of belonging, self-esteem, courage, confidence and finally maturity. Accordingly, the same ideals mentioned above are also taught to the young boys who go through the *idumi* circumcision ritual in Tiriki community (Personal communication, September 5, 2023).

3.15.1.4 Sense of Maturation

A part from *idumi* circumcision ritual giving cultural identity to the individual initiate, it graduates one into adulthood and therefore, one is no longer regarded as a child but an adult (Personal communication, September 2, 2023). Wanyama (2006) categorically states that, in most of African communities, circumcision ritual enables one to achieve manhood or womanhood for the communities that practice female circumcision. Without this important rite of initiation, then one has not grown to maturity. Until then, one is still considered a child according to the community members (Wanyama, 2006). This shows that circumcision is a very important ritual in many of the African communities.

The traditional circumcision practice enables the initiate to graduate into manhood and adulthood with all the rights and obligations given to him by the community. As a child, the young man was just on the receiving end, but now the community expects a lot from him and must prove that the transition has taken place. As an adult, there are things or behaviour that he is not allowed to portray like staying in the kitchen and entering his mother's bedroom which as a child and before circumcision one did without repercussion. It is through *idumi* that initiates graduate to adulthood and therefore, one is no longer treated as child but a mature members of the community. This transition also comes with some responsibilities specifically for those who have become mature

members of the society. According to African understanding, circumcision ritual is expected to transform the irresponsible and intractable boy into an adult man with dignity and self-respect (Papu & Verster, 2006, p. 181).

President Mandela wrote in his autobiography regarding circumcision as follows; I count my days as a man from the date of my circumcision (Papu & Verster, 2006, p. 181). According to the Tirikis, a male child who has not been circumcised is not a full member of the family and therefore, no inheritance for him. This can explain why during circumcision, children born out of wedlock are brought back to their biological fathers to undergo *idumi* circumcision ritual like other family children failure to which, one is not a member of that family (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). In case it is hard for the father to bring back this child born out of wedlock to his matrimonial home, he must find a sponsor within the Tiriki community who will take the child for circumcision according to the Tiriki culture (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). Circumcision transforms an initiate into adulthood and therefore, one is only treated as a mature and adult person after *idumi* circumcision ritual. Before then, he is just taken to be a child in the community (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). The fear of forever being taken as a child pushes young men to value and treasure this cultural heritage. The graduation into adulthood also carries along some responsibilities for the initiates (Personal communication, September 4, 2023).

3.15.1.5 Personal Identity

The foremost benefit of *idumi* circumcision ritual is the personal identity acquired by the initiates and those who go through it. Formally they were still children but now, they are regarded as fully grown adults and given the required respect by the other members of the community (Personal communication, September 12, 2023). Through circumcision, an initiate is now fully identified with an age group of which he will

forever belong. Generally, uninitiated man is an anguished man in the eyes of other people since he does not belong to any age group and therefore, he has no brother in the community. This man is a loner and lives for himself without a brother and a social group to be identified with (Personal communication, September 13, 2023).

The indelible mark or sign acquired through the circumcision will always affect the behavior of the initiate. The mark of circumcision brings out the union or the membership of the initiate to a particular community. Through circumcision, one is totally identified with the tribe and his place and role secured. To the person who goes through *idumi* ritual, it must be able to modify his personality and behaviour (Gennep, 1977, p. 71 cited by Kasomo, 2009, p. 157).

Ordinarily, there must be a clear difference between the circumcised and those not yet in the manner they act and behave since they have acquired a new status or condition or position which is higher and superior to their previous one. Culturally, the present condition of the initiate is more perfect than the previous one and therefore, will encourage one to take the ordeal of the circumcision ritual. The initiate is now completely identified as one of the community members. Basing on this new personal identity acquired, one will be given all the rights and responsibilities that the Tiriki people should enjoy. They are now allowed to join the elders and share a drink with them and even marry and start their own family and their place or position within the family and larger community made is clear (Personal communication, August 10, 2023).

According to the Tiriki understanding, a mature man who has not gone through the *idumi* circumcision ritual is totally considered as “nothing” before the community members (Personal communication, September 22, 2023). As stated above, this

uncircumcised man has no age group to which he belongs and therefore, stands alone in the community. He suffers a lot because of loneliness of having no friend in the community. He cannot even share a meal or participate fully in a social gathering (Personal communication, August 11, 2023). This is also true among other Luhya communities like the Bukusu people and therefore, Wanyama (2006) states that, one who has not gone through this vital ritual of circumcision is always considered unclean and unworthy to partake in the daily community activities of life in the community and may not serve food or drink with the circumcised men. He is not allowed even to give advice to other young men who have been circumcised in any matter pertaining the community. This man is considered as unworthy and he should not even consider marrying since he is still looked upon as a child (Wanyama, 2006).

Therefore, those who have reached the age of circumcision but not circumcised do not possess any identity in the community. In fact they are treated like strangers, alien and outsiders by the original Tiriki people. Shiyuka (2012) stated that the uninitiated men have no sense of belonging at all since they do not belong to any of the age – groups. Uncircumcised man is always a man who is on the cross since he is just treated as a child and is totally taken as nothing in the Tiriki community. He cannot address people in public gatherings, he cannot come out in public during the circumcision season, he is not considered for any leadership positions in the community, he is prohibited in sharing the meals or a drink with initiated men and he must be circumcised before he is buried even if he is a christian (Personal communication, August 26, 2023).

Lack of age – group also denied a mature but uninitiated man social status bestowed on initiated young men in Tiriki community. He cannot address the people in public, eat and share a drink with other circumcised men. This man is not even allowed to participate fully in burial ceremonies since he is not sanctioned through *idumi* ritual

since the work of burying the dead was directly associated with the warrior age – group (Shiyuka, 2012). Uncircumcised man is condemned never to get married or have the carnal knowledge of any woman since he is considered impure.

Simani (2005) states that, the uninitiated man carried the dreaded condition of ritual impurity (*luswa*) that could bring vital risks during *idumi* ceremony to young men of his family undergoing circumcision. This man, in case he died, he must be circumcised before burial to appease the ancestral spirits in Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). If the man is buried before the circumcision is done, then, the remaining family members and entire homestead was cursed forever. Therefore, it was mandatory to circumcise the corpse of the uninitiated man before burial. This could identify him with an age – group and therefore, opening the door for circumcision of other young men in his family without any negative effects (Shiyuka, 2012).

3.15.1.6 Identity of Women and Children

This cultural institution of *idumi* has impacted negatively on the position and dignity of women. The Tiriki community is known to look down upon women who are not valued by the the community members that, even after preparing the beer, they are excluded from sharing while the elders are drinking. They have no autonomous sense of belonging to the community unless through their biological fathers and their husbands. Otherwise they do not matter in the traditional understanding of the community. The identity of children is like that of women in Tiriki community's understanding. The children and especially boys only belong to the community through their parents if they have not gone through the traditional circumcision ritual of *idumi*. Even those children born out of wedlock only find their identity among the Tiriki community when the

undergo *idumi* circumcision ritual which give them a sense of belonging (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

3.15.1.7 Identity of Strangers

The Tirikis believe that, anybody who has not gone through the Terik – Tiriki circumcision ritual does not belong to them but any man regardless of his tribe who undergoes the *idumi* circumcision ritual is incorporated into the Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). The uncircumcised is treated as an alien and estranger to the community. Those included in this group are the immigrants into the Tiriki region from other Luhya communities even though culturally circumcision in their different communities, they are regarded as not belonging to the Tiriki Community. On contrary, the strangers who are circumcised are accorded a little bit of respect as compared to the uninitiated man although they are not full accepted by the community. A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, June 19, 2023) stated that, strangers or immigrants are not incorporated into the Tiriki community unless they undergo the traditional ritual through which they are accepted fully into the community known as “buying of the Tiriki circumcision or *idumi* or simply buying initiation.”

Immigrants are incorporated into the Tiriki community during the ceremony of “the beer of the back” referred to as *malwa gi shigongo* in Tiriki language. This is a very essential ceremony where the initiates take their oath of secrecy about matters of *idumi*. After the regular initiates taking their oath of secrecy, follows the immigrants - initiated adults who are also subjected to the oath of secrecy like the Tiriki young men. They pay the circumcision elders a bull for this ritual. It is normally referred to as “buying initiation” or *xugula idumi*. After this ritual the immigrants are incorporated fully into the Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

3.15.2 Moral Foundation of *Idumi*

The moral and normative foundation of *idumi* brings out clearly the moral significance of *idumi* circumcision ritual.

3.15.2.1 *Idumi* as School of Morality

The cultural identity and continuity is normally achieved through *idumi* as a school of morality where initiates are inducted into the traditions of the community (Personal communication, September 25, 2023). According to Magesa (1998, p. 95), the seclusion of the initiates is a very important period of formal instruction given to those circumcised and are on their way to adulthood. The initiates are instructed in matters of religion, life, death, domestic and social virtues, sexuality, sex, marriage, procreation and the value of life. Therefore, *idumi* circumcision ritual as a school of morality gives the initiates an opportunity to learn about all the realities of life (Magesa, 1998).

Regarding the teachings and learning during the seclusion period, Asitiba (2017) noted that, this is a very important session of the traditional Tiriki circumcision rite since it is a learning time for the initiates both in experience and instruction. The youth are normally taught to be real men after the initiation ceremony. The initiates staying in the sacred groves under difficult conditions hardened them to face the world with courage and perseverance. For the initiates, during this time of seclusion, come rain, come sunshine, they are restricted to leave the groves until the period of seclusion is over. It is better to die in these sacred groves as an initiate than to leave (Asitiba, 2017, p. 115).

The cultural circumcision ritual *idumi* has a very important aspect of imparting moral values to the initiates. Because of this, the entire process was designed to produce graduates with good examples to the younger generation due to the knowledge acquired during the seclusion period (Sitawa & Langat 2022). The elders, counselors of each

seclusion hut have the role of inducting the young ones into the community traditions and customs.

The initiates are mentored in roles they will take as adult members of the community in relation to responsible living, about leadership, issues related to parenting and their roles as husbands and fathers of the family (Sitawa & Langat, 2022). All the related knowledge and information related to the areas mentioned above were imparted during seclusion period to the initiates. The entire process of circumcision was the time of mentoring the initiates into adulthood accompanied with a lot of training and some form of torture to harden the initiates (Sitawa & Langat, 2022).

In a special way, the initiation age – groups was one of channels through which the moral values were imparted into the initiates. The young people going through this ritual are empowered with moral teachings pertaining to life and community. Seclusion is an ideal time for imparting these moral lessons and teachings to the young ones. Sitawa and Lang'at (2022), stated that, the boys who belonged to a certain age – group were expected to behave in a particular manner and if one behaved contrary to the community's expectation, then others would call him to order or the entire age – set seen to have been ill-prepared during the seclusion period. But if the entire age group behaved badly, then the elders together with the counselors will have failed in their mentorship role during the seclusion period. Through the age – group, the initiates learn to follow the customs and develop solidarity with other initiates (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

All the mentorship, guidelines were given to the initiates during this time of seclusion by various members of the community. Kakai (1995) states that, among the Abatachoni, the circumciser was a teacher to the initiates. He had also a responsibility of counselling

and guiding the initiates during the circumcision period. For the Tiriki community, the initiation chief has the same role of instructing and teaching the initiates especially after the seclusion, the initiates return to the forest where he reminds them of the oath of secrecy never to tell about *idumi* initiation to an outsider or to uninitiated person (Gibbs, 1965).

African people had a clear system of mentorship in most of their cultural communities. In this traditional system of moral education, the senior members of the community imparted knowledge and values to the initiates. In the African communities, the elders, the founding fathers and the heroes conducted themselves in a way that attracted the youth to emulate them. The adults had a significant part to play in educating the young people (Stephen B.I. Akaranga, 1996 as cited in Sitawa & Langat, 2022) and especially the ritual leaders, initiation chief and circumcision counselors in Tiriki community.

3.15.2.2 Source of Moral Responsibility

Here we are concerned about what the initiates are allowed to do as per the community standards and what they are prohibited from doing as mature members of the community after having gone through the initiation rite. The community makes judgment on whether a person is morally responsible or not and make others and ourselves accountable for their actions (Talbert, 2022). The Tiriki circumcision ritual puts the initiates at a high standard and so, more is also demanded of all those who have been initiated.

During seclusion, the initiates are made aware of their moral responsibilities as mature members of the community (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). They have acquired a different status different from that of women, children and strangers and therefore, they must take full responsibility for their actions. They are no longer

children and so, they have responsibilities, rights, obligations and duties in the community of which they would be held responsible (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Mbachi and Kariuki (2013) state that, the initiates are taught to be responsible members of the community and therefore, they feel much important and valued by the community. The sense of belonging imparted in the initiates enable them to be patriotic by loving and protecting the community culture and heritage. The community moral responsibilities bestowed on the initiates include the obligation of having the family and caring for it. The initiates are also given the right to get involved in sexual relationships responsibly leading to marriage. As adults, they are discouraged to enter the kitchen and the parents' bedroom at all costs (Personal communication, August 12, 2023).

3.15.2.3 *Idumi* as a Source of Moral Values

Moral values are principles or standards that guide an individual's behaviour and choices based on what is considered right or wrong. Apart from the teaching and the instructions given to the initiates during the seclusion period, most of the moral values are imparted through the circumcision songs. Wanyama and Egesah (2015) believed that, the induction of the initiates is normally done through music, performance and initiation rites which are laddered with heavy messages, some of which are passed to the initiates through the community myths.

First and foremost, the songs sang during the initiation give the initiates an aura of importance and a clear expression of who they are in the community. They are on their way to adulthood and this is made clear in the songs and therefore, they should always struggle to protect it and love each other since they belong to the same community

(Wanyama and Egesah, 2015). The initiation songs are full of moral values required by the initiates as they assume the new status of adulthood. The members of the family do a lot of work during *idumi* and therefore, they are praised through the songs as follows:

Ndari murumbi mama wari wainyanza
 (My mother loved me when I was in seclusion)
Ndari murumbi senge wari wainyanza
 (My Aunt loved me when I was in seclusion)
Ndari murumbi kuka wari wainyanza
 (My grandfather loved me when I was in seclusion)

The excerpt brings out one of the moral values of love about the mothers and aunts of the initiates during seclusion and the song expresses clearly how the mothers manifested this value to the initiates through the care and food preparation. The moral attributes of different members of community are expressed in the circumcision songs like this one above where the people are praised for love they showed to the initiates during the seclusion period. The initiates express how they felt the motherly love from the community during seclusion.

A part from the circumcision songs through which moral values are given, the entire period of circumcision is quite important in the lives of the initiates beginning from the preparatory stage to the final stage of incorporation of the initiates back into the community. This can also be referred to as the intermediate stage or transitional stage for the initiates. Precisely, the initiate is neither a boy nor a man. He is just between the two statuses of being. He does not understand himself and the community cannot put him either in the category of men or boys. One experiences a moment of the dilemma of belonging. Kasomo (2009) states that, this period of transition is referred to as “betwixt and between.” It is a period where one is considered to have left the previous status in life but not yet attained the new status and therefore, still aspiring. The initiates are on the process of leaving the state of childhood but have not attained adulthood status and so experiencing the transition period.

Although it is a stage without a well-defined traditional status for the young man, it is vital in preparing one for future life by acquiring virtues that will help him live a good life. Therefore, the entire period of circumcision can be called the intermediate stage for the initiate. It is a time when values and virtues are imparted to the initiates to lead a virtuous life afterwards. This is a requisite for the upright living of the initiates after graduating to adulthood.

The most important virtues include the virtue of patience where the initiates learn to wait patiently for the expected new status to come (Kasomo, 2009). This virtue of patience will help the initiates even after their circumcision in their daily lives. They learn to endure in matters pertaining to family and community. There is another important virtue that the initiates learn and that is the virtue of docility. All through the seclusion period, the initiates will be learning a lot from the lessons given by the initiation counselors who take care of them during the seclusion period. Docility means that the initiate is ready to silently listen to one's critic and be able to courageously face the difficulties in life (Personal communication, August 21, 2023).

Docility opens one to a new horizons of understanding the reality of life. That after circumcision, the initiate will be able to understand the world, the community and even himself in a better way than before. For the initiate to benefit from all that he is taught during the seclusion period, then one must have the virtue of obedience. This virtue of obedience will enable one to listen to the elders patiently even in their wrong thinking. The initiate learns that bartering words, arguing with the elders is equivalent to an act of disrespect (Kasomo, 2009). This virtue help the initiate to respect people of the senior age – group in Tiriki community. There is another virtue that one is bound to learn during this time of transition ethically known as the virtue of courage or bravery that enables one to endure the physical pain in life. This was very important virtue since

through circumcision ritual, we had the warrior age – group whose main purpose was to defend the community and involve in cattle raiding. One of the songs by a Tiriki initiate (Personal communication, August 24, 2024) through which this virtue is transmitted is as follows:

Yangimira mukona, mushevi yangimira mukona x 2
 (The circumciser got hold of his hand)
Yangimira mukona, mushevi yangimira mukona x 2
 (The circumciser got hold of his hand)
Ayee! Yangimira mukona, mushevi yangimira mukona x 2
 (Ayee! the circumciser got hold of his hand)
Ahooo! Yangimira mukona, mushevi yangimira mukona x 2
 (Ahooo! The circumciser got hold of his hand)

What the circumciser wants to instill among the initiates is the virtue of courage as they go to face the circumcision knife but also to be courageous to face life in future as the graduate as adults. Therefore, this Circumcision song explains how the circumciser got hold of the initiate's hand and encouraged him to face the knife. It manifests the courage of the young man who allowed himself to be circumcised during *idumi*. In this song, the initiate is applauded and praised for his courage. This is the same courage the initiate is supposed to show after the ritual and in his future life since the initiates were demanded to be courageous men. This virtue was acquired during seclusion when they were taught by the counselors how to make spears and arrows for hunting.

A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, June 10, 2023) explained that the entire period of circumcision is regarded to be sacred and peaceful moment. This is the time when peace was treasured by all the community and beneficial to the initiates who were in seclusion to avoid incidences of bad omen befalling them. The community and especially the families were expected to embrace peace.

According to the Tiriki tradition, the families that had taken initiates into circumcision were prohibited from fighting and even quarrelling. Even the youth and men in the

community were not allowed to get into violent activities to violate the required peace during the circumcision period. Family violence was discouraged and prohibited for this could affect the healing process of the initiates and therefore, the season of *idumi* is a peaceful moment (Personal communication, June 10, 2023). Sitawa and Langat (2022) echoed this idea by saying that, during the seclusion period, the morality of decency, sobriety and calmness was to be cultivated among the initiates to avoid fights, quarrels and other conflicts during and after the circumcision. This prepared the initiates to act always with decorum and decency and in future behave as sober adults after graduation to adulthood.

The cultural circumcision ritual of *idumi* also creates an opportunity for the initiates to learn the history of their community and especially the origin of *idumi* among the Tiriki people. Comparing the Tiriki and other Luhya communities, this history of their circumcision ritual is what makes them different from others and so, it is in order for the initiates to understand these peculiarities in relation to their culture. In this respect, Sitawa and Langat (2022, p. 6) noted that, the history of the Bukusu traditional circumcision rite and rituals provided meaning of specific acts done during the initiation. They continue to say that very important aspects are found in several myths presented systematically in the initiation process. This is true for the Tiriki initiates since their circumcision is of Terik origin and therefore, the background history of the ritual is quite important.

For the initiates who went through the circumcision ritual *idumi*, the moral value of respect was of paramount importance. All the initiates were called upon to be respectful to one's own age – group but more importantly to the senior age – group or age – set (Personal communication, June 10, 2023). This respect was meant to cultivate solidarity among the initiates and the community at large. With this moral value of respect, then

the initiates acted as brothers to each other, treating each other's wives and children as their own. The initiates had a duty to protect one another from any danger since they were bound together as brothers (Sitawa & Langat, 2022).

Generally, the elders taught the initiates to uphold the good values of the community. The youth are called upon to respect the elders and regard their peers with the same. The elders also implore the initiates to uphold the secrets of *idumi* circumcision ritual to strangers (Asitiba, 2017).

3.15.2.4 *Idumi* and Marriage

Through the initiation rite of circumcision, the young boys graduate to adulthood and are now considered mature persons. The entire process of initiation rite of circumcision always points to marriage as the most basic desire to maintain life without which initiation is incomplete in itself since that is end point (Magesa, 1998). According to Tiriki culture, one can only marry after going through the ritual of circumcision before then one is a child (Personal communication, September 15, 2023). Like in many other Luhya communities, circumcision is always geared towards marriage and the initiates are well prepared in matters relating to family responsibilities (Mbiti, 1969).

It is also assumed that by the time one goes through *idumi*, he is presumed to have matured enough to take the responsibilities that come with marriage and family. After initiation, the young men are permitted to shed their blood for the community by defending it. At this moment in their lives, the young people who have gone through the initiation are also allowed by the community to plant their biological seeds so that the next generation can begin to arrive (Mbiti, 1969).

The Tiriki believe that, as long as one has not gone through the cultural ritual of circumcision, he is still regarded as a child and so he cannot get married, he cannot

reproduce or bear children. In African understanding, whatever else a person has or possess, without marriage and children, one is considered to be totally nothing and useless. Unmarried and childless person is dammed and traditionally lost and in religious terms, he is referred to as “rotten” or considered as completely dead in African understanding (Magesa, 1998).

3.15.3 Social Foundation of Idumi

It is true that in Tiriki community, all social interrelations are determined by the traditional circumcision practice of *idumi*. Therefore, this ritual has a great influence on the social life of the Tiriki people. It is used to allocate people positions and status in the community. Through *idumi*, there is a bond of brotherhood that is established between those who belong to the same age – set. This bond is also extended to their families and their children.

3.15.3.1 *Idumi* as a Communal Entity

Circumcision practice *idumi* can also take a social aspect of entertainment to the community. Idumi cultural circumcision ritual is attended by all the people regardless of their age and even sex (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). *Idumi* circumcision ritual is always understood as a communal entity calling for the participation of all. This is clearly manifested during the entire stages of the initiation rite from the preparatory to the graduation stage of integration of the initiates back into community. Through the cultural ritual of *idumi*, communal inclusivity is realized since the event embraces all the people to take part at different levels (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

Starting from the ritual leaders or elders who decides whether to have *idumi* season or not, the sub – tribal leaders, the sub- tribal chief and the council of community elders

to the initiation chief and his junior collaborators. All these people mentioned above have a role to play in the entire circumcision ritual *idumi* (Personal communication, August 14, 2023). Apart from those who form the structural institution of *idumi*, the other members of the community are also given specific roles in the ceremony. Starting from the parents of the initiates, the initiates themselves, the sisters of the initiates who are charged with the responsibility of taking the headdresses after the circumcision of their brothers home, the counselors who build and take care and instruct the initiates during the seclusion period, the sponsors with the role of supplying the grain and food for the initiates and the Terik women sponsors who actively get involved during the graduation or the incorporation ceremony of the initiates back into the community. All these people have a special role to play during the circumcision period and therefore, everybody feels included in the entire circumcision ritual of *idumi* (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

The practice is the same in other Luhya communities and that is why Sitawa and Langat (2022) stated that, during the circumcision in Bukusu, the initiates, the parents of the initiates, the extended family members, friends and neighbours are all invited to attend and participate actively in the circumcision ritual and also witness their sons transiting to adulthood. Since the child does not only belong to the biological parents but to the community, then together all the community members have the responsibility to educate, guide and even counsel the initiates. The belief behind this is that, the well-being of all the initiates is a collective concern of the community and so, everybody is called upon to participate at different levels from the beginning of the circumcision ceremony to the end (Sitawa & Langat, 2022).

In many of the Luhya communities that circumcise their young ones, this aspect of communal inclusivity is manifested well during session of singing and dancing prior to

the initiates' circumcision and the cultural ceremonies that come after the circumcision. For the Tiriki community, these dances known as *vukhulu* are normally done in the public meeting grounds where those initiated are meant to dance mostly in the afternoon and are always joined by the community members. Original Traditional Tiriki initiates come out to dance putting on the masks to disguise themselves or hide their identity (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

3.15.3.2 Age – Group and Social Interactions

An age group is a number of people classed together as being of similar age. During an interview with respondents, it was categorically stated that, in both Tiriki and Terik culture where *idumi* originated, there can be no age – group organization without circumcision. It is only through *idumi* that the initiated are incorporated into the age – group system. A Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 14, 2023) explained that, the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi* rotates around seven age groups plus two other minor *Kwayimet* and *Kaplelach* ones namely: *Jimigeyi* (1890, 1897, 1905), *Nyongi* (1910, 1911), *Maina* (1920, 1927, 1932), *Juma or chuma* (1935, 1938, 1944), *Sawe* (1947, 1952, 1958), *Ngurunguru* (1964, 1970, 1975), *Ndaro* (1980, 1985, 1990), *Kwayimet* (1995, 2000, 2005) and *Kaplelach* (2010, 2015, 2020). These names are ancestral and were given as an honour to a Tiriki ritual elder with exemplary repute in the community or an event of major occurrence. At times immigrants who integrated well and were assimilated into the community like Juma and Hamisi would earn the recognition (Personal communication, August 22, 2023).

Each age group lasts for two circumcision seasons roughly between ten and fifteen years before the next age group is named as indicated above. For instance in 1980 was *Ndaro I* and *Ndaro II* named in 1985 up to 1990 to complete the circle and the new age group *Ngurunguru* was named (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). Each age

group is bestowed with certain responsibilities and expectations to affirm their status and contribution in the community. The roles of each group are hierarchical in nature and a reflection of the level of maturity both physical and in wisdom. The older age group normally comprises of aged men in their sunset years who provide guidance and considered custodians of the community tradition and values. It is observed that as natural attrition takes place, an age group ascends to the next hierarchy (Personal communication, August 26, 2023).

Like in the Abatachoni community, this age – group cultural practice has a social integrative process in community. Through it, young men after going through *idumi* are accepted as the members of Tiriki community (Kakai, 1995). The age – group categorization bind all the boys who were circumcised together giving them a special relationship of brotherhood. This acquired brotherhood during *idumi* prohibits persons of the same age – group to marry the daughters of their age – group. The daughters and the sons of the person of the same age – group are regarded as their children and so one not allowed to marry the daughter of an age – set (Kakai, 1995).

According to Magesa (1998, p. 103), all those circumcised in the same year form one age –set with a very special social and moral bond of loyalty and devotion with one another. They have a serious responsibility of caring and protecting each other's name and property. They refer to each other as a brother and therefore, the man's father age – set are his father and even the members of his father's brother are also his fathers. This is also extended to the sons of a man's age –set are also his sons and even the daughters. The bond of loyalty makes the wives of the members of the age – set man's fathers as his mothers and wives of his sons set as his daughters (Magesa, 1998). This clearly shows how the age – group system unites the community determining how one should relate to the other person.

Generally, the circumcision ritual influences the way an initiate is supposed to relate with the other members of the community. Papu and Verster (2006) talk about the relations pertaining to both horizontal and vertical aspects. Horizontal relationships are those between the circumcised and the community. Initiation determines how one should relate to his mother or women in general. His new status acquired through initiation also determines how he should relate with other men in the community. Therefore, circumcision ritual is at the center of all community relationships. The vertical relationships involves the ancestors of the community. The initiate through circumcision is connected with the living dead. The initiate is taught to respect, honour the ancestors by adhering to the community customs and carrying forward the ritual to his progeny (Papu & Verster, 2006).

Sitawa and Lang'at (2022) note that, during the pre-colonial period where there were no calendars, the age – group categorization served as calendars to the community. All events were referred to using the age –set names to guide periodization and what one needed was the knowledge about age – set operations to identify the time an event took place. Finally, it is important to note that, no name of the age – group can be given to the next age – group if there is a survivor of that group still alive. It is assumed that, it is improbable that after 135 years, there can be any man still alive when the age – group name is recycled (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

3.15.3.3 Source of Social Responsibilities

It is only after the initiates have gone through this traditional circumcision practice that are now given social responsibilities in the community. This is because, before the ritual, one is considered as a child and only adult or mature after the circumcision. For the initiates, the social responsibilities are acquired based on their age group which also determines the way each of the initiate will relate to other members (Personal

communication, August 4, 2023). The age –group categorization was based on the cultural ritual of *idumi* while young men were initiated and incorporated into the age – sets or age – groups within the community. At every level of the community, the age – group had specific functions to perform within the Tiriki community having graduated to adulthood.

At the personal level, one is now treated as an adult and therefore, allowed to marry and start his own family with the responsibility of parenting. As young warrior, he was meant to enter into the defensive unit of the community. To fight the enemies and even go for raids of cattle. The judicial leaders were quite important in matter of arbitration and settling of disputes in the community. The ritual leaders have a special part to play during the community's religious functions especially in moments of distress and calamities. The initiation chiefs, community council of elders and counselors are very significant during *idumi*.

3.15.4 Socio - Political Foundation of *Idumi*

This section looks at the socio – political significance of *idumi* circumcision ritual which include; the administrative structure, community leadership and the political leadership.

3.15.4.1 Administrative Structure

An administration structure is the administration of the then traditional societies through the organization and management of men, material and resources in accordance with the beliefs, doctrines, customs and opinions passed from ancestors to posterity orally. The entire Tiriki administrative structure was determined by the traditional circumcision practice *idumi*. All the people at the helm of this administrative structure of the Tiriki were men who have gone through the circumcision ritual called headmen

and at the top of it is the chief. The Tiriki people could not contemplate a leader who is uncircumcised at any level of the community structure. For the Tirikis, it is easier for a woman to be given an administrative position like sub – chief than the uncircumcised Tiriki man (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

Idumi was a key factor in the community leadership. It influenced the selection of leaders at all levels (the chiefs and village elders). The Tiriki administrative structure was well organized hierarchically with three important levels led by salaried tribal officials or leaders assigned territorial domain (Gibbs, 1965). At the lowest level of the community, we have nineteen sub – headmen each taking charge of a community. Above them, there was five headmen each in charge of sub – location and always assisted by his sub – headmen. At the apex was the chief responsible to Kenya administration for the whole location dealing with tribal affairs and aided by headmen. All these headmen were supposed to have undergone the *idumi* circumcision ritual of and most of them belong to the judicial elder’s age – group (Gibbs, 1965).

But nowadays, things have changed to some extent. While still maintaining that a stranger or the uncircumcised is still a child and therefore cannot lead, they have allowed women in leadership positions such as the village elder, the sub – chief and chief. The belief that, better a woman to take leadership roles than somebody who is not circumcised. The uncircumcised cannot socialize freely with others and even address the social gathering (Tiriki elder, personal communication, September 10, 2023).

3.15.4.2 Political Leadership

Political leadership is quite particular and only the circumcised have been elected to lead people. Here we consider the current elective positions from the Member of

Parliament to members of county assembly and see how the cultural practice of *idumi* plays a role. A traditional Tiriki elder (Personal communication, June 10, 2023) said that, when it comes to election among the Tiriki people, they are likely not to elect somebody who has not gone through their traditional circumcision ritual *idumi*.

The initiation ritual *idumi* bestows on the person the qualities of leadership especially that of courage and perseverance. The cultural circumcision ritual opens the door for a Tiriki man to play any role in the community including leadership roles. According to the Tiriki people, one who is not circumcised cannot marry and raise the family and therefore, it is unlikely for them to allow somebody who is not married to lead politically (Personal communication, August 13, 2023).

3.15.5 Religious Foundation of *Idumi*

Circumcision ritual cannot be understood just as a secular ritual since it has a religious dimension manifested in prayers, sacrifices and invocations to ancestral spirits to ensure successful accomplishment of the ceremonies (Kasomo, 2009). The Tiriki people had what we called ancestral cult as their religion and therefore, before the circumcision took place in the sacred groves, the ritual leaders had to make supplication and benedictions for those to undergo the ritual. In ordinary life, this religious aspect was manifested from the homestead up to the higher levels of the sub – tribal ancestral worship. The cultural practice of *idumi* is quite significant since it provided the ritual leaders who performed the religious duties for the community. These religious roles were directly acquired through the age – group categorization resulting from circumcision ritual *idumi*. It is quite clear that for anyone to perform a religious duty in Tiriki community, he must have been one of the elders of the community. Therefore, *idumi* provided the religious functionaries to the community.

Through *idumi*, the link between the living and the dead was achieved. The initiates were linked with their recently dead relatives through the cultural heritage of *idumi*. *Idumi* created a relationship with ancestors, deities and God (Kasomo, 2009). The living and the dead are connected through the shedding of blood on the ground. This act binds the initiates mystically with the living dead who are believed by many African communities to be living in the ground and therefore, reached through religious acts of pouring libation on the ground (Mbiti, 1969).

The supplications offered by ritual elders to the dead was meant to restore the broken relationship between the people and the living dead. The killing of animals during the circumcision ritual was said to be dedicating the initiates to the ancestors of the community to which they belonged and the animals' meat eaten by the initiates is meant to give courage and protect them from evil influence. The person who is chosen to anoint the initiates when they are coming out is believed to pass his good virtues and charisma to the initiates (Papu & Verster, 2006).

3.15.6 *Idumi* and Ubuntuism

Ubuntu is a traditional African concept originating from the Zulu and Xhosa languages which is translated loosely to mean “humanity towards others” and the belief in the universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity (Samkange & Samkange, 1980). There are various words that have been used by scholars to describe the reality of ubuntuism such as sympathy, compassion, benevolent, solidarity, hospitality, generosity, sharing, kindness, caring, collectivity and consensus (Nyanguru & Mugumbate, 2013). Ubuntu is normally based on generic life values of justice, responsibility, equality, collectiveness, relatedness, reciprocity, love, respect, community, sharing and unselfishness (Mayaka & Truell, 2021, p. 9.).

These are some of the values that are imparted to the initiates during seclusion for future upright living and a person who has embraced ubuntuism must manifest the mentioned values in his relation with other members of the community. Ubuntuism is opposed to vengeance, confrontation, retribution but values life, dignity, compassion and reconciliation (Nyanguru & Mugumbate, 2013). Therefore, it possible to know when Ubuntu is there and it will be obvious to notice when it is absent since it has to do with what it really means to be human, to know that you bound up with others in the bundle of life suggesting that one's own humanity is caught up and is inextrinsically bound up in yours explained in the saying "I am human because I belong." (Tutu, 1999 cited by Hailey, 2008, p.2).

Idumi is always community oriented since through it, one is initiated into the community with a specific identity. This means that one is not an island but only develops fully in the community. The underlying aspect of Ubuntu is bonding with other members of the community. *Idumi* as a cultural ritual is one way through which the initiates are closely united with the community (Personal communication, August 5, 2023). The underlying factor why *idumi* is important ritual among the Tiriki people is the desire to fully belong and be identified as a Tiriki. Therefore, Mbiti (2008) asserts that, to be human is actually to belong to a community. This belonging to the community means that one must also take part in the community rituals, ceremonies, festivals and beliefs of that community. The only way a Tiriki man can achieve this is through *idumi* circumcision ritual. Ubuntu identifies human persons as being with others and prescribes what being with others should be all about equivalent to the Western aphorism "I think, therefore, I am" which can easily be substituted with "I participate, therefore, I am" in the African context (Hailey, 2008, p.2).

Age – group (rika – in Swahili language) helps the initiates to grow in their responsibility towards the community. The age – group activities bring the whole community together to train, guide and advise the initiates on community values and their role in advancing the social and cultural, and economic wellbeing of the community (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). Through *idumi* circumcision ritual, one belongs both to the age – group and the Tiriki community at large (Personal communication, August 5, 2023). Therefore, Samkange and Samkange explains three maxims in relation to belonging to the community as follows: The first maxim states that, to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis establish respectful human relations with others (Samkange & Samkange, 1980 cited by Nyanguru & Mugumbate, 2013). The second maxim states that, if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, one should opt for the preservation of life. The third is embedded in the traditional African philosophy that believes, the king owed his status including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him.

Idumi circumcision ritual is a source of moral obligation, rights and duties given to the initiates and the elders. Ubuntu is an indigenous body of thought and practice which also recognizes the responsibilities of each human person to act for the rights of all others in supporting each others development (Mayaka & Truell, 2021). Ubuntu means that people are people through other people, Ubuntu promotes the rights and responsibilities of every person in promoting individual and societal wellbeing (Hailey, 2008, p.2)

Idumi is also the basis the cultural identity and unity giving one a sense of belonging to the community. Ubuntu philosophy always associates one’s identity with the community and the culture to which he belongs (Letseka, 2011 cited by Mulemi &

Ebale, 2023). The community acts as a catalyst and prescriber of norms through which individual attains personhood (Letseka, 2011 cited by Mulemi & Ebale, 2023). Ubuntu philosophy assists the person to value his own identity through his relationship with the other members of the community. Ubuntu is all about developing your fullness as a human person through your relatedness and relationship with other people in the community (Hailey, 2008, p.2). Again individual identity in African context is based on Ubuntu which involves recognizing the humanness of others and being recognized by others (Gaylard, 2004 cited by Mulemi & Ebale, 2023). This is only possible through *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people for men, without which, one does not belong (Personal communication, August 5, 2023).

3.16 Summary

This section has brought out clearly the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision ritual explaining why the Tiriki people have been persistent with this cultural heritage of *idumi* despite the presence of missionaries in the region. Due to its significance, it has been in existence for a long time since it fosters both the tribal unity and tribal identity. Through the *idumi* circumcision ritual, the initiates are fully identified with the community with some responsibilities and duties bestowed on them.

Idumi circumcision ritual is the foundation of the tribal unity through the age group system in which each young man must belong according to the time of circumcision. A mature man without an age set is like one without a brother and so, he may not share a meal with the other initiated men in the community. *Idumi* circumcision ritual is the basis and foundation of all relationships in community. It dictates how one should relate with the ancestors, the living dead and even those still alive i.e. the elders. *Idumi* plays an essential role as a school of morality where the young men are inducted into the traditions and moral aspects of the community. Moral values and virtues are imparted

during the seclusion period to the young initiates for better and upright living in the future. Through *idumi* circumcision ritual, one acquires responsibility towards himself and towards the community. Therefore, *idumi* circumcision ritual is very important for varied reasons including cultural, moral, social and religious which have enabled it to persist despite the arrival of Christian missionaries.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S PERSPECTIVE ON IDUMI RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

This section deals with the second objective of this study on the perception of the Catholic Church on socio-religious and cultural aspects of *idumi* circumcision rituals. It begins by explaining the history of circumcision, scriptural foundation of circumcision, the circumcision controversy, the missionaries' attitude towards African people, the impact of christianity on *idumi*, and the contested socio-religious and cultural aspects of *idumi* that are obstacle to evangelization.

4.2 Religious Foundations of Circumcision Ritual

This section covers the religious foundations of the circumcision ritual starting with its practice among the Jews, Muslims the Catholic teaching on circumcision.

4.2.1 Circumcision among Jews and Muslims

From the earliest time in history, male circumcision as a ritual was common among the people of south sea Islanders, Australia, aborigines, Incas, Aztecs, Mayans and ancient Egyptians (Doyle, 2005). These are the communities that were among the first to practice ritual circumcision on its people. Circumcision is valued among the Jews, Muslims and in many African traditional communities. Circumcision is significant to both Jews and Muslims as a symbol of heeding to the agreement between God and Abraham. However, this practice of circumcision seems not to have originated either with Abraham or Mohammed; it is a practice that might have been practiced long before these two religious personalities. It is argued that 4th millennium BCE, the Sumerians and Semites practiced circumcision before they migrated to Arabian Peninsula (today Iraq). These two tribes were also the fore parents of the Hebrew people. As immigrants,

they also carried with them their religious practice of circumcision. After they settled, others moved to the northern side to Assyria (today's Kurdish and south east Turkey) and established a city known as Ur of Chaldees that became a city for both the Sumerians and the Semites who settled in Iraq about 3000 – 2500 BCE. This city of the Sumerians and Semites was not far from the capital of Babylon near the Persian Gulf. As a seaport, the immigrants from Arabia and Far East, a part from their produce for sell, they also carried their culture, customs to the region. One of the customs that the Arabs brought to this city was the circumcision. Doyle (2005) states that:

The Jews and Muslims, respected Abraham as their patriarchal father who is believed to have been circumcised. He performed on himself, male relatives, and servants in his household as a mark of covenant between God and his people, known later as his chosen people, the children of Israel.

This is gives a religious purposes of circumcision rather than the cultural reasons as the case of the Tiriki people. Keller (1956) observed that, this circumcision was carried out by use of flint knives which was common with the Sumerians and the Semites who practiced circumcision as early as 1800 BCE. The reason why Abraham the father of our faith accepted circumcision ritual is not clear but he may have adopted it for hygiene to avoid infections. Therefore, Leviticus 12:3ff states that, for the Jews, circumcision was not a rite of passage but a sign of a covenant and a solemn relationship with God. It was previously performed at adolescent or prior to marriage but changed to the eight days of boy's life, counting the day of birth as day one. Circumcision was only performed to converted adults to Judaism (Whitehouse, 1952).

4.2.2 The Catholic Church's Perspective

The issue of circumcision has been controversial for a long time among the bioethicists. The question that have been always asked is; is it permissible to circumcise a baby boy? Some people have seen circumcision as a great violation of international human rights

law in relation to the rights of children. The position against circumcision is known as intactivism with both Catholics and non-Catholic advocates. However, the most important question is, is boys' circumcision of intricately evil? Is there a circumstance in which it is at least ethically permissible? To answer this question we look at the distinction between the circumcision in ancient Israelites and the modern one, then scriptural foundation, the Catholic teaching on circumcision.

4.2.2.1 The Biblical Perspective

From whatever we read from both the Old Testament and New Testament, it would seem that circumcision is permissible. Even prior to the Genesis 17:1ff which talks about circumcision, there are folk-tales in relation to Moses regarding circumcision.

Larue (1991) quoting the Old Testament puts it like this:

Then it happened at a stopping place along the way that Yahweh met him (Moses) and wanted to kill him. Then the wife Zipporah (Midianite) took a piece of a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched his feet (genital) with it, saying, you are my blood bridegroom and so let him alone. At that time she said, blood bridegroom in reference to circumcision (Exodus 4:24-26).

The above temple fiction story about circumcision suggests that the practice became a Hebrew custom through contact with the Midianites to whom the wife of Moses Zipporah belonged. By the rite of circumcision which the wife of Moses carried out on their son, the demonic intention to kill Moses was thwarted. The circumcision performed by the wife of Moses to their son laid the foundation for the infant circumcision among the Jews. Larue (1991) explains that, reference to the blood bridegroom also reflects the custom of circumcision before marriage. Therefore, just as the virgin bride would lose her hymen, testified to the bloody wedding night sheets (Deuteronomy 22:13), the removal of the prepuce would be the groom's parallel loss. Still, the mention of the flint blade suggests the antiquity of the circumcision ritual linking to Egyptians customs of using flint tools for circumcision (Larue, 1991).

After the Israelite's forty years desert experience, Yahweh, instructed Joshua to circumcise the people. God instructed Joshua to make flint knives and circumcise the people of Israel for a second time and Joshua circumcised them on the hill of foreskins (Joshua 5:2-3). Joshua's use of the flint knives still directs us to Egypt where they used flint blades for circumcision. There is another fiction that traces circumcision back to Abraham our father of faith in which a religious covenant is made between Abraham and God. In this covenant, Yahweh would be a unique God to Israelites who were to worship him alone. Being faithful to the ancient traditions where covenants were sealed with marks and symbols, then circumcision became the mark of the covenant made between God and Abraham (Larue, 1991). Genesis 17:1ff explains the terms of the covenant:

For my part, this is my covenant with you: you will become the father of many nations. And you are no longer to be called Abram; your name is to be Abraham, for I am making you father of many nations. For your part you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants.....every male among you must be circumcised.....you shall cut off the flesh of your foreskin and that will be the symbol of the covenant between us. Throughout all your generations, every male shall be circumcised at the age of eight days.

The priests of the Old Testament transformed circumcision from an ethnic covenant to a theological divinely ordained legal requirement of all the Jews. Therefore, circumcision is not a puberty rite or pre-marital ritual but a covenantal sign inflicted on infant males on eighth day after birth and not circumcising breaches the covenant between God and Abraham.

From the perspective of the New Testament, it would also seem that circumcision is also permissible owing to the fact that, the first Christians were Jews and therefore, they were circumcised according to the covenant relationship that Abraham had made with Yahweh, the God of Israel. Still in the New Testament, we are told that Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem for his circumcision (Luke 2:21). According to the Catholic

tradition, it regards the Blessed Virgin Mary as a sinless woman and Joseph as one of the Greatest of all the saints (Kaczor, 2018, p. 357). Therefore, we would not expect Mary and Joseph to engage in an intrinsically evil acts such as the mutilation of the child Jesus as the intactivist group suggests as they argue against circumcision (Kaczor, 2018). The reason why, at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke, clearly states that Jesus was also circumcised on the eighth day after his birth following strictly the Jewish tradition (Luke 2:2). Therefore, circumcision at the time of Jesus was a common practice among his followers. Even St. Paul the apostle was also circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Philipians. 3:5).

4.2.2.2 The Catholic Perspective

To understand the Catholic teaching on circumcision, there is a need to differentiate the ancient Israelites circumcision and the modern circumcision. Kaczor (2018) states that, what God commanded to the people of Israelites may have been very different procedure from what is being practiced today. The circumcision of the Israelites only involved a small cut of the foreskin which allowed the spilling of a drop of blood in a procedure known as “*Brit Milah*” which just involved the removing of only the tip of the foreskin (Kaczor, 2018). This was just a tiny symbolic cut “*milah*” which differs substantially, from the removal of the entire foreskin “*Periah*” and so, the permissibility of the first one may not imply the permissibility of the second one which most people practice today (Kaczor, 2018). However, it is thought that “*periah*” may have been practiced even before the birth of Jesus and even by the 2nd BC. Therefore, it is not clear whether the circumcision of Jesus involved the removal of the entire foreskin or the removal of a small portion of the foreskin (Kaczor, 2018). It may not be very clear which circumcision was biblically practiced and so, we cannot assume that the Old Testament circumcision required “*milah*” and not “*periah*.”

To understand the Catholic teaching on circumcision, we must determine whether circumcision is mutilation or not? The intactivists argue that, the contemporary circumcision is analogous to “*periah*” and is mutilation according to the Catholic moral teaching and so condemned implicitly by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 2297) which states that, “except when it is performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended amputation, mutilation and sterilizations performed on innocent persons are against moral law.” The encyclical of Pope John II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993, n. 80) includes mutilation in a list of actions that are incapable of being ordered to God and so, they are termed as intrinsically evil “*intrinsere malum.*”

The word mutilation can be understood in a broad sense to include minor mutilations that involve cutting or modifying the body but not in a way that compromises the functional integrity of the organs (Jones, 2017).

However, mutilation used in a strict sense or *per se* sense covers major mutilations where bodily functions are destroyed or diminished. It is also called “licit mutilation” in the case where this is done for the sake of the body as a whole (Jones, 2017). He continues to note that, the condemnation of circumcision as intrinsically evil implies that there could be no any “licit or defensible” mutilation (Jones, 2017) and mutilation in a strict sense is harmful *per se* and condemned irrespective of the circumstances (*Veritatis Splendor*, n. 80). Therefore, to understand the Catholic teaching on circumcision, it will be proper to limit the use of the term mutilation to the strict sense which implies a major destruction of functions not at the level of the part but at the level of the body as a whole (Jones, 2017).

Within the official documents of the church, mutilation was used in a strict sense and so, it did not include; skin grafts, blood donation, cosmetic surgery, practice of tattooing

or piercing of the body whose moral justification requires consideration of the particular circumstances, risks, burdens and benefits (Jones, 2017). Some of the justifying reasons for circumcision are; it confers health benefits by reducing the risk of heterosexual transmission of HIV and prevents urinary tract infection (UTI). Therefore, it is argued that circumcision is not mutilation in a strict sense which can only be allowed for therapeutic reasons, but it has other health benefits such as religious, cultural, moral and social (Jones, 2017). For instance, circumcision reinforces the bonds of identity, community and tradition in which the child is born and nurtured providing an important human and religious benefits compelling justification for circumcision (Jones, 2017). Therefore, according to the church teaching, Kaczor (2018) explains that:

Circumcision as currently practiced is not a form of mutilation in a strict sense and does not destroy or remove an organ of the body or undermine the function of an organ such as sexual and reproduction. For instance, circumcision does not prevent a man from consummating marriage and prevent couples from conceiving children naturally through sexual union (Kaczor, 2017). Therefore, the church has never condemned circumcision as mutilation but regarded it as a means of grace under the whole covenant (Jones, 2018).

4.3 Missionaries' Attitude towards African Cultures

Katoke (1984) stated that, a good number of the early Christian missionaries who pioneered evangelization in Africa had a negative attitude towards the local people and their way of life. Not only the attitude but their approach was not good for the people they came to evangelize. Their main purpose was to free African people from all their traditional values and religious concepts in order to plant their civilized Christianity with western culture (Personal contribution, August 5, 2023). To do this, they wanted a clean plate on which to plant a new faith (Katoke, 1984).

This approach was influenced by the Victorian concept of the Africans where the three objectives were adopted as follows; first the missionaries primary task was to

Christianize the African continent together with its varied cultures and way of life, secondly they also came with an idea to commercialize the African continent by introducing the cash crops and lastly, they were out to civilize the African people whom they believed they were backward. All the above were the consequences of the Victorian concept of the African people where the some of missionaries greatly believed that Africans were not civilized and did not have a religion (Katoke, 1984).

Therefore, in the process of civilizing Africans, for the early Christian missionaries, African Christian convert were introduced to European language, European table manners, dress fashions, and acceptance of the European names by the converts (Katoke, 1984). This understanding of the early Christian missionaries made it quite difficult for them to accept Africans and their cultural heritage.

Hildegarde (1991) writing on African perceptions of the missionaries and their message states that, the Xhosa people of South Africa, like any other communities had a distinct worldview that included the religious beliefs that influenced their day-to-day choices. But the absence of systematized theology led Van der Kemp (Hildegarde, 1991) to say that, I never could perceive that the Xhosa people had any religion, nor idea of God. This is just one statement that presents African people as without any religious affiliation and the ultimate beliefs of Xhosa people, enacted through rituals were dismissed as superstitions (Hildegarde, 1991). This corresponds to the early Christian missionaries' *tabula rasa* attitude towards the African people as regards to religion. It involved the tendency to regard African minds as so many jugs which had only to be emptied of the stuff that is in them and be refilled with the particular form of doctrine based on the teaching of the missionaries.

Most of the Christian missionaries who came to Africa, could not differentiate between Christian religion which they came to preach with their own European and western culture. To most of them, Christianity and Western culture seemed to be synonymous. Therefore, many a times, instead of preaching the Gospel and evangelizing Africans in the new Christian religion, they found themselves preaching their culture to the African people. Even the Africans themselves found it hard to differentiate between the Christian teachings and the European culture. Katoke (1984) states that, the Christian missionaries assumed that western civilization and Christianity were two aspects of the same gift which they were commissioned to offer to the rest of the world. Therefore, the missionaries also ended up preaching the western civilization instead of Christianity.

This early missionaries' conception of the Africans also created an attitude where by western culture was seen to be superior to that of the African people. African converts to be recognized as Christians, they had to accept the European Christianity with all its culture since African culture was alleged to be opposed to Christianity (Katoke, 1984). The early Christian converts believed that being a Christian was adopting the European way of life and culture especially the language, the European table manners, the European dress fashions and acceptance of European names by the Africans. Without this cultural transformation, there was no true conversion for the Africans (Katoke, 1984).

The foundation of the early missionaries' attitude was the mentality of thinking that the people they came to convert and evangelize had both cherished and held in high esteem their own customs, traditions and religious beliefs which the missionaries were out to free Africans from. This attitude and approach of the early missionaries blinded them from the fact that, God created all people of different races and cultures. Therefore,

there is no one culture which is regarded to be superior to other cultures. Being a creation of God, some of the cultures may seem rich in beauty and goodness but all cultures are also fallen and tainted with sin, including the European culture (Katoke, 1984).

The mistake of not differentiating between the Christian teaching and European cultural norms led to the weakening of the Christian message as received by the Christian converts. This attitude contributed to the desire of some African people to establish a kind of Christianity relevant to their way of life (Katoke, 1984). Although, later on, we will acknowledge the fact that, not all Christian missionaries were negative about the African people. For instance, Cardinal Lavignerie, whose episcopal residence was in Algiers, believed that, for the missionaries to be successful, they needed to mingle with African, become intimate with them as individuals to understand their modes of thought and customs (Pawlikova, 2011, p.273). This was the approach taken by many of the Catholic missionaries who encountered different cultures of the world. This is the attitude that can encourage and stimulate inculturation of African cultures into the Christian message.

4.4 The Tiriki Response to Christianity

This section expounds on how the Tiriki people responded towards the early Christian missionaries. They reacted in two ways to the Christian evangelizers who introduced Christianity in Hamisi Sub – County. The original Tiriki – traditionalists rejected Christian missionaries and their approach regarding *idumi* circumcision ritual. They did not want to compromise their culture for Christianity. The other Tiriki – Christian faction embraced Christian ideals and adopted less elaborate *idumi* circumcision ritual ceremony for their initiates as explained below.

4.4.1 Negative Tiriki – Christian Reaction

The Tirikis reacted negatively to the early Christian missionaries but it remains ironical that, although the Friends Quaker missionaries feel that the Tiriki were and are still the Luhya sub – tribe that was most resistant to the early Christian missionaries notwithstanding the fact that as early as 1954, the majority of the Tiriki people had become professing christians (Gibbs, 1965, p. 120).

The explanation why the Tiriki people were slow to accept Christianity like other Luhya ethnic groups is not well founded but only provide two explanations to account for this negative response. The first suggestion by Gibbs (1965) is that during pre-European times, the Tiriki people were not a clearly constituted tribe like other Luhya communities. The Tiriki people were considered as a rift-raff and outcasts by other Luhya ethnic groups (Gibbs, 1965).

Those who came to be known as Tiriki people included immigrants into this region who accepted the Terik circumcision. As people from different regions migrated into this region, the Terik requested them to give their sons to undergo the Terik circumcision. Those who gave their sons for circumcision were fully accepted and became the Tiriki people (Personal communication, September 6, 2023). This means that, the Tiriki people at the coming of the Europeans were quite a disorganized group and this may have been the reason for their slow response to early Christian missionaries (Gibbs, 1965).

The other reason why the Tiriki people were not ready to adopt Christianity was due to their Tiriki – circumcision cultural heritage. Sangree (1962) reported that the Tiriki people were quite less receptive to Christianity compared to other Luhya ethnic groups because of their appeal to beer. The Tiriki people hold on their special brand of idumi

circumcision ritual with a stubbornness which is a characteristic of those slow learners. Although not well founded but the Friends Missionaries believed that these could be some of the explanations why the Tiriki people were slow in embracing Christianity. Many of the Tiriki people believe that apart from other cultural factors, *idumi* circumcision ritual played a greater role in determining the way the Tirikis responded to Christianity as a new religion (Personal communication, September 5, 2023).

There are also other reasons why the Tiriki people reacted negatively to early missionary evangelizers in the region. Gibbs (1965, p.125) affirms that, it was due to “the hostility the missionaries expressed towards the secret Tiriki – Terik circumcision and the initiation customs.” Most of the Luhya communities have a simple circumcision ritual without a long period of seclusion and secret initiation rites as compared to the Tiriki – Terik circumcision ritual. This hostility of the early missionaries towards *idumi* and all the rituals performed during the circumcision period might have been the basis of why the Tiriki people could not accept Christianity fully as it was perceived to be centrally to their esteemed cultural heritage.

The early Christian missionaries were opposed to the elaborate *idumi* circumcision rituals coloured with beer festivals and the public naked dances performed by the initiates among others (Personal communication, September 7, 2023). Regarding the drinking patterns of the Tirikis, the early missionaries introduced a new notion whereby, beer was seen as evil (*damanu*) and beer drinking was taken as a sin (*bwoni*) by those who had embraced Christianity (Sangree, 1962).

For the traditional Tiriki people, Christianity was a religion that accommodated everybody including the rejects of the community. This did not go well with Tiriki people and therefore, they regarded Christianity as a religion of rejects (Personal

communication, September 10, 2023). There was a Tiriki's feeling of disgust towards the Mission which accommodated the aliens, outcasts, witches and irresponsible youths (according to the Tiriki standards) recruited as their first African helpers and converts. The Tiriki people could not approve the people who were very close and working for the missionaries in the newly established mission. Having recruited people with not moral standing might have contributed negatively towards the early Christian evangelizers (Gibbs, 1965).

Therefore, it is clear that the people who first attracted to Christianity were those outside the tribal group organization without a sense of belonging to the traditional Tiriki community. Many of these early converts were tribal aliens, outcasts, women, children attracted by food and clothing or working on mission land for money and attending mission school (Gibbs, 1965, p. 73).

4.4.2 Positive Tiriki – Christian Reaction

There are various reasons why women were attracted to Christianity specifically to Protestant churches than the Roman Catholic. One of the reason is the desire to escape the drudgery of beer making which was mandatory from the traditional cultural heritage. It was the duty of women to prepare beer for their husbands and for any celebrations in the community (Gibbs, 1965). Majority of women did not like the culture of making traditional beer but because of tradition, they accepted this role reluctantly. Therefore, with Christianity and especially, the Protestant ones, the women saw this as an opportunity to escape the role of beer making and joined in big numbers the Christian churches. In this sense, Christianity was liberating to these women from this cultural practice of making beer for their men and especially during *idumi* circumcision period (Personal communication, September 2, 2023).

The age – group organization to some extent contributed to women joining other Christian churches rather than Catholic which had accommodative attitude towards beer. Still, women were not integrated into the social framework of the community through the age – group system because they did not undergo the initiation rite as compared to Tiriki men and so, they lacked that sense of belonging. They did not fully belong like the rest of the men in the community. This lack of identity with the Tiriki community may have been one of the reason why many of them joined Christian denomination to have that sense of belonging.

The social position of women as compared to that of men was inferior to an extent that she only belonged to the clan or community through her husband's family, giving her connection with the major social, religious rites and institutions of the larger community. With prolonged absence of the husbands, who work away from home, the Christian churches through the pastors have taken over to provide the much needed social and religious framework for many women in Tiriki community. This explains why many women have joined the Christian/ Catholic churches where they feel accommodated (Gibbs, 1965).

Apart from the women who embraced Christianity with ease, other sections of people who were converted to Christianity are those who were uninitiated and so unqualified to partake perfectly in the age –group beer drinks with other elders and were strictly discourage to participate in age – group activities of which beer drinking was an integral part (Sangree, 1962). This category of people had no brother because they did not belong to any age – group in the community and therefore, it was quite very easy for them to join and remain in the new religion. It is noted by Sangree (1962) that, very few people except those excluded from the age – groups were attracted by the alternative affiliation and status offered by the Christian church membership.

Another factor that contributed to women joining Christianity was the conversion of Chief Amiani in 1927 to Christianity (Shiyuka, 2012). After having been persuaded by the missionaries to legislate against the Christian women being forced to brew beer for their husbands, women joined the new Christian religion in big numbers to escape the drudgery of brewing beer. This explains why many youthful women converted to Christianity in big numbers. Nevertheless, even with the conversion of most women to Christianity, this did not make the Tiriki Community beerless, since the role of these women was taken up by men (Sangree, 1962).

The age – group social organization also contributed positively for people to embrace Christianity. It was normally the outcasts that immediately and willingly accepted Christianity with ease as an alternative affiliation. These people felt out of place in the community and therefore, sought refuge in the Christian churches. The other people excluded from the age – group were those who were not initiated according to idumi circumcision ritual heritage even if they were circumcised. The Tiriki community could not accept them as members of their community. This rejection made it easier for them to accept the new religion where they felt at home. The uninitiated people also suffered the same fate since they were regarded as strangers to the community and could not fully participate in community affairs (Personal communication, October 10, 2023).

4.5 The Effect of Christianity on Idumi

The Tiriki people have a long history of practicing *idumi* as an initiation rite of young men into adulthood. Traditionally, this practice was performed as a cultural and social event, marking the transition of boys from being children to manhood. With the introduction of Christianity to the Tiriki community, the practice of circumcision took a new meaning. Christianity had a great impact to the Tiriki traditional circumcision practice in various ways. Asitiba (2017) stated that in 1946, two groups emerged

regarding the Tiriki circumcision ritual namely: the Tiriki – traditionalist group and Tiriki – Christian group. The groups in Tiriki circumcise their boys to graduate to adulthood. They both carry out the circumcision in the sacred groves and with the traditional initiation chiefs or circumcisers. The difference only lies in the circumcision rituals that come before and after circumcision especially in songs, the dances, attires for the initiates and the ritual.

A distinctive mark between these groups was the use of alcohol during the idumi circumcision ritual ceremonies. For the Traditionalist group, alcohol was at the centre of idumi celebrations while the converted group substituted beer with tea in their celebrations. Therefore, Sangree (1962) stated that, both the Tiriki elders and Christians in general divided the Tiriki community into two factions. All drinkers of alcohol were classified as good Tiriki age – group members in good standing with the community while all abstainers of alcohol as Christians and highly suspect by Tiriki elders. Generally, abstinence has become to be a symbol to both missionaries and African of the Christian church members. Those who indulge in beer – fitting ceremonies are regarded as traditionalist while those who shun beer as Christians.

4.5.1 Tiriki – Traditional Ritual

One of the Tiriki faction regarding the cultural circumcision ritual was comprising all those who professed the original script referred to as Tiriki *Musituni*. *Musituni* is taken from the Kiswahili word *msitu*, which means forest. Therefore, as used in this contexts, it refers to those traditionalist Tiriki as regarding the circumcision ritual. The term *msituni* is normally used by the Tiriki Christian when referring to those who are strictly sticking to their traditional way of carrying out their traditional circumcision ritual. It is used derogatively to belittle the original group to the effect that they still uphold outdated value of circumcision ritual (Asitiba, 2017). Like the Bukusu of Western

Kenya, the Tiriki traditional circumcision rite is quite elaborate in nature with some rituals that contravene religious expectations like too much alcohol involved. This impacts negatively to the community and to the family.

4.5.2 Tiriki – Christian Ritual

The inception of Christianity/Catholics greatly influenced the Tiriki community to drop some of the traditional aspects that were in direct conflict with the gospel message (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). The early Christian missionaries experienced a lot of challenges with this circumcision ritual. Most of the Protestant missionaries wanted it to be abolished completely while the Catholics, sought to integrate the positive values in *idumi* ritual with the gospel message (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). As a result, the traditional circumcision was adapted to incorporate the Christian elements to include prayers, blessings and religious rituals conducted by the Christians (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). With the coming of Christianity, now the religious significance of circumcision is emphasized with the belief that the act is a symbol of spiritual purification and commitment to the Christian faith (Personal communication, August 30, 2023). The result of the encounter between Christianity and Tiriki culture is the origin of the group known as Tiriki *Vanusu* of “half Tiriki” comprising the Tiriki people who do not embrace fully the traditional Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi*. They circumcise but their ceremony is not very elaborate like that of the Tiriki *Musituni*. This faction of the Tiriki people only embraces some (half) of the Tiriki traditional circumcision ritual *idumi*. The term *vanusu* was coined by the traditional Tiriki faction and used derogatively to belittle those Tiriki people who have embraced Christianity (Personal communication, September 4, 2023).

Therefore, the Tiriki – Christian ritual is a modified version of the traditional Tiriki circumcision that incorporates Christian teachings and practices such as dances and songs sung during the ceremony of *idumi* ritual. Even the circumcision itself is performed by a religious leader and prayers are included in the ceremony. The songs for the converted group has taken on the Christian tunes and even the dancing styles are difference between the two groups. Initiates of the traditionalist group dance in a circular manner wearing the masks while the other one dance in a straight line without the masks. The initiates of the traditionalist group stay in the forest for one week after circumcision before going to the seclusion huts while those of converted group proceed to the seclusion huts immediately after circumcision wearing lessos and not the animal skins like the traditionalist group. This is quite important since it maintains the cultural significance of the rite while also aligning it with Christian values and beliefs (Personal communication, August 28, 2023).

4.5.3 Differences in Traditional and Tiriki - Christian Ritual

This section explores the ceremonies and rituals involved in *idumi* for both the original traditionalist group and the Tiriki – Christian group. The original - traditional circumcision ceremonies among the Tiriki are dominated with beer and beer brewing. For the Tiriki – Christian faction, they do not brew beer and drink beer in their circumcision ceremonies and rituals. Instead of making and drinking beer, they value to make and take tea during their ceremonies. So beer or alcohol is not part and parcel of the Tiriki – Christian circumcision ritual (Asitiba, 2017).

Prior to the circumcision of the initiates of the traditionalist group, they are made to dance in public naked, guided by the elders and other young men who have already gone through the ritual (Personal communication, September 6, 2023). The dancing is quite important for the psychological support for those going to be circumcised making

them brave to withstand the circumciser's knife (Asitiba, 2017). The dancing while naked is very symbolic for those to be initiated into adulthood. They dance naked in public denoting they are still children and so not embarrassed to show their nakedness but soon they will graduate to adulthood. This gives them courage and confidence they need to face the knife (Asitiba, 2017). But some time, these dances and music accompanying the pre- circumcision and during public dances may be having some negative implication with some immoral messages conveyed through the songs and even the way the dances are performed (Barasa, Nyanchoga & Lilechi, 2020).

Traditionally after the initiates have healed, there is the dancing of the initiates in public fields every afternoon. On the other hand, the Tiriki – Christian faction never leaves the seclusion places until when the seclusion period is over and they do not dance in public like the traditionalist ones every afternoon (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). For the original Tiriki traditionalists, after circumcision in the sacred groves, the initiates are normally given the animal skin to wear throughout the circumcision period. They are also given a kind of animal skin to sleep on during the night. In some cases, they use the banana leaves for both serving food and sleeping for the traditional Tiriki faction.

The Tiriki – Christian faction are given *lesos* or some cloth material to use during the seclusion period. Instead of using banana leaves for serving food and sleeping, they normally use plates and other utensils. When the Tiriki – traditionalists come out to dance in public, they are all clothed with animal hides and masks something that Tiriki – Christian faction do not get involved in. The masks and the animal skin are supposed to disguise the initiates so that, they are not known by the people during the public dancing sessions and avoid the works of the witches and sorcerers that may affect them. With the masks and animal skins they put on, they virtually appear the same when they

come out (Personal communication, September 6, 2023). During this dance, the family members and relatives also join them which not common with Tiriki- Christian faction who remains in seclusion until the time of coming out or graduation.

Songs are very important aspect of the circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people. They are sung in a way to give courage to the initiates who are about to face the knife. Through these songs, a lot of teachings are imparted to the initiates that will help them live a good life after their initiation to adulthood. But through the same songs, those who shy away from the knife are ridiculed. The other people who are ridiculed are those who have abandoned the traditional way of circumcision *idumi* to embrace Christianity (Asitiba, 2017). This message can well be illustrated in one of the Tiriki circumcision song by a Tiriki elder (Personal communication, August 24, 2023) as follows where the Tiriki Christian faction is castigated by the Tiriki traditionalists as they praise themselves for their courage and wisdom:

Mundu munusu woi! woi! woi! woi ndatunya ha! ha! haaa! ha!
 (A half Mutirichi woi! woi! woi! woi ndatunya ha! ha! haaa! ha!)
Idumi bayaye ndatunya mmm! mh! mmmmh! mmh!
 (Idumi makes me sad mmm! mh! mmmmh! mmh!)
Ingolove yakhaya mundu munusu khufwala
 (The mask defeated a half Tiriki to put on)
Shali nyala mba! (He will never manage)
Toto mundu mutirichi ni mucheli yafwala kahala
 (Original Tiriki is clever, managed to put it on slowly)
Lisero liakhaya omundu munusu khufwala
 (A half Tiriki could not put on the skin)
Shali nyala mba! (He will never manage)
Toto mutirich ni mucheli yafwala kahala
 (Original Tiriki is clever, managed to put it on slowly)
Mundu munusu woi toto ndatunya! ooooh! awooi ndatunya x 2
 (A half Tiriki woi makes me sad ooooh! awooi makes me sad x 2)

The above is one of the circumcision song commonly sung by the Tiriki traditionalist group to castigate those who have embraced Christianity and adopted less elaborate *idumi* circumcision ritual by praising themselves (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). The song encourages the initiates as they go the stream for circumcision. It

ridicules those who have abandoned their traditional circumcision ritual and rebukes and make fun of the coward person (a half Tiriki) that cannot put on the mask and the skin. It praises a courageous man (*Mutirichi*) for the courage and wisdom of how to put on the mask and the skin. From the song, the fearful man is a coward and stupid while the *Mutirichi* is courageous and a wise person (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

All the initiates for both Tiriki faction undergo confession before they face the knife of circumcision. This is normally done before the elders by the initiates prior to circumcision. It touches on all the taboos the initiate might have violated against in his life. This confession is supposed to be truthful since it is for the welfare of the initiates. If the initiate is not willing to say the truth and confess, he is threatened of something bad happening during circumcision, for example, bleeding to death from the circumcision cut. This confession is made by both the traditionalist and the Tiriki - Christian factions (Gibbs, 1965).

The circumcision ritual of both the two factions take place from the sacred groves but in different locations to avoid confrontation from these groups (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). As they leave the forest, they are guarded by the elders and other young men who have already been circumcised. The Christian ones are dressed in lesos while the traditionalists are dressed in hides or animal skins. For both, women, children and the uninitiated men are not supposed to see them and, the elders and the circumcised young men are given a task to clear the way for initiates (Gibbs, 1965).

For the traditionalists, the period of seclusion is normally spent in making masks and other costumes to be worn by the initiates whenever they came out to dance in public

including the head dresses on their graduation ceremonies. Both are taught how to sing and dance although the Christian ones are taught Christian songs or songs with Christian implications. Both are drilled in the art of hunting and warfare as they prepare to become the warriors of the community.

At the end of seclusion before the initiates graduate to adulthood, there is a solemn oath that is taken by all the initiated young men before the elders never to divulge any aspect of *idumi* initiation rite to women and strangers at the pain of ostracism and death by sorcery to the initiate who reveals (Gibbs, 1965). Then finally the unmasked initiates receive the blessings from the elders and triumphantly return to their families where they are greeted with feasting and ceremonies closely similar to those of welcoming the bride arriving in home of the groom (Gibbs, 1965).

In general, the Tiriki – Christian circumcision ritual is normally punctuated with Christian songs, dances and prayers (Asitiba, 2017). For the Christian faction, scripture readings especially from the Old Testament dominates the graduation ceremonies. In these readings, they bring out the fact that, circumcision is a cultural practice that has been ordained by God himself for his people over generations. There is no room for biblical reading in the traditional Tiriki circumcision graduation ceremonies. In this sense, then circumcision seemed as an outward sign of inward faith in God.

4.6 Catholic Contested Aspects of *Idumi* Ritual

Christianity has been in existence in Hamisi Sub – County for over a century. Apart from the Catholic Church which evangelized the area, we have also other Christian affiliation churches and denominations. There are varied cultural practices in the region. Some of these cultural practices are contrary to the Christian ideals and doctrines. Some of them have even been an obstacle to the spreading of Christianity in the region. One

of the cultural practice that hinder evangelization in Hamisi Sub - County is the elaborate Tiriki circumcision practice which is a source of dilemma and challenge to the spread of gospel message. The dilemma Christianity and especially Catholics have to deal with pertains to the cultural practices and rituals that are deemed anti – Christian during the time of circumcision. The most outstanding cultural element is the dancing of the naked candidates of initiation for three consecutive days before being circumcised. During this season, the churches are empty especially for those women assigned to prepare food for the initiates. There are many other cultural practices that considered to contradict the gospel message.

4.6.1 Physical and Medical Dangers

Physical and medical dangers to the initiate is a concern of the Church and the community at large. The Catholic Church is concerned with the wellbeing of the whole person who is who is made up of body and soul. Therefore, when the human person is subjected to some inhuman conditions, it becomes the concern of the church. Sometimes, the initiates are subjected to some conditions not favourable for human health during the time of *idumi*. Starting with the condition in the sacred groves where the initiates are supposed to stay for a reasonable period of time. This is especially true for that group which calls itself, the “traditionalist or *vamasero*.” The initiates of this traditional group stay in the groves for one week after circumcision before they can move to the seclusion huts. The initiates are subjected to very hard conditions as part of the circumcision practice. Most of the respondents were in agreement that some of the initiates succumb to death during the circumcision and seclusion period (Personal communication, August 20, 2023).

Sometimes, the newly initiated men go through post - surgical complications such as excessive bleeding, uneven circumcision wounds and excessive removal of the foreskin

exposing one to infections, failure to remove the foreskin completely and severe genital mutilation such as injury to the glans or urethra (Thanduxolo & Kang'ethe, 2021). The complications may result into the death of an initiate due to over bleeding and disease infections (Personal communication, October 23, 2023).

It is also observed that after graduation of the initiates, they tend to go on rampage for sexual relations with many different girls that may prone then to getting sexually transmitted diseases such as STDs and HIV/AIDS which affects them forever (Personal communication, October 24, 2023). These are part of the objectionable behaviours that are contrary to the Catholic teaching where the human body is regarded as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:9).

4.6.2 Social Aspects

Although *idumi* circumcision ritual is a treasure among the Tiriki, it is accompanied by some social problems. During *idumi*, learning in most schools is disrupted due to prolonged seclusion period. Other negative aspects of *idumi* include discrimination and stigmatization against the strangers and uncontrolled use of alcohol and drugs by the youth.

4.6.2.1 Disruption of the Learning in Schools

The Catholic Church being a champion of education, with many Catholic sponsored schools, it becomes one of its concerned when the learning is disrupted in schools. Pope Paul VI (October 28, 1965), in the Church document about declaration on education (*Gravissimum Educationis*), states that:

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education, that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation

of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

The above except shows the interest of the Catholic Church in Education for all the the people which is contradicted by some of idumi ritual ceremonies. During this special season, most of the people are deeply pre-occupied by *idumi* circumcision ritual which to some extent affect learning. Some of the initiates leave school earlier than usual for them to prepare for the circumcision. Some will not even wait to do the exams before they leave to join the rest for *idumi* circumcision ritual (Personal communication, September 23, 2023). Mutsotso (2013) confirmed this by saying that, during circumcision season, there is a lot of disruption allowing youthful generation of both boys and girls to disappear from home and schools with their parents' support. This necessarily affect their school attendance that leads to non-coverage of the academic syllabus by the teachers.

Due to this interference, the teachers may be required to sacrifice some of their private time to recover the loss (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The circumcision ceremonies among the Tiriki people take a long sequence of events. It is not a one-day event but originally took six month ending with the seclusion period and subsequent graduation of the young men into adulthood. Starting with candidates expressing the wish of being circumcised, the prior preparation and traditional dancing for almost three days before the actual circumcision in the sacred groves and he coming out of seclusion of the initiates and dancing in community meeting place every afternoon. All these community ceremonies involve the entire community members.

The singing and the dancing will always attract the school going children and sometimes, lure them to leave the school and join the celebration that marks one's manhood (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). Many of the school going pupils

abscond from school to join the circumcision celebrations for a prolonged period thus interfering with their learning. One of the school going boy interviewed remarked that, he left classes to join the dancing and the circumcision celebration because the young men involved were his friends and he had just to join and see them through the whole process until they get circumcised (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). He had to join them since they left school for the initiation to manhood and he thought that when time comes, he would do the same and he would need his friends to join him. For him the ceremony come once for the initiates but the school could wait since if he missed this occasion, it would never come again but the school would always be there (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). Therefore, the circumcision ceremonies are given the first priority over education. This alone can interfere greatly with the learning in most of the schools.

Truancy is another problem that comes with the *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people and so, the rate of absenteeism of the school going children is increased during and after circumcision. One of the respondent, a male teacher (Personal communication, August 25, 2023) confirmed that after initiation, some of the initiated learners develop tricks. A good number of them leave home in the morning as if they are going to school but they do not reach but hide on the way doing their own things and go home in the evening with the rest of the students. This behaviour greatly interferes with the learning where the teachers find it hard to cover the syllabus but it is the beginning of many of the young dropping out of school. *Idumi* circumcision ritual also affects the academic calendar which in turn affects the academic achievement of the students in schools (Personal communication, August 25, 2023).

One of the respondents from Erusui stated clearly that, when the initiates pass by the schools dancing and making a lot of noise singing filthy songs and howling, they

pollute the conducive environment of learning and attract even the children who are in school to join them (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The noise, howling, singing and dancing goes on the whole day during the circumcision season. In the Tiriki community, this noise is started by one person from one side of the village and is taken over by others who join and after a short time, the village is covered with the noise and singing (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). This also interfere with the learning in most of the learning institutions in the community.

4.6.2.2 Prolonged Period of Seclusion

This prolonged seclusion interferes with Catholic Church activities and learning in schools since the initiates other members cannot participate fully during this time. This is the time when most of the Churches experience very minimal attendance of the Christians. One of the respondents, clarified that, the Tiriki circumcision has four stages starting with the preparatory phase, then followed with the real ordeal of circumcision, the seclusion period which is quite long and lastly graduation of the initiates to adulthood (Personal communication, August 25, 2023). This prolonged seclusion period affects learning in most of our learning institutions since the young men are kept out of school for a long time due to this traditional circumcision ritual *idumi*. The young men who undergo initiation are likely to interfere with their school programs and therefore, learning is affected. The situation is made worse with every afternoon dancing of the initiates in public which attract the multitude to join them. If it happens when the schools are in session, then be assured a good number of school going children will leave school to join the dance and the celebrations. This still impacts negatively to learning in schools. But the staying away from school by initiates as they recover also affects their learning.

4.6.2.3 Discrimination against Women, Children and Strangers

Discrimination any human person is against the will of God since the fundamental message of the sacred scriptures proclaim that the human person is a creature of God in his being in the image of God (Psalm 139:14-18). Therefore, being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity the human person who is not just something but someone created in image of God (Genesis 1:27). This is not the understanding of the Tiriki people, culturally, women do not belong to the Tiriki community apart from through their husbands and parents. The same is true to the children who have not gone through the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi*. For this matter, they are naturally discriminated against by the male family members. They do not belong to any of the age – group like the male population.

Tikoko (2021) states that, another reason why circumcision brings about gender disparity is that, the cultural ritual of circumcision is conceived as enabler to the boys who have a chance to go through it against the girls creating a male superiority over the female counterparts. Changah (2013) confirmed this by saying that, in one of the community of Kalenjin in Keiyo, once the youth is circumcised, he assumes new social roles and responsibilities in the community. At the same time, the community expects him to behave differently from those who have not gone through the same ritual. He is expected to exhibit behaviour ascribed to adult code of conduct. His entire environment even in his family is altered in a way that, he is now not expected to mingle freely with the uninitiated men and should always respond to women in specific way (Changah, 2013). This scenario provides serious challenges to boys who have undergone the traditional circumcision ritual. The cultural induction provided under the initiation circumcision puts the man above the woman, competing with the girl, therefore, it poses

a serious challenge to the boys who have been indoctrinated to believe that they are superior to the girls (Changah, 2013).

There is also discrimination against those who are uncircumcised or strangers in the Tiriki community especially in social gathering, meal and beer sharing by the elders. The strangers are not allowed to partake in the same drink with the Tiriki elders or those who have been circumcised the Tiriki way. Even the Tiriki young men who opted for the Tiriki – Christian circumcision rite are not also allowed to partake in a drink with the Tiriki elders unless they buy the Tiriki traditional circumcision through the ceremony known as *shigongo* where they go through less elaborate ritual for them to be adopted by the traditional elders of the community. Otherwise they will be discriminated forever.

One of the respondents said that *idumi* circumcision ritual puts a clear demarcation among those who have gone through the traditional rite and those who have not. Those who have not taken the Tiriki circumcision are considered as outcasts by the community members (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). This difference was made manifest with coming of Christianity and modernity in Kenya. This new worldview has challenged the traditional one making some people to abandon the old ways and their cultural heritage including the traditional cultural *idumi* circumcision ritual. It has made many to adopt the less elaborate *idumi* circumcision ritual against the traditional which was quite elaborate. Others have opted to take their young men to the hospital for same circumcision ritual. The differences between the ways one is circumcised has created a lot of conflicts in the community by some people being seen as traitors and outcasts by the other group. This has also limited the levels of social interaction by different people according to the type of circumcision they took (Personal communication, September 6, 2023).

4.6.2.4 Stigmatization of people

There is stigmatization of those who have not gone through the Tiriki original circumcision rite or those circumcised but in a different rite but worse still for those who have not been circumcised at all. These people are looked upon as inferior to the other Tiriki people who went through the traditional rite. The reason why some of them would like to “buy the Tiriki traditional circumcision” although they did not go through it for them to be accepted. To the Tiriki understanding, a stranger is the person who has not gone through the idumi circumcision ritual. He is a total stranger because he does not belong to any of the age groups. This is a person who is never accepted by the Tiriki community and he will always be sidelined by the rest of the people. He is like a man who is compared with those suffering from leprosy since he is isolated from the rest of the people (Personal communication, September 11, 2023).

Other people who are stigmatized are those who have not been circumcised in the Tiriki tradition especially those who have undergone hospital circumcision. These people are not considered fully Tirikis and they are held with low esteem in the community. It is also true that they are less respected in the community and regarded as cowards who feared the traditional knife and opted for circumcision. They could not stand while being circumcised and therefore referred to as those who underwent the cut on the table or board (*lubao*) in the hospital (Personal communication, September 12, 2023).

4.6.2.5 Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs

Among the Tiriki, there is a very close connection between the drinking patterns of the community social organizations which was used constantly in the religious and ritual ceremonies for only those who have been initiated into the age group system (Sangree, 1962). This means that only the initiated young men and elders were allowed to partake in these beer ceremonies. Anybody without an age group was a stranger and therefore,

not allowed to share the beer with the Tiriki elders and men. For instance, the uninitiated, the outcasts and the strangers were people who could not share in these ritual ceremonies where alcohol was involved (Personal communication, October 10, 2023).

The issue of beer in the circumcision ceremonies was one of the reason why the early missionaries objected to the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi*. It was all punctuated with alcohol at every stage, including the beer of the leaves, the beer of the fire, the beer of the back and the beer of leaving. In all these occasions where beer is served to the elders, women are not supposed to partake in it or those who are not circumcised in a Tiriki traditional way. There is a lot of alcohol consumption during *idumi* (Barasa, Nyanchoga & Lilechi, 2020).

During *idumi* circumcision ritual, alcohol is legalized and the license for brewing and consumption obtained. Most of the people are allowed to take alcohol to any level and any amount they wish. This time, most of the men and young men you meet are likely to be drunk all day long. This also applies to women since, apart from the beer taken to the sacred groves for the elders, during the beer festivals, it is the father of the family who leads the members to the houses where the beer is to be taken (Personal communication, September 6, 2023).

After *idumi* circumcision, the young men feel that they are now adults and this give them a temptation of getting involved in substance abuse. The common drugs such as cannabis, cigarettes, bhang are commonly used by the young men (Personal communication, September 7, 2023). The common type of alcohol misused by all the people in the Tiriki community during and after seclusion period is *busaa*. It is the same that is used during the seclusion period for the four beer festivals. It is normally

prepared by all the families with an initiate during the circumcision period. People move from one family of the initiated young man to the next. This can take few days or many days depending on the number of the initiates. Sometimes, it may take even one week if the families are many (Personal communication, September 8, 2023).

The drinking does not just end in the families of the initiates but some of the school going children take it along to schools to prove their manhood and even influence others to join them in taking it (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). Some of the young people continue with this habit after the circumcision period which has affected many of them to become less productive in the community. Some have even left their learning and lucrative jobs because of alcohol (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). Generally, alcohol and drugs have affected negatively the lives of many people in Tiriki community.

In general, rituals and ceremonies involving beer drinking do not only pertain to the *idumi* circumcision ritual. There are very many informal community beer parties that take place among the Tiriki people where men tend to gather around different beer pots according to age groups regularly. Beer drinking is most common during the harvesting time when the grain is abundantly available in most of the families where beer ceremonies could be held every week in the community. It is also observed that, it is quite rare for thirsting elders not to find a beer drink to join in another neighbouring community within a walking distance (Sangree, 1962). Therefore, in Tiriki community and especially during *idumi*, beer becomes part and parcel of the peoples' way of living through the *idumi* season.

4.6.3 The Moral Aspects of Idumi Ritual

Although *idumi* circumcision ritual has many positive aspects, it also has some negative effects to the community ranging from indiscipline of the initiates, sexual immoralities, unwanted pregnancies, early marriages, school dropout for young people, destruction of property and inter – factional violence.

4.6.3.1 Indiscipline of Boys after Initiation

The gospel message is very clear about the respect required from the children towards the elderly people in the community. The Sacred Scripture says, you shall stand up before the gray head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God, I am the Lord (Leviticus 19:32). The Scripture also says, honour your father and mother that your days may be long in the land the Lord God is giving you (Exodus 20:12). Despite this gospel teachings, it is normally observed that the young men after graduating from the seclusion period become arrogant and contemptuous especially to women and the people who have not gone through the circumcision and even those who have been circumcised but not in their way (Personal communication, September 2, 2023). This has created some problems in the institution of learning where female teachers are not respected by the boys after initiation. This has also affected the learning process of the young men in schools when they feel that they are adults and cannot be disciplined by female teachers. Some of the boys become unteachable.

There is a total lack of respect for women or girls (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). In schools, the situation is worse because, the young men after the *idumi* circumcision ritual feel that they are now adults and fully grown. There is a feeling of independency in decision making and the initiates would like to make their decisions independently. That respect towards the female teachers is diminished or lacking (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

There is always attitudinal changes that happens to the initiates during the circumcision ritual resulting from the instructions given to the initiates in the seclusion huts contrary to the formal education teachings. They are normally exposed to the gender biased instructions given by the counselors and the guardians. Sometimes they are instructed to see women as completely inferior to them and therefore, after seclusion, the newly initiated young men are likely to look down upon women especially the female teachers at school. The same happens within the families where the newly initiated young men lose that respect towards their mothers and the female siblings. They are also advised not to stay with their mothers especially in the kitchen and play with their sisters (Personal communication, August 24, 2023).

The initiates find it quite hard to follow the instructions given by female teachers and even to take the punishment from them. The initiated boys can easily opt to drop out of school rather than take the punishment from the female teachers (Yegon, 1996 cited by Mukhongo, 2003). Generally, the initiated young men feel that they cannot take instructions from the female teachers and are likely to take the law into their hands thus causing chaos and disruption in schools. The young men after *idumi* circumcision ritual become unmanageable by women and specifically by the female teachers (Personal communication, September 5, 2023).

4.6.3.2 Sexual Immoralities

The teaching of the Catholic Church regarding the behaviour of the human person is clear. Amidst the corruptions experienced in our communities, God's standard still remains the same, "Be Holy for I am Holy" (Leviticus 11:44). The same maxim should be observed during the Luhya circumcision ceremonies which involve the traditional singing and dancing prior to the real circumcision ordeal. This is an occasion that brings together all the people in the community, young and old and women and men. In some

communities, these circumcision ceremonies are on throughout the night. With people of different sexes mixed together, you expect many things to happen. Some boys and girls take this as an opportunity to engage in sexual activities which are contrary to the Christian teaching. Sometimes, since there is also a lot of beer associated with circumcision ritual, many a times, people are drunk and can do all sort of things.

The sexual laws are relaxed during *idumi* leading to some people indulging in uncontrolled sexual activities especially during the night hours of the ceremonies. People are likely to engage in immoral activities leading to fornication and cases of adultery in the community. It was observed that, during *idumi*, there is a lot of sexual manipulation and blackmail especially from the men. Most of the respondents were in agreement that, during *idumi* circumcision season, one can get the woman he has been lusting for and women the same (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

To show the extent of these immoral activities, one of the respondents said that, women are encouraged to go around without their under wears during the *idumi* circumcision period. It may not be exactly true, but this indicates the possibility of sexual immoralities during the circumcision period (Personal communication, September 3, 2023). During this time, the mothers of the initiates are also vulnerable since one of elders can approach one and demand for sex for the well-being or healing of their son in seclusion which is blackmail but it has happened (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

The sexual immorality is aggravated by the behaviour exhibited during and after the *idumi* circumcision ritual. After the circumcision, most of the initiates feel that the school uniform is outdated and are likely to choose to wear any type of cloth they prefer. During *idumi* circumcision ritual, some men wear ladies clothes and even some of the

women put on men's clothes that is likely to lead to indecent behaviour of the people (Personal communication, September 24, 2023).

4.6.3.3 Unwanted Pregnancies

During the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies, young people including school pupils are exposed to men who take advantage of them. There is free mingling of both men, women, boys and girls of all ages together. During this time and sometimes after the ceremonies, we have cases where girls have been impregnated by their relatives. It is a time where some of the sexual laws are dispensed and so, sexual immorality is common during this season (Personal communication, September 4, 2023).

The situation is also made worse by a lot of drinking during the circumcision ritual ceremonies that lead to drunkenness and ultimately sexual involvement by young men and women who participate in these rituals. This uncontrolled sexual activities during the circumcision ritual ceremonies have resulted into unwanted pregnancies for school going children. There are cases where small girls are lured to indulge in immoral sexual activities during these circumcision period with reckless boys who may be acting under the influence of alcohol that colours these ceremonies. Both the school girls and young girls are impregnated by the men attending the celebrations. This can lead to abortion which is another immoral action on the side of the people involved. Therefore, the young girls end up leaving school for an early marriage for which they were not prepared.

4.6.3.4 Early Marriages

The *idumi* circumcision ceremonies bring together people of all ages and so, with the free mingling and alcohol taking, then many girls are prone to getting sexually abused by their male counterparts (Personal communication, September 4, 2023). Due to these

uncontrolled sexual activities, many girls who conceive and give birth early in life end up getting married since they are no longer in school but mostly because of desperation they go through (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

There are cases where the boys and girls who met during the circumcision ceremonies ended up marrying or staying together like wife and husband. These cases are as a result of the unwanted pregnancies that arise due to this unrestricted mingling of people during the circumcision ceremonies. These marriages also impact negatively to those involved since they had not matured enough for them to get married. Some are just forced into marriage because of the unwanted pregnancy that resulted from their irresponsible behaviour (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

4.6.3.5 School Dropout

Sangree (1962) stated that, after adolescence, many of the boys who undergo the Tiriki traditional circumcision do not go back to their churches and schools to continue with their catechesis and education because of submitting themselves to the traditional Tiriki initiation which is beer – fitted ceremonies. The taking of too much alcohol makes the young men to act in irresponsible manner when drunk leading to immoral acts by both boys and girls. It is observed that many of the girls and boys of early age have dropped out of school due these irresponsible actions during the circumcision ceremonies. The boys may become parents at a very early age by being forced by the circumstances. The same case will happen to girls of school going age if they find out that they have conceived.

The community has lost many students who drop out of school after the circumcision season. Generally, after the completion of circumcision, the young men go on rampage for sexual related activities with different women. But even during the *idumi*

circumcision ceremonies, men and women freely mix during the beer festivals and the public dances. Sometimes, these dances end quite late and so, some young people take the advantage to involve in irresponsible sex which lead to early pregnancies. This has forced many young men and women to drop out of school (Personal communication, September 6, 2023).

The attitudinal changes that happen to the initiates is considered as one of the reasons why the young men drop-out of school. The instructions received during and after circumcision contribute greatly to children dropping out of school. A good number of the initiates feel that they are no longer children but adults who should not be taking instructions especially from female teachers. The majority of those who leave school, especially the initiated young men, feel that they are already mature or adults and therefore, no need to continue with the ordinary schooling (Personal communication, September 7, 2023).

The reason why the Ministry of Education (MOE) (1994:55) reported that, the socio – cultural beliefs and cultural practices such as the initiation ceremonies were among the causes of that escalate the drop-out of the pupils from school. Again, circumcision ceremonies and the accompanying rituals were cited in the MOE Report (1994:103) as the cause of children's absenteeism in many of the primary schools during the circumcision period. The ministry indicated that, there was high school drop – out of school going children especially after circumcision season.

According to a Tiriki male teacher (Personal communication, September 4, 2023), after the young men going through the ordeal of circumcision, a good number of them regard themselves as adults and equal to the teachers but a little bit superior to female teachers. Mukhongo (2003) stated that, the initiates cannot continue cooperating well with those

who have not gone through the rite of circumcision and therefore, some can even beat their male teachers while disrespecting the female teachers and what follows is dropping out of school because they are uncontrollable.

4.6.3.6 Destruction of Property and Use of Vulgar Language

There is a noticeable destruction of property and use of vulgar language (Barasa, Nyanchoga & Lilechi, 2020) by the initiates especially when they are almost graduating from their seclusion huts. There is wanton but permissible and sanctioned destruction of property such as maize, bananas and other foodstuffs during the ceremonies. Most of the time, the destruction is done at night by the initiates who may damage the crops on peoples' farm land. This makes people incur a lot of losses in terms of food security in the family. During the seclusion period and especially after the initiates have healed, they involve themselves in destructive activities at night when they raid the farms of people to get the food i.e. the banana and maize plantations around their seclusion huts. Although other people also take the opportunity to steal from the farmer's lands. It is a common and accepted behaviour for the initiates to harvest food crops from peoples' farm during the seclusion period (Personal communication, September 12, 2023).

Therefore, seclusion period among the Tiriki and other circumcising communities is characterized by destruction of property, rowdiness and opportunity for seduction and sex (Barasa, Nyanchoga & Lilechi, 2020). The vulgar language is mostly expressed in the *idumi* circumcision songs which are sung during circumcision time. Some of the songs are very obscene and dirty in content opposed to the ideals and teachings of the church (Personal communication, September 14, 2023).

4.6.3.7 Inter – Faction Violence

One of the cultural aspect that was contrary to Christian teaching was the violence and the animosity between the two factions of the Tiriki community as regards to circumcision ritual *idumi*. Asitiba (2017) acknowledges this by stating that, there exist animosity between these two groups to an extent that they conduct their circumcision rituals separately and independently of each other. The elders have come up with different sacred groves for each Tiriki circumcision faction to avoid violence and confrontations from the adherents of each group (Personal communication, September 7, 2023).

Therefore, from the onset of Christianity, the Tiriki community has witnessed some violence between these two circumcision faction groups. Each of them would like to refer to the other as the betrayer either of the traditions or Christian faith. This can clearly be seen in the circumcision songs especially of those who are typically Tiriki traditionalists. These opposing groups are not allowed to meet during the circumcision period since this is tantamount to violence. During *idumi* circumcision ritual, there are different factions namely; the Tiriki traditionalists commonly referred to as Tiriki *Msituni* or *Vamasero*, since their official attire during seclusion is animal skin, the Tiriki Christian faction also known as Tiriki Vanusu or Vasomi and the Maragoli faction. The educated Tirikis or the Christian faction is not allowed or expected to meet face to face with the Tiriki Original faction during the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies (Personal communication, September 6, 2023).

If by any incidence the two groups meet during the *idumi* circumcision time, there would be a very serious fight or war between them that can leave many people injured and wounded. There are also many nick names that each group will use when referring to the other opposing group. For instance, the traditionalist will refer to the Tiriki

Christian as betrayers of the Tiriki tradition (Personal communication, September 5, 2023).

Due to this enmity between the two groups and the rivalry between them, some people have been forced to abandon their homes because of harassment only to come back after the *idumi* circumcision season. Some have even migrated forever from their home land due to this animosity between the two factions (Personal communication, September 4, 2023).

Therefore, one of the roles of the Sub – County committee is to draw a clear program of activities for each group just to avoid direct confrontation during the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies. Each group will be designated to a particular area of operation to avoid meeting the other group. It is not that the two groups will circumcise on the same day but each given its own date and place of circumcision. The two groups do not share the sacred groves for circumcision. Each faction has its own sacred grove where they carry out their circumcision to their young ones (Personal communication, August 20, 2023). This program is clearly drawn so that the school calendar and church activities are not disrupted by the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies.

But even with this clear calendar and program, still violence will be witnessed between the two Tiriki factions. Apart from the violence experienced when the two groups meet, the violence is extended to the seclusion huts. This occurs when for instance, the original Tiriki faction feels that, the Christian faction has taken some of their boys into their seclusion after circumcision, they raid the Christian seclusion huts and destroy them by burning them down. This behaviour has caused a lot of fight and commotion during the *idumi* circumcision period. Sometimes, even the initiates are not spared by the invading group (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

An initiate interviewed from Erusai in Kisasi village, to be specific, he accepted that violence during *idumi* is rampant between the two conflicting groups of the traditionalist (Tiriki Vamasero – the ones who put on animal skins during circumcision) and Tiriki Vasomi – the Christian ones who use the lesos during circumcision). The two groups do not agree since one considers the other as inferior and betrayer of the culture (Personal communication, August 26, 2023). A Tiriki initiate (Personal communication, August 20, 2023) who is of the Christian faction narrates what happened to them during the *idumi* of 2010 when he was circumcised as follows:

That early morning after undergoing the knife, we had to travel from deeper sacred groves of Kaimosi forest where circumcision was done to the seclusion that was set for us in the forest in Kisasi village. This walk from Kaimosi forest to Kisasi had to go through the Itumbu stream. It was after this stream that we bumped into the Tiriki – Vamasero, the traditional group. This group attacked us trying to take some of the initiates but they could not due to our large numbers. The fight involved exchange of fist, clubs, the walking sticks and stones.

4.6.4 Economic Aspects

The traditional circumcision ritual is quite involving economically which impacts negatively to the families involved. This is true in many of the African communities and especially the Luhya communities that are still quite traditional with this cultural heritage. This part outlines the economic implications of Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi* in Hamisi Sub – County.

4.6.4.1 Tiriki – Traditional Ritual

Among the Bukusu community of Western Kenya, the cost of circumcision is an important factor to consider by the parents of the initiates. This is a community where like the Tiriki people, they have two separate types of circumcision to their young men namely the traditional and the clinical referred to as the Christian Bukusu circumcision rite. Comparing the two, Barasa et al., (2018) remarked that, it is costly to circumcise the boys at home traditionally as compared to the clinical circumcision or hospital

circumcision and so we opted for the clinical one. This was so because we were to raise the school fees for the brothers who are in secondary schools. They talk about the costs prior to circumcision which include the food and alcohol brew prepared by the parents of the initiates for community in preparation for the real circumcision (Barasa et al., 2018).

Then during the circumcision itself, there is circumcision fee for each candidate and a lot of food required for the people who come to celebrate the initiation of their young one. In addition the family is also required to provide alcohol and ceremonial bull for the initiation ceremony. This becomes an economic burden to the parents of the initiates. This is almost the same with Tiriki culture during the circumcision. There is a lot of food, beer that colours the entire circumcision ritual that is reasonably expensive. Immediately after the circumcision, the parents are also required to provide the cloth, fee and wound medicare. For Tiriki people, they are required to provide for animal hide of skin for the initiates to use during the seclusion. What is covered here is only but the financial costs for one to circumcise the son in a traditional way (Barasa et al., 2018).

The material costs prior to circumcision include all types of food stuff ranging from sugar, flour, beer, local brew, meat, milk etc. During the circumcision, a bull, goat, chicken and other food stuffs are also required. At the graduation, all the food stuffs mentioned above are required including new house for the initiate, new clothes, beddings, shoes and rewards (Barasa et al., 2018). Therefore in terms of financial costs and material costs, the family must be well prepared to cater for all these requirements.

The Tiriki traditional circumcision ceremony is always marked with beer and alcohol. There are four stages during the circumcision and during seclusion period where the parents of the initiates are required to provide beer to the elders of *idumi*. The beer is

normally shared by the elders and all those who are already initiated into the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi*. This also is both financial cost and material costs incurred by the parents of the initiates. The Traditional Tiriki circumcision ritual is quite expensive in nature.

4.6.4.2 Tiriki – Christian Ritual

The cost of circumcision for non – traditional rite is a little bit lower as compared to the traditional one even among the Bukusu and the Tiriki community (Barasa et al., 2018). Most of the time, what is required is just food without alcohol or beer. The fee for the circumcision cuts across the divide. Here the initiates are allowed to use clothes and not the skin of an animal. For eating they use ordinary utensils as compared to the traditionally circumcised young men who uses the stick and the banana leaves for eating.

Therefore, there is a big economic implication as regards to the Tiriki circumcision ritual that impacts negative to other spheres of family life like education of the other members of the household. The Tiriki – Christian circumcision ritual is not as expensive as the traditional one. While the other ritual is coloured with alcohol and beer, the Christian one is normally coloured with tea. Most of the time, tea is the one that is consumed (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

4.6.4.3 Laziness and Idling Attitude

This is a common attitude during the *idumi* circumcision ritual where everywhere in the community, nothing economically beneficial is happening. All the people are just involved in merry making, feasting and beer drinking. This behaviour affects the community badly in terms of economy. During the entire *idumi* circumcision period, most of the people do not engage themselves in profitable work. From the time they

wake up, the community is full of ululations as an indication and a preparation for the public dance of the initiates in the afternoon. One of the respondent, a lay woman reported that, the whole morning session is wasted just preparing for the evening dance (Personal communication, August 3, 2023). So both the women and men end up doing nothing profitable for the family or community apart from gathering at the public square for the dance. Most of the time, people just walk from one seclusion hut to the next singing from morning to evening (Personal communication, August 3, 2023).

The men and the young initiated men have no time to spend in the farms or business ventures. For the women, their work is mainly looking for food and preparing for the initiates. They have no time to engage in serious farming or any other business. This behaviour during *idumi* circumcision ritual is very disastrous especially after the circumcision season where some families will even lack the food to eat and the fees for their schooling children (Personal communication, August 4, 2023).

4.6.4.4 Over Spending

As mentioned above, *idumi* ritual is quite involving economically depending on which Tiriki faction. The Tiriki traditional faction is the most expensive as compared to the Tiriki Christian faction due to the processes involved in each. One of the respondent, a lay woman, remarked that, the money required to circumcise a child traditionally can easily buy land for the family. There is plenty of food and alcohol involved and this requires money. Some poor families end up selling their land and livestock in order to sponsor their children for the *idumi* circumcision ritual. *Idumi* circumcision ritual has increased the poverty rate among the average families in the region (Personal communication, August 6, 2023).

From those who have had their sons go through the *idumi* circumcision ritual, they all agree that it is an expensive ritual to undertake. For this reason, the parents of the initiates must prepare well. One of the respondents, lay woman gave the summary of the economic implications of *idumi* which included the following:

The construction of seclusion huts 1500/=, the initiation fee 500/=, tetanus injection 200/=, personal effects including hide/skin 4000/= and blanket 1000/=, food on the eve of circumcision 1800/=, material/equipment used like pots, baskets known as *vihinda* 2000/=, drinks for elders – busaa 15,000/=, food during healing season 30,000/=, personal effects 1500/=, the caretaker's fee 2000/=, medicine for healing wounds 200/=, clothing during graduation 5000/=, home welcoming of the initiates 60,000/= graduation square fee 200/= and maybe other miscellaneous expenditure of 10,000/=. The total comes to almost 140,000/= for one initiate (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

This is how costly *idumi* circumcision ritual is for the families that are sponsoring their boys for initiation. The Tiriki factions spend a lot of money in *idumi* with some differences with the Christian faction where beer and use of hides or skins is not applicable (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). It is quite common to hear that, a family sold part of the shamba, a livestock such as cows, sheep and goats for their sons to be circumcised.

4.6.5 Cultural Aspects

There are two cultural aspects that affects the people and especially those who embraced Christianity in the Tiriki region. These are the fear of witchcraft, sorcery which is real among the people and the many customs and taboos that seem not to be in conformity with the Christian ideals.

4.6.5.1 Fear of Witchcraft and Sorcery

Witchcraft means the use of magic or supernatural powers to inflict harm or cause misfortune on others and so, the fear of witchcraft and sorcery is at the center of the Tiriki community consciousness. The fear of witchcraft is real and especially during

the circumcision period. It for this reason that the traditionally initiated boys are clothed with hides or animal skin with a mask whenever they come out to dance in the meeting community places. At this stage they are very vulnerable and they must be protected from people with “bad” eyes and “evil” spirit. A part from the initiate’s fear to be bewitched, the common population also believe that, it is during *idumi* season that your enemy can bewitch you easily.

Majority of the elders and initiates interviewed were in agreement that, people are very fearful during the *idumi* circumcision period due to the fear of witchcraft. It is like the powers of the witches is strongest and most effective during *idumi* circumcision period (Personal communication, September 6, 2023). The ritual elders are also believed to possess some mysterious powers during this time and therefore, they are revered by most people. During the circumcision period, their word is final and people avoid confrontations with them for fear of being bewitched (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

4.6.5.2 Taboos and Customs

Taboos are statements which forbid someone to do or to touch something. There are taboos and customs of *idumi* that make it very difficult for the Christian activities to continue naturally. Those who are directly linked with the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi* do not find time to join the rest of Christians in the church’s celebrations. Those who are charged with the responsibility to cook for initiates cannot be allowed to attend the funeral or the Christian burial ceremonies of the faithful departed. They are restricted within the confines of the homes. Still the parents of the initiates are not supposed to indulge themselves in sexual activities lest the child in the seclusion may be affected by slowing the process of wound healing (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

4.6.6 Religious Aspects

With the coming of the Christian missionaries, the Tiriki people were in dilemma regarding the Christian ideals and their culture. Christianity has created a problem of religious syncretism where some people who have embraced Christianity still go back to their culture during *idumi* circumcision period to carry out *idumi* in its traditional manner. Apart from this, the role of ritual leaders and shrines is still active among the Tiriki people during *idumi* season where the sacred groves play a vital role.

4.6.6.1 Problem of Religious Syncretism

Sitawa (2019) noticed that the presence of Christianity in Bukusu land affected the traditional cultural heritage of circumcision. It led to the transformation of this rite into what can be called Christian – Bukusu circumcision rite. This is exactly what happened in Hamisi Sub – County with the arrival of Christianity in the region. The church must struggle with the Christians who are in the church during mass and immediately partaking in the Tiriki traditional circumcision rituals. We have those who profess to be Christians but when circumcision period comes, they withdraw into the sacred groves neglecting their religious obligations and duties in the Church. They no longer care about the church activities but concentrate fully on the *idumi* ceremonies. This is the kind of syncretism that people are likely to experience during *idumi* season. They belong to the church but still very traditional in practice.

Just like in Bukusu land, there are those who decided to remain traditional as regards to circumcision practice and those who may end blending and combining the two types of circumcision rituals. The Tiriki – Christian ritual is blending some of Christian ideals into the cultural circumcision ritual thus being a half Christian and a half Tiriki in their celebration of the circumcision ritual *idumi*. In Bukusu community, there are people who blend the traditional and the modern way of circumcision. In this case, the initiate

goes through part of traditional ritual like songs, dances, eating and drinking but instead of going to the river for mudding, he goes to the hospital for clinical circumcision (Sitawa, 2019). For some boys who undergo Tiriki – Christian circumcision, they may be required to go through the ceremony of “buying the circumcision” for them to be accepted fully by the traditionalist group.

In the opinion of most of the catholics, they stated that in Tiriki community, those who are traditionalists are also members of the same church. The only difference is that, during circumcision, they opt for that elaborate *idumi* circumcision ritual as opposed to the Tiriki – Christian faction. Sometimes, these could be members of the same family belonging to the same church but the difference only comes during the circumcision period (Personal communication, September 24, 2023).

4.6.6.2 Role of Ritual Leaders and Shrines

Although the issue of homestead shrines and even the community shrines have greatly disappeared, there remains the shrines located in the sacred groves where the circumcision normally takes place. At the homestead, each family had its own shrine managed and presided over by the homestead elder. He could offer sacrifices on behalf the entire homestead or family. The shrine at the community was presided over by the ritual elders especially during moments of community distress and calamities. They could also offer sacrifices during the time of harvest on behalf of the entire community. This community gatherings for sacrifices has disappeared but the ritual elders are still relevant during the circumcision ritual *idumi*. It is quite true that, during *idumi*, even the priests and pastors within the region cannot be allowed to participate fully since they do not belong to the Tiriki by circumcision to offer prayers for the initiates. This time, the ritual leaders are more acceptable than the religious leaders in the region.

4.6.6.3 Place of Sacred Groves

The circumcision takes place in specified woods or bushes that have been set aside for this purpose and are situated across Tiriki land. These are not only ordinary forests but they have religious significance to the people in Hamisi Sub – County. The sacred groves are primarily a place where the initiates are circumcised. It is also a site for rituals and cleansing ceremonies. Other functions of the sacred groves are a site for sacred trees, site for special prayers, site for herbal medicines, site for food, source of construction materials, site for cultural teachings and a sanctuary for sacred animals. But the Tiriki people hold the sacred groves with esteem because it is the place where circumcision is done (Kassilly & Tsingalia, 2009).

It is a place where the union of the initiates and the ancestors is achieved by them shedding blood on this sacred ground. The forest has a religious significance among the Tiriki people. It is a place where the elders offer sacrifices and prayers to the living dead and their ancestors. This touches on the faith of the people who are already Christians but still go back to the forests for prayer and sanctification (Personal communication, September 23, 2023). These reasons and others make the forests to occupy a very important place in the lives of the Tirikis and so, so many taboos are there to protect the destruction of the sacred groves which in turn contributes to environmental conservation in the region.

4.6.7 Pastoral Aspects

During the *idumi* circumcision period, there are some pastoral challenges that Christians are faced with since all the attention of the community as mentioned below.

4.6.7.1 Anti – Christian Practices

One of the respondents, stated that, the traditional Tiriki idumi ritual has greatly affected the church's activities in the region especially in line with pastoral care of the Catholic faithfuls. It has happened that when an initiate dies during *idumi* in seclusion, even if he is a baptized Christian, the church will not be given an opportunity to give a Christian burial. Even the SCC will not be involved in the burial of the initiate (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). The ceremony will be carried out by the elders at night without any Christian prayers offered. This contradicts the teaching of the church where Christian are to be accorded Christian burial. There are also other traditional ritual that the Tiriki elders would like to perform during the burial of an initiation chief or a circumciser a part from what the church does. This is mixing of the tradition and Christianity at the same time.

It is a big pastoral challenge to attend the burial of a Tiriki elder who is also a Catholic. The elders would like to bury their elder in a specific manner which may be contrary to the liturgical rite given by the church. Sometimes, this has created a fight between the traditional elders and the members of the church (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). This brings about a clash between the church and the Tiriki elders.

Another problem comes in when a mature man dies before being circumcised. Traditionally, the Catholic Christian community of family cannot bury this person until he has been circumcised by the elders of the community. To the Catholic faithfuls, this does not make any sense since the person is dead already. It is like baptizing a dead person before burial which is not allowed by the church (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). The funeral participation by the Christian community is totally limited due to the beliefs surrounding idumi circumcision ritual. Any person who is directly involved in the care of the initiates is not allowed to attend burial ceremonies

since this could affect the healing process of the initiates (Personal communication, September 3, 2023).

4.6.7.2 Effects to Church's Activities

It is also noticeable that during the circumcision season, the Church participation and attendance by the Catholic faithfuls is at minimal level since most of them are immersed in the ceremonies related to *idumi*. This is a very common phenomenon experienced by the pastors who work in this region. This applies to the Sunday celebration of the liturgy and other functions in the church. This will affect even the meetings at the church during afternoon since this is the time when the initiates are supposed to be dancing in the community meeting public places where the entire community congregate to participate in *idumi* celebration (Personal communication, September 10, 2023).

The Catholic Church tradition of having mass daily suffers greatly during *idumi* season. During *idumi* circumcision period, the number of Christians who attend this daily masses is minimal. Christians do not have time for spiritual activities. The memorial masses which are common and celebrated in the Christian families are also limited during this time and if it is necessary that it must be celebrated, then only the family members and very few Christians will attend. This also applies to other church functions like weddings but the situation is worse for funeral or burial masses (Personal communication, September 23, 2023).

The sacramental life of the Christians is also disrupted in a way that they do not have time to come to the church as stipulated in the church's commandments. In other words, the Sunday obligation is not adhered to by the catholic Christians. Because of the involvement in the *idumi* circumcision ritual, even the catechumens have no time to continue or attend to their catechism classes (Personal communication, September 14,

2023). There is a total stand still of all the activities of almost all movements in the church including the legion of Mary, the Catholic Men Association (CMA), the Catholic Women Association (CWA), the youth movement and even the normal parish office day is also interfered with (Personal communication, September 15, 2023).

Those involved in the lay ministries are also unable to carry out their pastoral duties properly due to *idumi* circumcision ritual. Everybody is fully immersed in the cultural celebrations of *idumi* (Personal communication, September 23, 2023). Two of the sacraments that suffer greatly are the anointing of the sick and confession for those who are dying. The belief is that anyone who dies during *idumi* period is a bad omen to the entire Tiriki community. You are not supposed to die during *idumi* and therefore, the community distances itself from anyone who is very sick and likely to die during the season. This ailing person is only left to the care of the close family members and not even to small Christian community. It is worse if he dies since even the Christians will not take an active role in the funeral preparations (Personal communication, September 4, 2023).

4.6.7.3 Effects to the Christian Communities

The SCC involvement also suffers greatly since most of the women who are very active are taking care and cooking for initiates. The usual weekly small Christian community meeting is also affected. Once the organization and the activities of SCCs come to halt, then the entire parish is paralyzed. Without people attending to SCC meetings, then the ministries towards the sick, dying, lapsed Christians and generally prayers sessions are affected. The Tiriki people expects all the family to circumcise their children according to the Tiriki tradition by participating fully in *idumi* circumcision ritual.

Any family that does contrary to this becomes an enemy of the community. In the case where a family decides to take their boy for hospital circumcision, they may experience that sense of isolation by the other members of the small SCC. During *idumi* circumcision season, almost all the parish pastoral programs are disrupted. The normal priest's pastoral visits to the families and small SCCs is interfered with since all are deeply immersed in the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies (Personal communication, September 25, 2023).

The pastoral activities such as visitation of communities is impossible during this season. Even the community masses that are normally organized in is not possible. The weekly community prayer meetings also suffer a lot because of this cultural heritage (Personal communication, September 24, 2023). Due to Low Church attendance during this time, the church offerings are very much reduced and this affects the day to day running of the church. The priests find it hard to run the parish activities without enough income since the Christians invest much in *idumi* circumcision ceremonies than the church (Personal communication, September 13, 2023). The normal parish council meetings, prayer group meetings are also affected since the majority of women are involved in preparing and looking for food for the initiates (Personal communication, September 25, 2023).

4.7 Summary

This chapter has brought out the conceptual meaning of circumcision, the scriptural foundation explaining the attitude of the early missionaries towards the African culture and the different orientations to Christianity. From the findings of this study, then it is clear that, the influence of Christianity in this region led to the origin two distinct groups in relation to *idumi* namely; the original Tiriki faction which opted to remain adamant to their cultural heritage of elaborate *idumi* ceremonies and those who accepted

Christianity called the *vanusu* which means a half Tiriki or Tiriki – Christian faction. The difference between the two groups is not in the circumcision act but in the rituals that accompany the circumcision rite.

The traditionalists value the elaborate kind of rituals prior and after the circumcision of the young people such as public dancing of the initiates every afternoon in public meeting places with the masks on their heads. The Tiriki – Christian faction have brief rituals that come before and after the real circumcision. They do not have public dances of the initiates and do not have beer festivals like the traditional group. The differences between the two lead to the identification of the contested variables of *idumi* circumcision rituals that the early Christian missionaries did not accept from the Tiriki cultural heritage.

The study also brings out clearly the contested aspects of *idumi* circumcision ritual including; the social, moral, cultural and economical. The social contested variables such as prolonged seclusion period, discrimination, stigmatization, and alcohol/beer consumption have been highlighted. Other cultural aspects like taboos, customs and and the fear of witchcraft are mentioned. The immoral behaviour and activities are responsible for the early marriages and school dropouts in the community. Pastorally the church is adversely affected by this cultural practice of *idumi* among the Tirikis by the agents of evangelization in the region. Therefore, this chapter identified some of the contested socio-religious and cultural variables of *idumi* that have impacted negatively to the proper evangelization process in the region singled out by the church.

CHAPTER FIVE

CATHOLIC RESPONSE TO SOCIO – RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF *IDUMI* RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY.

5.1 Introduction

This section addresses the third objective which is meant to explore the Catholic Church's response to socio-religious aspects of idumi ritual and its challenges to evangelization. It explains concepts used by the Church to bring out the relationship between cultures and the gospel message. It defines culture, evangelization, inculturation and R. Niebuhr's consultative/dialogical critical approach to cultural transformation with five approaches to aid the Catholic Church in responding to the socio – religious and cultural aspects of *idumi*.

5.2 The Concept of Inculturation

In this section, it is important to give some of the theological understanding of the term inculturation by different scholars. Waliggo (cited by Kanu, 2012) defines inculturation as a honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his gospel of salvation message ever more understood by the people of every locality, culture and time. It is like a reconciliation between the Christian message and the traditional cultures of various people all over the world. It involves the reformulation of the Christian doctrines and the gospel message into the very thought patterns of the local people and therefore making Christianity to truly feel at home in the different cultures of the world. This initiative makes it possible for the doctrines and the Christian messages to be pleasant to the people who fully accept and live it in the same cultural community.

There is a felt need that Christianity has not penetrated deeply into the African people's lives despite the fact of having been Christians for a long time. Balancing between the African way of life and the new Christian demands have created a lot of problems for

the new converts. What is observed is that, while eagerly embracing the new religion, an African remains stuck in his traditional cultural heritage at the same time. For instance, the Tiriki people who have already become Christians find it hard during the time of idumi and a good number of them are tempted to go back to their traditional culture at the time of circumcision (Personal communication, October 10, 2023).

During this time, they all disappear into the sacred groves to practice their traditional circumcision which has been a source of pastoral dilemma for most of the evangelizers in this region (Personal communication, October 10, 2023). Azevedo (n.d) stated that, it is in this context that inculturation can be taken to refer to the continual demand felt by the local church to understand, express and live the gospel message according to their own particular cultural geniuses. It is only when this demand is fulfilled that an African will feel at home with this new Christian religion and live the Christian ideals from his cultural background. In this way, the new religion will be building on some of the cultural values of the local community.

Inculturation elicits a variety of meanings and so other scholars prefer to use the term incarnation especially Arrupe (as cited by Kanu, 2012), who defines inculturation as the incarnation of the Christian life and Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such way that this experience not only finds expression through the elements proper to culture but also animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation influencing and transforming culture to a higher level animated by the gospel message.

When Christ enters into our culture, he purifies culture and so, a new creation comes about in the lives of the people. As the people accept the new religion, they are equally influenced by it in their day-to-day life and sometimes changing it totally. This is

exactly what happened when Christianity reached the Tiriki land. For instance, with the coming of the early Christian missionaries, the *idumi* circumcision rituals were transformed in line with the message of the gospel for those who embraced Christianity namely the Tiriki – Christian faction also referred to as *Vasomi* or the converted. They had to abandon the elaborate traditional rituals of *idumi* for the sake of the new religion. It is not that they abandoned *idumi* circumcision ritual, but they still practiced it according to the Christian teaching (Personal communication, October 11, 2023).

Two factors, Christianity and modernity brought a lot of changes in many African communities such as people turning to clinical circumcision instead of the treasured cultural rite. The same is true with the introduction of Christianity into the Tiriki community which brought about the changes in *idumi* circumcision ritual. Formerly, to circumcise one's young one in hospital was a taboo and one could face the consequences from the community. For instance, one could be ostracized by the community members for going against their traditions. If not, one felt rejected and isolated by the other community members who went through the traditional rite (Personal communication, October 12, 2023). This change from their traditional to modern way of circumcision could be a typical example of acculturation in our African traditional communities.

Pope John Paul II, defines inculturation as the incarnation of the gospel in autonomous cultures but at the same time introducing these cultures into the life of the church as a whole. What comes out clearly in this understanding of inculturation by Pope John Paul II is the reciprocity of the gospel message and different cultures of the world (Kanu, 2012). Inculturation is a two-way traffic that takes place between the cultural heritage of people and Christian message. With this reciprocity, there is exchange between Christianity and the traditional cultures. This brings about the enrichment of both,

making evangelization of the message of the gospel quite effective in nature and beneficial to the local people. This enrichment also makes the message of the gospel more acceptable by the people of different cultures and in this context, the Tiriki people (Personal communication, October 11, 2023). It is true that, Christianity has very many good ideals that should be emulated and lived by the Tiriki people. But at the same time, the Tiriki people have some good moral values that can be used by the new religion in its process of evangelization bringing about that mutual sharing and enrichment of both sides, thus explaining the aspect of reciprocity of inculturation.

Crollius (cited by Kanu, 2012) reiterates what Arrupe and John Paul II stated about inculturation as incarnation but introduces another terminology for the same. For him, he uses the term integration and therefore, inculturation is the integration of the Christian experience of the local church into the culture of its people in such a way that the experience not only express itself in elements of the culture but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the universal church (Kanu, 2012).

Inculturation can be distinguished from other related terms such as acculturation and enculturation. Acculturation is an anthropological concept that is normally used to explain the encounter with a different culture other than one's own. It explains the contact between the different cultures and the changes that are bound to occur as a result of that contact (Azevedo, n.d). A case in point is, if a person of a different community which does not practice the traditional circumcision of their young ones settles among the people who circumcise, he may end up circumcising his male children which is a cultural practice of the people he settled in.

According to (Azevedo, n.d), enculturation is a sociological and psychological term describing the normal process of socialization of the young people in every community. It can easily be defined as the process through which an individual is introduced to and become inserted into his community cultural way of life. It pertains to the way of life one learns as he grows in his particular cultural community. Normally, people of different communities would like to socialize their children according to their accepted traditional cultural heritage. Therefore, although these terms are closely related to inculturation, they are also understood differently from inculturation (Azevedo, n.d).

The term enculturation is likened to socialization of the young people in our communities. Ordinarily, both girls and boys are socialized differently in most of African communities due to different roles they play in the society. The girls are mostly trained on how to care for their children as good mothers while boys are trained to become the head of the families with particular roles different from those of girls (Personal communication, October 12, 2023). The traditional *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people is one of the means through which the young people are socialized to be up to date with their roles as mature members of the community after acquiring that cultural identity by circumcision (Personal communication, October 13, 2023). The foregoing makes *idumi* a very essential cultural practice in the Tiriki community without which the young men could lose their identity with the community.

Inculturation from a cultural anthropological approach could mean the process through which the person is inserted into his culture (Metuh, 1996 as cited by Kanu, 2012). This can be a very long process by which an individual is meant to accept and live according to the culture of his community. In some respect, its meaning is the same as that of enculturation or socialization of the young people into the cultural way of a particular community. For instance, as stated above and referring to the Tiriki people, then one of

the ways in which the young men are inserted into the culture is through the *idumi* circumcision ceremonies which calls upon all the community members to participate at different levels. During this time, one is introduced to the cultural heritage of the community of which he is supposed to live by. Therefore, the boys are inserted into the Tiriki culture through *idumi* (Personal communication, October 12, 2023).

Apart from the cultural anthropological meaning which makes sense among the Tiriki people, there is also a missiological dimension of the term inculturation as used in the church today. This missiological understanding of the concept of inculturation will make the background of our discussion in order to bring out the relationship between the gospel message and Tiriki culture by integrating them. This involves taking some positive aspects of *idumi* circumcision ritual and integrating them with the Christian ideals. This means, leaving out most of the elaborate aspects of *idumi* circumcision rituals by the Tiriki – Christian faction. For instance, the prolonged seclusion period, which interferes with Church's and school activities together with the naked dancing of the initiates in public places, undermines the human dignity of the initiates and the use of excessive beer in the *idumi* circumcision celebrations (Personal communication, October 12, 2023).

In this missiological perspective, then inculturation becomes the process through which the church or the Christian message is inserted into a particular culture of the people. We are talking about how the early Christian missionaries with their gospel message inserted themselves into different cultures of the local people they came to evangelize. It can simply mean, the entrance of Christianity into different cultures of the world. These are the two meanings attributed to the word inculturation both as a way one is inserted into culture and the way the church inserts herself into a local cultural way of life of the people (Metuh, 1996 as cited by Kanu, 2012). Therefore, inculturation means

the marrying of both Christianity and the local culture of the people creating harmony between them for effective evangelization of the word of God. This is what the church should do to reach to the deepest part of people when they encounter the new Christian religion to make sense to them. Without inculturation, Christianity remains foreign to the people of different cultures. In an effort to integrate both culture and Christianity, the new Tiriki – Christian faction sprang up among the Tiriki people regarding their circumcision ritual commonly known as “half – Tiriki for christian faithfuls (Personal communication, October 12, 2023).

Therefore, according to Pope Paul VI, for the mother church to be able to bring the mystery of salvation to all creation, it must implant itself through inculturation process into various groups and cultures following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by the virtue of incarnation inserted himself into certain social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwelt (*Ad Gentes*, 10). By the church inserting herself into the cultures of the people, it will remain relevant in answering the pastoral needs of the people whom they are evangelizing. For this reason, then, inculturation is critical for any proper evangelization to take place.

Although, Cardinal Lavigerie, Apostolic Delegation the Sahara and the Sudan, did not directly use the word inculturation in his instruction the White Fathers who were coming to work in Africa, the process was implicitly applied. For him, transforming Africa must be done by African themselves and not the Europeans. Therefore, the Christian missionaries are only initiators but the lasting work of evangelization must be done by Africans themselves once they become Christians. The Africans must become truly Christians and not to become either French or Europeans for successful evangelization (Pawlikova, 2011, p. 273).

5.3 Concept of Culture

Before we can talk about the integration of Christianity with culture, it is essentially important to understand what the meaning of culture is. Obeten (2020) defined culture as the totality of the way of life of a people. Culture is what differentiates people of various communities from each other. Culture includes the embodiment of their cultural uniqueness as a tribe or community. Therefore, culture is a concept that includes the people's language, the people's worldview, their process of socialization, the cultural marriage rites, the types of the foods they eat and the drinks they take. All the mentioned items are inclusive in the concept of culture of the people.

Culture encompasses the entire worldview of a particular cultural community thus affecting the way in which they perceive and understand the realities in the world they live in and the way people interact with other religions of the world (Obeten, 2020). Therefore, this way of life of people is very important if the gospel message is to be inserted in their culture. The Christian agents of evangelization must put into consideration the cultural aspects of the recipients of the Christian message for them to be successful. Sometimes, the agents of evangelization would like to overlook these cultural aspects but this has had a negative impact on the entire process of evangelization.

Gaudium et Spes (no. 53) states that, man comes to a true and fully human only through culture. This indicates the importance of culture in the normal human development through which man realizes himself as a human person through cultivation of good values of nature. Therefore, culture involves everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities and strives by his knowledge and his labour to bring the world itself under his control (GS, 53). It continues to state that, man

develops himself fully in a particular cultural milieu which provides him with all he needs for his survival.

5.4 Evangelization

Pope Paul VI, is quoted to have stated that, the church is sent to the nations of the world as a universal sacrament of salvation by obeying the mandate of Jesus commanding the disciples to out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:16). The Apostles themselves on which the church was founded preached the word of truth and begot the church (Ad Gentes, 1) and it has forever remained the duty of their successors continue with this task so that the word of God may spread and be glorified (2 Thessalonian 3:1). Therefore, the main purpose of inculturation is evangelization of people of different cultures of the world. Inculturation involves the process of evangelization where people receive the message of the gospel in their own cultural patterns. Pope John Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states that evangelization is the main reason for which the church exists. The church cannot be effective in its mission without evangelization of the people. The main function and work of any church is to evangelize its people. This means that the church must be involved in pastoral activities to achieve its role in the community. The church has to evangelize in order to bring the message of the gospel to the people of different cultures. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to understand the concept of evangelization in order to appreciate the process of inculturation in the church.

Obeten (2020) avers that, evangelization is everything that the church does or puts into its joyful proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ in fulfilment of the mandate that the Lord himself has given, for the salvation of the souls (*salus animarum*). The church exists in order to evangelize which involves preaching and teaching, channeling

of the gift of grace, reconciliation of sinners with God and the perpetuation of the Christ's sacrifice in mass (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 4).

There is also a connection between evangelization and the various worldviews of the different evangelized cultural milieu encountered by the church. In this context, then, the evangelizers of the message of Good News also becomes an agent of inculturation for the successful mission of the church by bringing about incarnation of the word of God among the people of different cultures. This is what the early missionaries missed in their approach to the various cultures of the world. The message of the gospel must be inserted in the cultural way of life of the community for it to bear the fruits. Therefore, the three terms, culture, inculturation and evangelization must be well integrated for the church to fulfill its mission of bringing salvation of souls (Obeten, 2020).

There is a very close connection between evangelization and inculturation and therefore, Schinneller (cited by Obeten, 2020) maintains that, the preachers of the gospel are at the same time the agents of inculturation and so, wherever the gospel is lived, wherever it is preached, the evangelizers have the duty to search continually for ways in which the message of the gospel can be more deeply lived, celebrated and shared among the people of different cultures which demands the process of inculturation (Obeten, 2020).

5.5 Inculturation in the Catholic Church

The concept of inculturation has a long history in the church and the scholars have used different terminologies to refer to the same reality. It is also true that the origin of this concept as applied to the relationship of the gospel message and different cultures of the world is not quite clear but Schinneller (cited by Kanu, 2012) attributes its use to

Cardinal Sin of Manila during the Synod on catechesis held in Rome in 1977 and Pope John Paul II, who inserted it in his Apostolic Exhortation *catechesis tradendae* of October 1979 on catechesis (Kanu, 2012). This is the earliest use of the term inculturation in the history of the church. This marked the beginning of the use of the term inculturation in the church which has continued to date. The term inculturation has been employed by the church whenever the Christian message and the cultures of people are to be harmonized for effective evangelization. Inculturation is the solution of the conflicts resulting from the encounter of the gospel message and the cultures of the world.

Inculturation is the term underlying the problem of how faith can be related to the different cultures of the world. Pope Paul VI, experienced the need of evangelization when he visited India in 1964 and his subsequent visits to Uganda, Manila and Philippines in 1969 (Azevedo, n.d). These visits became an eye opener to the reality of inculturation for successful evangelization mission of the church. The Pope, while distanced himself from the dominant expression of the Christian faith and message in European terms, he stressed the relative autonomy of cultures in shaping their own way of linking faith and culture. The observation was that Christianity and the European culture was one and the same thing.

The Christian message was equivalent to Western or European way of doing things. This is what the Pope wants to eliminate from the gospel message so that people can accept and receive the same message according to their own cultures. The early missionaries had one problem, that in the process of evangelizing the people, they also wanted the people to embrace their western culture of doing things together with the word of God. Western culture and the gospel message was one and the same. This

created a lot of difficulties for the African people since only one who embraced European culture qualified to be a true Christian.

During the Synod of the Bishops on Evangelization in 1974, apart from the term adaptation, other terminologies were introduced such as accommodation, insertion, incarnation and indigenization to improve the relationship between Christian message and the different cultures of the world. Azevedo (n.d) says that, it was not until 1976, with the publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, that we find the full and precise meaning and description of inculturation even though the term itself is not actually introduced into the text (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 19, 20). Azevedo (n.d) states that, when we put together some intuitions of Pius XII's *Fidei Donum* and the document *Ad Gentes* from the Vatican II, plus *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of Pope John Paul II, we come up with a solid foundation for the theological research and reflection on inculturation (Azevedo, n.d).

5.6 Models of Inculturation

Crollius (1978) says that, inculturation is a new word in missiology associated with the need to find a model whereby the church becomes part of the culture of the people. Theologians have come up with some models of inculturation in the history of the church to help us reconcile between the African cultural heritage and the Christian message. The purpose of these models is to facilitate harmony between the gospel message and the varied cultures of the world. The models also help in bringing about a successful Christian mission of evangelization when the message of Christ encounters different cultures. They help us identify different levels of the elements of inculturation to be used in the process of evangelization. There are four main models that can be used in the process of inculturation by the agents of evangelization which include the gospel,

faith, people and church as the subjects of inculturation. Therefore, inculturation can be gospel oriented, faith oriented, people oriented and church oriented.

Taking the gospel as the subject of inculturation entails considering the relationship between the gospel message and the culture of the people. It means the message of the gospel must be contextualized among the different cultures. This brings out the first model of inculturation popularly known as incarnation where inculturation becomes evangelization (Stuart, 1994). Pope John Paul II, says that, the role of evangelization is to bring the power of the gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. John Paul II defines inculturation as the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures. Okure (1990) stated that, our understanding of the mystery of incarnation should serve as the solid foundation for understanding inculturation. In this model, Christ becomes the real subject of inculturation and Okure (1990) confirmed this by underlining that:

Inculturation functions as the process by which Christ becomes native to or incarnated in particular African cultures. Without it, Christ remains outsider or foreigner to a culture, he does not become a citizen and then the culture itself cannot be redeemed by him.

The second model of inculturation is where the faith of the people becomes the subject of inculturation in the process of evangelization. Faith could be taken to mean a religious tradition or affiliation (Shorter, 1988). Objectively, faith can refer to the body of truths, practices, traditions as expressed in scripture and tradition of the church's teachings i.e. the creed, the council definitions and magisterial teachings. Subjectively, it refers to the personal act of assenting to God's presence in one's life (Stuart, 1994). Therefore, faith must dialogue with different cultures of people for fruitful evangelization. George (1990) asserts that, faith needs to be part of a cultural synthesis and quotes Pope John Paul II, who said that, a faith which does not become a culture is a faith not fully received. The Christian faith must be cultured since the message of

Christ is always transmitted through the different cultures of the people. Faith remaining foreign to culture will remain outside the same culture.

The third model make the people themselves as the subject of inculturation process though it does not appear in theological categories. Inculturation should help to make Christianity to be a peoples' religion and a way of life which cannot be supplanted or weakened (Waliggo, 1986). Christianity should give answers of hope to the anxieties and anguishes of the African people. It should address the needs of the African people for evangelization to be successful. For Waliggo (1986), a true church is where Christ, his community is, where the brotherhood of the believers and poor is felt, the lovers and the imprisoned are and where hoppers and the sick are attended to by the agents of evangelization. Inculturation should be people oriented to make Christianity their religion (Waliggo, 1986).

The fourth model makes the church to be the subject of inculturation process. The church refers to the people of God or the people on their journey towards the promised land as found in the book of Exodus and also reflected in Paul's teachings (Romans 9:1ff -11:1ff). The church as the people of God is one of the major understanding of the church that emerged during the Vatican II Council (*Lumen Gentium*, 17). Here inculturation leads to a truly authentic African church which is not only concerned with the individual but the entire community in which he lives his faith (Onwubiko, 1992). Inculturation refers to the relationship between the local church and its own culture. It is analogous to the process of enculturation where one grows up and becomes inserted into the culture of the people (Crollius, 1978, p. 728-729).

In this context, inculturation involves the church inserting herself into the culture of the people, since the local church is the church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous

and which is inculturated and is a continuous, humble and living dialogue with the living traditions, cultures and religions. Therefore, the inculturation of Christianity should lead to the incarnation of the universal church in a local culture to give birth to a local church into which individuals old and new are inculturated (Onwubiko, 1992, p. 111). The church only becomes intelligible to the people when it is inserted into the local culture of the people.

5.7 Necessity of Inculturation Today

The church from the very beginning has contributed immensely in regard to the development of culture all over the world. But at the same time, it has found it very difficult to harmonize various cultures of people with the christian teaching (GS, 62) and therefore, theologians must find out an appropriate way of communicating the doctrine to men of their time since the deposit of faith is one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated another thing (GS, 62). This brings about the need for inculturation in the church.

Therefore, there is a close connection between culture, inculturation and evangelization. Culture necessarily involves the way of life of a particular community. Inculturation pertains to the insertion of the Christian message into a particular cultural milieu and evangelization is the proclamation of the message of good news to the people of different cultures. From the early Christian missionaries' approach to evangelization in Africa, there is a felt need for inculturation if its purpose is to be realized and lived by the people of different cultures. This is what the early missionaries needed as they came to evangelize the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County.

The missionaries' approach was also varied in nature. There are those who were totally opposed to the Tiriki – cultural heritage of *idumi* circumcision and could not tolerate it

to any extent. For instance, according to Sangree, all missions in the Tiriki land, with exception of a small rather recently established Catholic Church mission preach and profess that drinking of alcohol beverages is incompatible with the Christian teaching and therefore, alcohol seen as something evil. This created hostility and animosity between the early missionaries and the local Tiriki people. This situation is not only peculiar to the Tiriki community but also applies to most of the African communities.

Therefore, there are various reasons that makes inculturation inevitable for the successful evangelization of the African people from the earliest encounter with Christianity. Starting with what Pope Paul VI, stated in *Nostra Aetate* (no. 1) noted that:

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the church examines more closely her relationship to non – christian religions one is a community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth (Acts 17:26).

This is enough reason why Christianity and all cultures of the world should be integrated for perfect evangelization to take place. For proper evangelization, the church must accept and dialogue with followers of other religions and cultures to recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral as well as socio – cultural values found among these men or religions (*Nostra Aetate*, 1). This attitude makes it easy for the missionaries to approach different cultures and religion of the world.

Christianity as brought by the early missionaries was conceived as a foreign religion by many African communities and preached by the foreign people from the European countries. It was a foreign religion, preached by foreign people, encoded in foreign culture and heavily Europeanized Christianity (Okere, 1974 as cited by Nche & Okwuosa, 2016). This necessarily creates a need for inculturation of the Christian

message with the local cultures to make it more acceptable and easily lived. As a foreign religion, it was totally strange to the African cultural values leading to the failures of the early Christian missionaries' efforts of evangelization.

The early missionaries missed to understand African cultural values, rejected everything African as barbaric and African names substituted for European names (Nche & Okwuosa, 2016). They did not see anything positive in the African cultures. The entire cultural heritage was bad and anti - Christian. African cultural way of doing things was seen as being incompatible with Christian message. For instance, Husani (cited by Nche & Okwuosa, 2016) confirms this by saying that, the age – grade system, the initiation rites, the rites of celebration of onset of pregnancy, birth, marriage, death, funerals, harvest celebrations and other traditional feasts and festival were often circumvented by the early Christian missionaries. This is also true about the Tiriki - *idumi* circumcision rituals that were not approved by the early Christian missionaries. With this negative approach of the early Christian missionaries to African cultures, then it was quite easy for them to suppress and supplant the existing traditional religion and customs with imported religion of Christianity. It was easy to replace these African cultural heritage since the missionaries could not grasp the values enshrined in them.

Apart from Christianity being a foreign religion to Africans, there was another reason that necessitated the urgent need for inculturation. This is just due to the crisis of faith commitment of the African people to Christianity. The faith crisis also called for a solution which basically lied in inculturation. There was a conspicuous discrepancy between the faith of the converts and the practical life. Nche and Okwuosa (2016) affirms this when they say:

Despite their conversion to Christianity, many still consult the fortune tellers when they want to embark on a project. The same is true when

a well thought out project flops or there is a sudden death of happenings that seem otherwise unaccounted for. Many prefer the services of the native doctors to our modern hospitals. Some find no contradiction in practicing both traditional religion and Christianity.

The above description just shows how an African - Christian is torn between the new Christian religion and his traditional cultural heritage or African religion.

This is quite very true with the Tiriki people especially those who have embraced Christianity. They will be active members of the church until when the season of circumcision comes. Some of the Christians go back into their cultural heritage during the circumcision of their sons in a traditional *idumi* ritual. Some will even abandon the active participation in church matters as they enter into the sacred period of *idumi*. There is a double standard portrayed by most of the Tiriki people who face a dilemma between Christian way of life and the tradition one. Husani (cited by Nche & Okwuosa, 2016) admits this by saying that:

Since the new religion is not rooted in the African world of meaning, it lacks organic vitality and therefore, in moments of crisis, many Africans revert almost instinctively to the old-time religion which provides answers to their questions about life, threats of life and their ancestors.

This is what is missing in the new religion that does not address the African question to provide the practical answers to the African people, and so, they easily go back to their traditions to seek for what Christianity cannot provide. This crisis of faith commitment of an African convert calls for inculturation for successful evangelization to happen.

Another very important factor that necessitated for inculturation is the fact that Christianity as a new religion was popularly known as the religion of the oppressors. It was not easy to differentiate between the missionaries who brought the message of the gospel from the colonizers of the people. They were regarded as one and the same by most of the Africans. This fact created a lot of difficulties for Africans to accept

Christianity as a religion different from the colonial masters. The reason why Husani (n.d) declared that the early Christian missionaries who stormed the continent of Africa came from Europe on the heels of their brothers whose message was not to liberate Africans but of political, economic and cultural subjugation in a system of colonialism. This created a problem for missionaries who came to preach the message of the gospel of Christ.

The people of Africa were presented with both the gospel on one hand and the economic exploitation on the other hand. They could not differentiate between the man who asked them to receive the gospel and the one who asked them to pay the taxes. For most of the Africans, the missionaries were taken as the agents of colonialization (Mbefo, 1989 as cited by Nche & Okwuosa, 2016). Mbefo (cited by Nche & Okwuosa, 2016) affirms the fact by stating that, the missionaries used the Sermon on the Mount to reduce Africans to passivity and sub – massiveness which made it easier for the colonialists to expropriate their lands. Your reward shall be in heaven was used to break African resistance; the type exhibited by Mau Mau in Kenya.

Therefore, Christianity created a conducive atmosphere for easy penetration of colonial government and so, Mbefo (1989) quoting Jomo Kenyatta said that, when the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened our eyes, they had the land and we had the Bible. Christianity was seen by Africans as a new religion of the oppressors.

These are some of the factors that contributed greatly to the negative attitude of the Africans towards Christianity as a new religion. These made it very hard for it to be accepted wholly by the African people and so, there is a need for inculturation for

successful evangelization to take place. It must be known that Christianity by nature is no – man’s religion but every man’s religion which makes inculturation requisite element of evangelization of the gospel to different cultures of the world.

Apart from the negative aspects above, from the history of church, and especially the Catholic Church, there are some factors that also led to inculturation as an essential component of the church’s teachings. There was a realization during the Vatican II Council of what Rahner referred to as a “world church” with the implications of the Council teachings leading to inculturation in the documents of liturgy, on mission, on ecumenism and openness to non – christian religions and non – believers. The Council felt the need to reach out to other cultures of the world in the mission of evangelization. This must have also contributed positively towards the process of inculturation in the Catholic Church (Azevedo, n.d).

The other reason for inculturation in the Catholic Church was the awareness of the local churches which had a direct consequences to episcopal collegiality. This was to bring about the unity of the Catholic Church in the world as it opens its doors to the other cultures of the world. The last factor that might have contributed to the process of inculturation is the emergency of an explicit awareness of the diversity of cultures all over the world and the increasing perception of the relationship between cultural and religious universes (Azevedo, n.d). This diversity of the cultural background may have been one of the reason why inculturation was inevitable. Azevedo (n.d) sums up the rationale of inculturation as follows:

The first is to make the Christian message intelligible to the people of various cultures of the world, the second is to bring the message of the gospel into in-depth of people’s life and thirdly, to make the gospel message bear good fruits on a given soul. Therefore, for evangelization to be successful as a mission of the church, then inculturation plays a very vital role.

5.8 Richard Niebuhr's approach to Culture

For this approach to be instrumental in reconciling Christian message and the different cultural heritage since the task of the church is evangelization. The only process that can help the church in the world of diversity of cultures is inculturation. Therefore, consultative/dialogical critical approach to cultural transformation of H. Richard Niebuhr in his book "*Christ and Christ*" is very important in addressing the contact of Christianity and culture. Nyuyki (2018) says that:

In a consultative/dialogical critical transformation approach, one identifies cultural aspects that are incompatible to Christianity and engages a discussion with the people involved until they themselves understand the negative implications of such practices and deem it necessary to change.

This consultative/dialogical critical transformation approach is appropriate since it involves the people directly and therefore, can easily bear positive results. This approach according to Richard Niebuhr is divided into five main components; Christ against culture, Christ of Chulture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture paradox and lastly, Christ and culture transformation. This research will try to employ them at different levels to bring out the integration of the gospel message and local culture especially, concept of Christ and culture transformation will be adopted as explained below.

5.8.1 Concept of Christ against Culture

This is not the approach that was taken by the Catholic Churches towards different African traditional cultures of the world in the process of evangelization. It is an extreme kind of approach and most radical in relation to other cultures of the world by the Christian agents of evangelization. Here, Christ is the sole and only authority when it comes to evangelization and spreading of the message of the gospel (Nyuyki, 2018)

and the claim of any culture must be rejected. This was the approach of many Protestant missionaries took towards the Tiriki cultural circumcision rituals of *idumi*.

Most of the respondents confirmed that, the early Christian missionaries especially, the Protestants, discouraged and condemned the practice as barbaric in nature. In this approach, there is totally nothing positive in African cultural heritage and therefore, the people are discouraged to live according to their traditional way. The cultural practices are seen as evil by the Christian missionaries and so, they must be abandoned for a better way of living preached by the Christian evangelists (Personal communication, September 23, 2023). The Christian missionaries rejected completely the Tiriki *idumi* circumcision rituals as evil. They even prohibited their members from participating in them as a barbaric practice.

For the Christian missionaries, the Protestants, they preferred the equivalent circumcision rite where the initiates were to go through the circumcision ritual but from the hospital or in any medical health facilities (Personal communication, September 22, 2023). For instance, the Friends Church introduced hospital circumcision to do away with the Tiriki circumcision rituals of *idumi*.

Apart from the rituals accompanying *idumi*, they also disregarded all the community beliefs about the same rite by embracing all those people who were deemed useless in the community into Christianity. These are people who had no position according to the age – group system of the Tiriki people. They never acknowledged the cultural arrangements of the community regarding the aliens, women and the uninitiated members of the community. These are the people whom the missionaries first accepted in their Christian churches (Personal communication, July 24, 2023).

5.8.2 Concept of Christ of Culture

This one is the opposite of the concept of Christ against culture. It is an approach to evangelization that was mostly adopted by the Catholic missionaries who came to Tirikiland, where both Christian teachings are not totally different from the cultures of the world but the difference is only found in quality. This meant that, the cultures of the world are subject to purification by the gospel message to effectively be integrated into the Catholic faith. It is an approach where the best culture that conforms to the Catholic teaching is adopted by the faithfuls. This is the opposite of the concept of Christ against culture where all the cultural elements of different communities are accepted wholly as part of the Christian faith. There is no conflict between the cultural heritage and the Christian faith (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012). Both culture and Christianity conform to each other with ease without any tension and the best culture selected to conform to Christ (Nyuyki, 2018).

It is an approach where culture is fully embraced by Christianity without any discrimination. This position cannot apply to the situation of the early missionaries in the Tiriki land where there were cultural and Christian conflicts over cultural practices. The early Christian missionaries did not see anything positive in the *idumi* circumcision rituals as performed by the Tiriki people. Everything surrounding *idumi* was taken to be an outdated and anti – Christian practice especially by the protestant missionaries in the region. The Christians needed an overhaul of the entire *idumi* circumcision practice of the Tiriki people.

On the other hand, we have a situation where the African people with their cultural background accepted fully the new Christian religion without questioning anything. They embraced the Christian culture with ease and adopted everything western as part of their Christian faith. This applies to the early Christian missionaries who believed

that to be a Christian, then one must adopt the European way of living and this was imposed on Africans. For instance, the people were to take European names, take the table manners of European together with the dressing etc. The European culture and Christianity was one and the same thing and therefore, Christ conforms to people's culture.

5.8.3 Concept of Christ above Culture

This approach recognizes both the authority of Christ and culture of the people but Christ is given precedence. Although people acknowledge their culture to be good, Christ is believed to be superior to all cultures of the world. Christ in this sense becomes the fulfilment of all the cultures of the world. All the cultures converge and meet in Christ as their fulfilment where he is able to complete whatever is lacking in any culture (Nyuyki, 2018). This is a very balanced approach towards Christianity whereby, the Christians while still appreciating their culture, they recognize that Christ is superior to all their cultures.

This approach enables the agent of evangelization to recognize some positive aspects of the *idumi* circumcision rituals that can be instrumental in the preaching the gospel message such as the moral values of *idumi* and promotion of peace where all form of violence is discouraged either at the family level or community. This aspect of peace can also be adopted by the Christian for harmonious living with one another (Personal communication, July 24, 2023). Other aspects that Christianity could borrow include the positive solidarity among the initiates, obedience, respect to the people of higher age – group and the sense of unity created through *idumi* circumcision ritual among the initiates and the entire Tiriki community (Personal communication, July 24, 2023).

5.8.4 Concept of Christ and Culture Paradox

This is an approach where both the Christ and culture are recognized as authorities in the process of evangelization and therefore, there is a tendency where both Christ and culture are to be obeyed by the people (Nyuyki, 2018). The Christian faith is embraced by the people who still value their cultural heritage. In this approach, both authority of Christ and culture must be obeyed and the tension is inevitable. This situation creates tension among the people who want to be fully Christian under the authority of Christ but still take their traditions seriously (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012). For instance, you may find in the same church leaders who have embraced Christianity but the same time who still belong to the Tiriki – Traditional faction when it comes to circumcision. These are the Christians who will disappear throughout *idumi* circumcision season to perfectly participate in this ritual. This is the time when some of the Christian ideals are forgotten by the people and cultural ritual is given a priority in their lives (Personal communication, October 13, 2023).

This approach to Christianity is responsible for the Christians leading a double life since for them, both Christ and culture are of value to them. There are many Tiriki Christian who have professed the Catholic faith but when time for circumcision comes, they disappear into the sacred groves for the *idumi* circumcision rituals (Personal communication, July 23, 2023). These Christians have one leg in the church and one in their cultural heritage. When things are fine, they are fully present in the church but during the crisis moment, they disappear into their culture to seek for solutions. This results into a kind of syncretism where people are mixing Christianity with their cultural way of living. When it comes to *idumi* circumcision ritual, many of the Tiriki people experience the dilemma since those who have already been converted to Christianity are tempted to go back into their traditional circumcision practice.

5.8.5 Concept of Christ as Transformer of Culture

A part from the concept of Christ above culture and Christ and culture paradox, the concept of Christ as the transformer of culture is the best approach to different cultures of the world by the agents of evangelization. We acknowledge the fact that culture reflects the fallen nature of humanity and therefore must be redeemed by Christ. The same fallen culture can be renewed by Christ to glorify God and promote his purpose on earth (Nyuyki, 2018).

This approach creates no conflict between Christ and culture which is open to transformation and purification by Christ (Harriet & Kirsten, 2012). The Catholic Church is very good at this, it does not condemn culture but tries to find some good elements in culture that can be instrumental to evangelization. Therefore, Katoke (1984) quotes Pope Pius XII, who says in the Mission Encyclical of 1951 that:

When the gospel is preached in any new land, it should not destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just and beautiful. For when the church calls people to a higher culture/christian culture, and a better way of life under the inspiration of the Christian religion, she should not act like one who recklessly fells and uproots a thriving forest. No, she grafts good stock upon the wild that it may bear a crop of more delicious fruits.

Here, there is that harmonious integration between the culture of the people and the Christian message. The good cultural ideals are grafted on the Christian ideals for proper and effective evangelization to take place.

5.9 Agreeable Aspects of Idumi

While chapter four dealt with the contested variables of *idumi* circumcision rituals, here we concentrate on the agreeable variables that can be used for the purpose of inculturation. There is a need to reconcile between the traditional aspects of Tiriki circumcision rituals and the Christian teaching for proper evangelization to take place. There must be a holy marriage between the Tiriki cultural aspects and the Christian

doctrine. This can be done well through the process of inculturation whereby, the good elements are included and enriched by the Christian teaching. This will involve the contextualization of the Christian message to make sense to the Tiriki people by integrating good cultural elements into Christianity aided by the fifth approach of Nieburh's consultative/dialogical critical approach to cultural transformation namely; the concept of Christ as a transformer of culture.

5.9.1 Cultural and Christian Values

There are several cultural values that the Catholic Church can learn and use from the Tiriki circumcision ritual in the process of evangelization of the gospel message among the Tirikis of Hamisi Sub – County.

5.9.1.1 Idumi Cultural Values and Sacramental Convergency

The first one is the value of cultural unity achieved through the *idumi* circumcision ritual by all the initiates and the Tiriki community members. This traditional ritual attracts all the people in the community and calls for their active participation in it. The unity is clearly manifested among the initiates themselves who undergo the circumcision together and share the knife of circumcision. The shading of blood at the same time effects the unity among the initiates forever. This is cemented through the social categorization of age – group system which binds the young men together (Personal communication, October11, 2023).

On the other hand, unity is a Christian ideal desired by all the people in the world. There has been a continual call for Christian unity by many Christian churches. One way through which this Christian unity can be achieved is through the sacrament of baptism. The sacrament of baptism should also bring about the Christian unity required in the church just as circumcision does to the Tiriki people. This Christian unity can help in

healing the conflict that have manifested itself among the Christians all over the world. Those young men who share the knife of circumcision remain united forever, what about those who share the water of baptism?

The sacrament of baptism should bring about even a greater unity among the people of the world. This idea of unity is echoed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1995; 1267) where it states that all those who have been baptized are incorporated into the church also known as the body of Christ since from the baptismal fonts is born the one people of God, transcending all the other natural of human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes beyond what *idumi* gives to the initiates by sharing the same circumcision knife. The unity acquired through *idumi* is limited while that of baptism is universal and embracing all the people who have accepted Christ in the lives.

5.9.1.2 Value of Peace

The value of unity among the initiates and the entire community brings about the desired peace experienced during the *idumi* circumcision period. During this time, there is unity of purpose by all the members of the community based on the welfare of the initiates. *Idumi* circumcision period is solemnly a peaceful season. All types of violence, quarrels and domestic and community fighting is discouraged and prohibited during this sacred time of *idumi*. Things that cause disruption of the life of the community are discouraged, for example, quarrelling and fighting by the members. The family members with their initiates in seclusion huts are strictly prohibited from domestic quarrels and fighting in case it interferes with healing of their son. But those who violate this provision are normally punished by paying for it before the community elders (Personal communication, October 14, 2023).

Peace has always been a call of the Christian for all people to exist peacefully. By the very virtue of having been made the children of God through baptism, then, this should be the foundation of peace in our communities. Peace is very important for any development to take place in community. Without peace, there will be no development in the society. Therefore, peace is of a paramount importance that must be cherished and treasured by all people of the community. The Christian churches working among the Tiriki people have always stressed the need for peaceful coexistence between the two Tiriki factions of *idumi* circumcision ritual namely; the Tiriki – Christian faction and the Tiriki – Traditional faction (Personal communication, October 13, 2023).

5.9.1.3 Value of Respect

Other values are that of respect especially for people of higher age – grade or elders. This is also be associated with the value of obedience required by all the initiates to the elders. The church and especially the Catholic Church is hierarchical in nature and the issue of respect and obedience is key. Just like the initiates who vow obedience to people of higher age – group, the young men who are ordained to be priests, religious brothers and sisters professing also take a vow of obedience to their superiors. This vow does not only apply to the particular bishop but all the authorities of the Catholic Church. This is the same even in the religious congregations and the Christians at large (Personal communication, October 14, 2023). From the Christian point of view, children are always advised to respect and show obedience to their parents and even other people who are older than themselves. This virtue of obedience should be extended to all the members of the community for harmonious living.

The CCC (1995:1269) states that, when one is baptized, he becomes a member of the church. Therefore, he no longer belongs to himself but to Christ who dies and rose from the dead. As a newly baptized person, he is called upon to be subject to other people by

serving them in the communion of the church. He is also called upon to obey and submit to the church's leaders by holding them in respect and affection. This also applies to any initiate who have successfully gone through *idumi* circumcision ritual, where obedience and respect to the elders and people of higher age – group is a sign of maturity and this is also required of all the Christians towards their religious leaders (Personal communication, October 15, 2023).

5.9.1.4 Virtue of Purity of body and Mind

The process of *idumi* circumcision ritual is always taken by the entire community seriously and especially the initiates. After the selection and before the real circumcision, the Tiriki initiates make a perfect confession of the sins committed prior to the ritual. The confession must be honest and truthful for the initiates. After the confession, the elders absolve and encourage the initiates to face the circumcision knife. The reasoning is that, if one does not make a perfect confession, then something wrong will happen during the circumcision. For instance, the initiate may find difficulties during the healing process of he may bleed to death because he did not make a perfect confession. The initiate after confession is given a penalty to be paid to the elders for his sins to be absolved.

From this practice of confession before circumcision, there are some elements that we can pick out to help us the process of teaching the Catholic faith on the sacrament of confession. The first one is the need to confess to the elders and not anybody else. It is only the elders who are allowed to listen to the initiate's confession. The same in the Catholic church where only the priest can listen to confession of the Christians validly and so, the CCC states that, confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of penance (CCC: 1456). The elders can absolve and advise just as the priest in the confession box. This can be an aspect worthy emulation by the Catholics who value the

sacrament of confession which is required before a catholic can worthily participate in other sacraments of the church like holy communion and even matrimony (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). This is true, if it is a perfect contrition by the initiates themselves, for the love of their wellbeing and safety not out of fear and other practices that threaten their lives to make the act imperfect contrition. Contrition should be out of love of God (perfect) and not the fear of eternal damnation (imperfect) contrition (CCC: 1451).

5.9.1.5 Source of Cultural and Christian Identity

Idumi circumcision ritual gives that cultural identity to the initiates among the Tiriki people. That one who has not gone through it, is not identified with the community. One becomes a mutirichi by participating in *idumi* circumcision ritual. *Idumi* becomes the door through which one enters into the community (Personal communication, October 14, 2023). The sacrament of baptism does the same to the converts who become Christians by the virtue of the baptismal ritual. The sacrament of baptism makes the neophyte a new creature, an adopted son and daughter of God, whereas the *idumi* makes one acquire a new identity in the Tiriki community (Personal communication, August 25, 2023).

One is identified as a Christian and baptism opens the avenue for one to participate fully in the life of the church and other sacraments. For instance, one cannot be ordained a priest in the Catholic Church before receiving the sacrament of baptism. Equally, one cannot marry in the church before baptism. In short, participation in other sacraments entirely depend on the sacrament of baptism. Likewise, for a young man to participate fully in the social life of the Tiriki community, then one must accept and go through the *idumi* circumcision ritual (Personal communication, October 13, 2023). According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, baptism forms the basis of the whole Catholic -

Christian life. Baptism is the gateway to the life of spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through it, one is reborn as a son and daughter of God, incorporated into the church and made to share in her mission (CCC: 1213).

5.9.1.6 Source of Socio – Moral Responsibility

Idumi is the source of both moral and social responsibilities given to initiates after graduation to adulthood. Before it, one is generally treated as a child and therefore, without responsibilities and obligations towards the community. These include the responsibility to begin his own family and also get marriage of which he is not allowed before circumcision. One also takes the responsibility as a young warrior to protect and fight for welfare of the community and therefore, courage is another virtue that the initiates must acquire during the *idumi* circumcision ritual. This virtue of courage is also essential for all the agents of evangelization. All the Christians need this virtue in their ministry due to many challenges they face and so, like the warrior, they need to be courageous. This is true especially when Catholics receive the sacrament of confirmation where they become the soldiers of Christ in the evangelization of the gospel message (Personal communication, October 16, 2023). In short, the sacrament of baptism becomes a source of responsibilities and duties to the neophytes who is allowed to enjoy some rights within the church. For instance, to receive the other sacraments, to be nourished by the word of God and sustained with other spiritual helps from the church (CCC: 1269). The neophytes are called upon to take active participation in the apostolic and missionary activities of the people of God, the church (CCC: 1270). For those feeling that, they are being called to serve as priests, brothers and sisters, their dream can only be realized after the sacrament of baptism and confirmation. All leadership in the church is founded on the same sacraments.

5.9.1.7 Virtue of Chastity

During *idumi* circumcision season, all those who are closely connected to the initiates are called upon to practice the virtue of chastity. These include the parents of the initiates and the counselors who take care of them in the seclusion huts. This is also important for healing and welfare of the initiates in the seclusion huts. Violation of this requirement brings bad omen to the initiates and therefore, it must just be observed. These include the elders and the young men already circumcised but intends to visit the seclusion huts who are supposed to be chaste (Personal communication, October 26, 2023). Purity of body and heart is a requirement of a worthwhile participation of Christians in any sacramental life of the church. One should not be in a state of sin when partaking in the sacrament of the church. Proper disposition is key when it comes to receiving the sacraments of the church (Personal communication, October 14, 2023).

5.9.2 Pastoral Aspects

Inculturation should permeate the entire mission of evangelization mission if the church has to take roots in different cultures of the world.

5.9.2.1 Offering of Sacrifices and Prayers

Majority of the participants in the focus discussion group acknowledged that the Tiriki people were fond of offering sacrifices and prayers to the ancestral spirits and especially the living dead to find favour with them. This was seen at the time of planting and even after a great harvest, people could thank God for the grains (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). Very few of Tiriki people still do this, instead they still give offerings and sacrifices (a goat, sheep, chicken and even a bull or a cow) in the Christian liturgical celebrations during mass. What they used to offer to the spirits is now offered to the Almighty God in the Christian churches. The prayers to the ancestors is now directed to God through the saints who intercede for them especially the Blessed Virgin Mary.

They no longer offer sacrifices to ancestors but to Almighty God. They carry the goats, sheep, hens, farm outputs and even cattle to offer within the celebration of Holy Eucharist (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). This belief in the ancestors was quite important for early missionaries since it helped the missionaries to preach about the existence of the saints in heaven. Like the traditional ancestors, the Christians pray through these saints to get God's blessings.

While the prayers of the Tiriki people were directly focused on ancestors as their end, the Christians focused their prayers to God who is almighty. The Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints only become intermediaries but not the end of Christian prayers. But the understanding of the ancestors helped very much in the preaching about the saints by the early Christian community.

5.9.2.2 Use of Cultural Elements in Liturgy

The cultural names that was used during *idumi* are also applied but in a Christian sense. There are a number of songs that are used by the Tiriki – Christian faction with the Christian intonation and rhythm. Some of the Christian dances have been adopted by the initiates during their graduation ceremonies. Most of the respondents were in agreement that, there is a difference between the two factions. While the traditionalist one, the initiates dance in a circular manner, the Christian one, they dance in a straight line (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). The baton (walking stick) that is normally given to the initiates as the graduate from seclusion is now commonly used by the men group during the liturgical celebrations especially during the bible procession and offertory (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). It is also true that many of the participants agree that the name used to refer to the Tiriki ritual leaders *musaalisi* is commonly used for a pastor or a priest (Personal communication, August 16, 2023).

5.9.2.3 Veneration of Ancestors

Many of the participants in focus discussion group explained that, the idea of ancestors dominated the categorization of the age – groups during *idumi* circumcision ritual. In fact, the names of these age – groups are directly taken from the ancestors who lived an exemplary live while on earth. They were outstanding in their live and so, their names given to the age – groups to show respect and appreciate them (Personal communication, August 16, 2023). Therefore, many a times and especially during *idumi*, the Tiriki people remembered their dead relatives by venerating them through sacrifices and offerings. This was mainly done to achieve the harmony between the dead and the living. They always respected their departed brothers and kept them close to their families by giving their names to children to achieve immortality. They even prayed to them for favours and protection from hard situations of life. The Christians also believe in saints who are there to intercede for them always in their prayers to God. Christians now organize for memorial masses for their departed relatives within the family or the community.

Most of the respondents were in agreement that, for Catholics, they remember the dead at two levels namely; the saints who are already sharing in the beatific vision with God and those who are waiting to be united fully with God. The saints are celebrated every year on 1st November while the souls of the faithful departed is on the 2nd of the same month (Personal communication, August 23, 2023). With this understanding, the saints could be likened to the spirits of ancestors who have rested in peace and influencing the community positively. For instance, not bringing bad omen and calamities to the community. They are at peace with themselves and the community at large. The Tiriki people also believe that the spirits of those people who never lived well here on earth are not settled in the underworld. They become even troublesome to the community and

therefore, the need for offering sacrifices and prayers to appease them. These could be likened to the suffering souls in purgatory undergoing some cleansing before total unification with God.

5.9.2.4 Admission of Christians from other Churches to Catholicism

The question of who are the true Tirikis is not quite clear since originally, the Tiriki was not a tribe but any person who accepted the Terik circumcision ritual qualified to be called a Tiriki. Those who do not go through the Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi* always remain strangers to the community. They do not belong to the Tiriki community in any way whatsoever. But there is a way through which the non – Tirikis can be absorbed into the Tiriki community. One of the ways is through circumcision ritual *idumi* and the other one is through the ritual of admission of non – Tiriki people into the community. This ritual is known as buying the circumcision by those who were not circumcised in Tiriki way referred to as *shigongo*.

It requires one to be admitted to pay a cow or a bull to the elders before he is fully accepted by the community. There is a special ritual to be undertaken by the Tiriki admirer. This rite of admitting likened to the process where those who are baptized Christians from other churches are admitted into the Catholic Church. There is always a process through which these non – Catholic Christians should go through before they become fully Catholics.

5.9.2.5 Community Masses

From the community ritual sacrifices that the Tiriki people had from the community sacred groves led by the ritual leaders, today they participate more frequently in the church celebration every Sunday in their respective churches. The ceremonies are led by the pastors, priest or any religious leader in the community. There are masses that

are offered for different needs of the community and therefore, the entire Christian community is involved. For instance, prayer for the candidates before the exams and even thanksgiving masses for successful exams where all the people regardless of their factions join to thank God. Other occasions like thanksgiving masses after the harvest, all the community members attend regardless of the circumcision affiliation. Talk about even the funeral masses, weddings and attended by all the people. Remember, we talked about syncretism where people are mixing the traditions and Christianity. They may be Christians, but still go back to their cultures during circumcision period.

In the Tiriki community, people had community sacrifice and prayers on various occasions. They required the favours of the ancestors during the time of crop planting and therefore, they offered sacrifices so that their crops could do well. Again after having a good and plentiful harvest, it was common for the entire community to offer sacrifices to the ancestors again in a thanksgiving mood for the abundant harvest (Personal communication, October 16, 2023). This was also very common in other Luhya communities. The Tiriki people also had community sacrifices and offerings during the hard times or times of calamities like climatic and environmental hazards, epidemic, prolonged drought and famine. They could also offer sacrifices before facing their enemies in war or after a successful cattle raid by their warriors. All these occasions were presided over by the ritual elders on behalf of the community whose roles were made obsolete apart from that of *idumi* circumcision ritual where they are still very relevant.

With the coming of the Catholic Church in the region, the role of the ritual leaders and community sacrifices and offerings have diminished apart from those involved in *idumi* circumcision ritual directly. The community and even the family ritual leaders and their roles have diminished greatly. The ritual leaders are only significant during the *idumi*

circumcision period. Their roles have been taken over by the religious leaders of the new religion in the region. On all occasions when the community requires spiritual nourishment, they turn to the services of the church and its ministers the priests and pastors.

The Catholic Church has a pastoral program that caters for spiritual needs of the community members at all times of need. The church provides an opportunity for the people to celebrate masses for various needs such as *mavuno* (harvest) mass which comes after harvesting their crops, masses offered before and after election for the new leaders and prayers at the inauguration of the new leader. This research is being conducted during the time of the national examination and masses and prayers have been offered for candidates in many parts of the country. In short, the community sacrifices, offerings and prayers the Tiriki community formally used to have are now being performed by the church and its ministers (Personal communication, October 16, 2023). Traditionally, the people used to gather in the community sacred groves where the ritual leaders presided over the prayers and offered sacrifices to the ancestors.

There are special masses organized by the priests working in these region shortly before the circumcision of the young people where all those intending to go for *idumi* ritual are consecrated and prayed for in the church during mass and this also happens after the graduation of the initiates from the seclusion where masses are organized by various families to offer thanksgiving for their initiates (Personal communication, October 14, 2023).

It is true that the ritual elders had special roles in the Tiriki community during the time of crisis and even the moments when they needed to thank God for his blessings like after harvest or winning the battle. It is the ritual elders who normally led the religious

worship of the community in one of the sacred groves where the community gathered. The same role has been taken over by the priests and the religious leaders who offer the sacrifices and prayers for the community no longer in the sacred groves but in the churches and the small Christian communities.

5.9.2.6 Christian and Tiriki Concept of Heaven

The Tiriki people did not have the concept of heaven as understood in Christianity today. Majority of the participants pointed out that, for the Tiriki people, their departed relatives continued to live in the underworld (*emakombe*) and continued to influence the living community in various ways (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). But they believed that those spirits of good people lived comfortably after their death but other spirits could always linger around influencing people negatively especially those who were not given a befitting burial ceremonies. The Tiriki believed that life continued after the death of an individual professed through libations given to the dead (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). They did not have the concept of heaven as Christians but their belief in ancestors helped Christianity to teach the reality of heaven and hell, where good and bad people are destined to be after their historical life here on earth. This understanding is the reason why the dead are treated with respect by the living community.

5.9.2.7 Causes of Evil and Good

For the Tiriki community, evil could be caused by several personalities. The first was the ancestral spirits in case they were annoyed with the community. This could be in a situation where one of the departed relative was not given a befitting burial by the community members. He or she is likely to disturb the community's peace and harmony. The reason why people offered libations, sacrifices and offerings to appease the dead. They also believed firmly that the same ancestors were the source of the

blessings to the community. They prayed to them for good health and harvest. Many of the participants stated that, the concept of Satan and God for both evil and good was foreign in the Tiriki traditional worldview since they believed that, the ancestors were fully responsible for both the good happenings and bad (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). With the coming of Catholicism, they now understand that evil is the work of the devil and not the ancestral spirits and God is the source of all goodness although he can permit evil to happen since the human person is a free being endowed with rationality and free will.

5.9.2.8 The Role of Sorcerers and Magicians

The role which the sorcerer/witches and diviners enjoyed is now within the mandate of the pastors and priests to offer solutions to the problems affecting the community. Like many other African communities, the Tiriki people had a strong belief in the work of sorcerers and witchcraft. They believed in their role so much and when a problem arose in the community, they easily attributed it to them. This could be death in the family or community or even the epidemic that affected the entire community. In case of any problem in the community and family, they sought solutions and guidance from the diviners who gave the explanation of what was affecting the people. Even for those ailing from various diseases were taken to them. But today the pastors and priests are there to pray for the sick and those experiencing difficulties in their lives.

Majority of the respondents were in agreement that, the fear of sorcerers and witches is experienced during the *idumi* circumcision period, the initiates are jealously protected from the works of the sorcerers and the witches (Personal communication, August 15, 2023). Majority of the respondents were in agreement that, this was one of the reasons why the initiates were hidden in seclusion huts throughout the season and why they used to cover themselves with hides and masks whenever they came in public. They

feared the prevalence of the evil spirits and people of bad eyes that could affect the healing process of the initiates. People went to the diviners to understand their current difficult situations in life such as sickness, childlessness and even death (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

Many of the respondents confirmed that, currently, the role of the sorcerers and witches were taken away with Christianity in a sense that, the function can now be performed by the religious leaders who pray for the people in difficulties and do some healing mission. These religious leaders could be priests, catechists and even just Christians who have this ministry in the church. Majority of the people would like to approach a priest in case of any problem unlike traditionally when they approached the diviners (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

5.9.2.9 Role of Sponsors – Counselors

The Catholic Church can also learn something from the different phases of *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people. *Idumi* is not just a one - time event but a process through which an initiate is allowed to go through. There are different stages that are very important for initiates as they graduate to adulthood. Starting with the preparatory stage, the real circumcision cut, the seclusion and finally the incorporation back into the community. During this time, there is a lot of instruction and learning that the initiates go through with specific emphasis of different topics as they head to their graduation as adults. Majority of the respondents were in agreement that, the same process if adopted by the church can enrich the catechetical program for those preparing for the sacrament of baptism in the church (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

It is true that from the time of the apostles, becoming a christian was accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages just like the stages of *idumi* ritual which

included the proclamation of the word of God, followed with acceptance of the gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, baptism itself, outpouring of the Spirit and admission to Eucharistic communion. Prior to this, there is a long period of catechism with a series of liturgical preparatory rites culminating in the celebration of the sacrament of initiation (CCC: 1229). If this process is taken seriously, it can bear good fruits but with modern changes in education system, the program and the process of catechism has been affected diversely.

Many of the respondents confirmed that, during *idumi*, the initiates are guided by different people prior and during the preparatory stage especially in their selection by elders and instruction by the counselors or guardians (Personal communication, August 16, 2023) where the initiates are selected. Even the day before the circumcision, the elders of the community are with the initiates giving them some moral lessons and support to them. Immediately after the circumcision, the initiates are led out in a procession to their seclusion huts where they stay throughout the entire period. They are assigned a counselor or a guardian to take care of them during this sacred period. He is also charged with the responsibility to teach the young ones who are in seclusion. The lessons are progressively arranged from the time they enter the seclusion up to their graduation day as adults.

Sultana (2018) who quotes Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states that, there is no any other reason for which the church exists apart from the evangelization of the people. Evangelization as the fundamental mission of the church was reiterated by both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis. One of the ways through which the church evangelizes is by catechesis program where catechumens attend in stages and the pastors, the catechist and other members of the church are involved in their preparations and education during the time of catechism.

Just like the way *idumi* circumcision ritual is organized especially during the seclusion period for the education of the initiates, catechesis is also meant for the formation of the catechumens before their baptism. The tasks of evangelization include the following: The first one is the evangelization which aims at helping the catechumens to enter into the personal relationship with Jesus. Through evangelization, the catechumens are supposed to encounter Christ who is calling them to enter into a relationship (Sultana, 2018). Through the catechesis, the faith of the faithful is also developed leading the people to enter and participate fully into the community of the church which is the body of Christ. Therefore, Sultana (2018) quoting Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (24th Nov 2023) states that there can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus the Lord. Jesus is at the center of our catechesis program.

Sultana (2018) states that, the task of catechesis is the liturgical education and the teaching of prayer to the catechumens. It is only through catechesis that one will be able to properly understand both the liturgical rites and the prayers so that one can easily enter into the mystery the liturgical rites stand for. This understanding is key to one participating actively in all the liturgical celebrations. One can only achieve this through proper catechesis program given to the catechumens. Even for initiates during seclusion, the knowledge given to them, helps them to live a fully acceptable life in the community after their graduation (Personal communication, October 20, 2023).

Moral formation is one of the aim of *idumi* circumcision ritual to help the young people to grow morally. The same applies to catechesis in the Catholic Church which should be done and taken seriously by all those who are involved especially the catechists. The aim of catechesis is to help the catechumens to live the message of the Good News daily. To help them do this, the sacred scripture and the word of God is very essential

to achieve this. The catechumens must make the bible their friend and read it often. This will help them in making good choices and decisions in life by forming their conscience rightly (Sultana, 2018).

During seclusion period, the initiates are given some instructions about their social life in general including the life skills. They are also initiated into the way of life of their community to help them live well. Catechesis also gives an opportunity to the catechumens to have education pertaining the Christian life in their community. They stay together during the catechumen's formation to foster that sense of community and therefore, catechism is carried out in small group to enhance that community life (Sultana, 2018). This will help the young to stay well in their community after baptism since all relationships are accomplished in community. Through this, they develop a sense of their duty towards the community in which they live.

After graduation, the initiates are now mature adults and must behave accordingly as they are incorporated back into their community. They have to show that sense of maturity to the rest of the community members. Therefore one of the task of catechesis is missionary initiation where people are called to witness by their very lives. It involves bearing witness to what one believes and the readiness to live what to believe. This can be done through the words and action of the one who has gone through the catechesis program. People should be able to see a changed person after the catechesis and baptism (Sultana, 2018). The same as the initiates who are now referred to as adults after idumi circumcision ritual and must behave in a mature manner.

Finally the person who is carrying out this catechesis is very important and must be an exemplary to the catechumens for him to be effective. A sponsor should not just take himself as imparting knowledge to others through repeated formulae to aim at bringing

the people into direct relationship with Christ. Therefore, he must act before proclamation by witnessing through his way of life to the catechumens. A sponsor should be of a role model to be emulated by the people around him because he has proved his faith through practical living in the community (Sultana, 2018).

5.9.2.10 Community Participation

It is true that the *idumi* celebration attracts the entire community who participate joyfully. Each and every member of the community is involved. Even those staying away from home normally come back home to join the rest of the population. The dancing and the singing is all done by all the people in the ceremony. During the initiation, the parents of the initiate are all required to be present as their son enters the circumcision ritual, which they do. According to the focus discussion group (Personal communication, August 15, 2023), the members stated that:

Majority of the participant accepted that *idumi* is a community affairs. Starting from the Sub – County community where all the preparations for *idumi* are discussed by the chosen elders from every sacred grove in the community. The parents solicit all the food stuff as stipulated by the ritual both material and finances. The village elders do the selection of the candidates of initiation and the elders and the counselor prepare the seclusion huts and give instruction during the *idumi* season. The other members of the community also join in the afternoon public dancing of the initiates.

The above scenario is quite contrary to what happens in the church, men are normally more active in the *idumi* ceremonies than even women who are very active in church activities (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). This is because most of the roles assigned are male oriented and women have very little to play during *idumi* apart from preparing food for the initiates. For instance, the selection of initiates, preparation of the initiates, the shaving of initiates, circumcision itself, preparation of seclusion huts, moral instructions to the initiates are roles assigned to men (Personal communication, October 15, 2023).

Borrowing from the Tiriki initiation rite and according Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in Christian initiation, catechumenate should be taken care of not only by the catechists and priests but by the entire community of the faithful where he resides. This will make the catechumen to feel that he/she rightly belong to the community of the people of God the church. This community involvement will provoke the catechumen to learn to cooperate with all members of the Christian community by life witness and profession of faith in spreading the Good news to build up the church of Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, 14).

5.9.2.11 Funeral Celebrations

There were funeral rituals that contradicted the Christian way of life especially that of the initiates who die in seclusion, the death of someone not circumcised, attendance of Christian for funeral masses and the death of the initiation chief. When an initiate dies during *idumi* circumcision season, it is considered as bad omen by the Tiriki community. Therefore, the funeral and burial arrangements are only done in total secret and by only the elders of *idumi* in consultation with the father of the initiate. The mother and the other family members are not involved in the arrangements for the last sendoff of the initiate. If the initiate was already baptized and deserved Christian burial, this is also denied since no Christian who is not of Tiriki elder status will be involved. The church will not be notified as usual and therefore, the ceremony will be totally traditional. The burial will not take place during the day but at night and the grave totally made flat to the level of the ground. This is a great injustice to somebody who was a Catholic and deserved a proper Christian burial (Personal communication, October 23, 2023). This happens both for the traditionalists and the Tiriki – Christian factions when the initiates die during *idumi* circumcision season. It is serious since even

the Catholic faithfuls themselves are not given an opportunity to say a prayer over the dead person (Personal communication, October 15, 2023).

The same thing would happen to an adult person who dies without having gone through the *idumi* circumcision ritual. This is someone who is already considered as an outcast by the community members together with his entire family. Again, he has no age – group and so, there will be no one willing to take the responsibility of burying him since the ancestors cannot accept him without having been circumcised (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). Therefore, the uncircumcised man must be circumcised before any arrangements for his burial commences. Otherwise, no burial will take place. This again will happen to a person even if he is a Catholic faithful which is not reasonable since the person is already dead (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). This is a clear manifestation of a case of syncretism where one has embraced Christianity but still wants to participate in Tiriki cultural heritage when it comes to *idumi* circumcision ritual.

The condition of the uncircumcised man also affects the family members especially the male children. For instance, if the father of the family has not embraced the circumcision, then, none of his sons can be allowed to be initiated according to Tiriki culture. The father has no age – group and therefore, the children cannot be allowed to enter into any age – group. To break the circuit so that the sons maybe enjoined to the age – groups, the father must be circumcised before the burial can take place even if the man was a Christian. This is a case where tradition must be complied with before the Christians can take over the burial ceremony and sometimes, this has caused a lot of confusion in the community (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

The funeral of an initiate chief also brings a lot of confusion since the Tiriki people maintain that some traditional rites must be performed before he is buried. There is normally a clash between the Christians and the community elders. In this case, the church will carry out the Christian rite of burial but allow them to carry out their post – burial rituals for the initiate chief after the liturgical celebrations like having a procession with the dead before being buried (Personal communication, October 21, 2023).

The Tiriki also believe that to die during *idumi* is bad omen, and therefore few people will attend the burial of a Christian who dies within *idumi* season but after the season, there is mass organized by the Christian to mourn the person properly. The Christians are totally discouraged from attending funerals during *idumi* circumcision season for safety of their initiates in the seclusion huts. This is even stricter to mothers who may be involved in preparing food for the initiates who are by taboo not allowed to go for funeral celebrations in case it interferes with the healing process of the initiates (Personal communication, October 24, 2023).

During the focus discussion group, the participants were in agreement that, while the culture of people must be respected and uphold, the the religious affiliation must also be respected. For all the cases mentioned above, those who are Christians should be accorded the Christian services even if they have died. The church should be allowed to celebrate the liturgies for its people even if they are not fully integrated into the Tiriki community through *idumi*. Hence, the faith of the people must be respected by the community (Personal communication, October 24, 2024).

In line with this, the constitution of Kenya (2010) declares that every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought belief and opinion. This means that,

while culture is something good and must be treasured, it also means that people must be free to worship in their religion. The constitution sets stage for harmonious coexistence of diverse religious beliefs in the nation including the African traditional religion. This is the reason why inculturation becomes an important aspect that brings about this harmonization between Christianity and African cultures for peaceful coexistence.

5.9.3 *Idumi* and Sacrament of initiation

This section is quite very important since we want to see some of the socio – religious and cultural aspects of *idumi* circumcision rituals that can be used to bring about successful evangelization in the region.

5.9.3.1 *Idumi* and Christian Baptism

Taking some of the cultural aspects of *idumi* circumcision ritual, its symbolic nature can be likened to baptism, Holy Communion and confirmation which are also referred to as sacraments of initiation. As initiation rites, they imprint a character on the person or put indelible mark on one who goes through them. For the *idumi* circumcision ritual, the initiates receive a physical mark through the act of circumcision of the male sexual organ which is irreversible and therefore, permanent in nature by cutting off his foreskin (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). One will always live with this mark forever and again, it can never be repeated once it has been performed on the initiate. There is a character imprinted in the person who undertakes both circumcision and the Christian baptism. The one who undertakes *idumi* circumcision ritual receives a physical indelible mark through the cutting off the foreskin which is a permanent sign. Likewise, the one who is baptized receives an indelible mark which is of spiritual nature imprinted on his soul. The baptism seals one with an indelible spiritual mark of character of belonging to Christ, given once for all and cannot be repeated (CCC: 1272).

For those who are baptized, this sacramental character consecrates them for christian religious worship allowing them to participate in holy liturgy and serving God by exercising their baptismal priesthood by the witness of their holy lives and practice of charity (CCC:1273).

Secondly, through the *idumi* circumcision ritual, one is admitted into the Tiriki community. Through the initiation one can rightly be called *omutirichi* without which one remains an alien and a stranger to the community (Personal communication, October 15, 2023). The circumcision brings about that cultural identity with the other members of the community thus creating a sense of belonging. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, through the sacrament of baptism, one is made into a child of God and belongs to the family of the people of God. Baptism becomes the door to the Christian life of the convert. Therefore, through the sacrament of baptism, one is incorporated into the church and the faithful are destined by baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion. (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). They form one body of the Christian community whose Jesus Christ is the head, the church. It is right to conclude that, through baptism one becomes a member of the church (CCC: 1269).

Thirdly, through the initiation ritual, all those who go through it attain that cultural unity required by the community. The sharing of the blood through the circumcision knife is enough to effect a very strong bond between the initiates and their extended families. This is brought about especially through the age – group categorization that comes about with the *idumi* circumcision ritual. The initiates become closely related to each other by the very fact of having been circumcised together (Personal communication, October 16, 2023). On other hand, the sacrament of baptism is the source of unity among the Christians. They all died with Christ and rose with him after the sacrament of baptism. Through baptism all are referred to as children of God and all attain the

brotherhood and sisterhood through the same sacrament of baptism. Dogmatic Constitution on the church (*Lumen Gentium*, 11) states that those who undergo baptism are reborn as sons and daughters of God and must openly confess the faith which they received before men through the church.

5.9.3.2 Idumi and Holy Communion

Borrowing from the teaching of the church about Eucharist (CCC:1324), then *idumi* circumcision ritual can be understood as the source and summit of the Tiriki people since *idumi* is the foundation of all the relationships within the community. The initiates are told the manner to relate with the other members of the community and the sharing of a common life. In the Tiriki community, there are things that one cannot do without having gone through the circumcision ritual of *idumi*. The circumcision allows one to participate fully in the community life.

One who is initiated can freely share a drink and a meal with other initiated community members of which it is a taboo to do before the initiation into adulthood. Even just addressing people in a social gathering is prohibited for those who have not gone through the proper Tiriki circumcision ritual *idumi*. The one who is uninitiated remains an outsider to the Tiriki community. The Eucharist augments our union with Christ, the same as what circumcision does to a Tiriki initiates with the community. Therefore, through the Eucharist, one is also united closely to all the faithful in one body (CCC: 1396) just as circumcision makes one closely identified with the community with full rights to participate in its social life.

For Christians, Eucharist is the source and summit of their lives and the liturgy of Eucharist has two parts namely; the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of Eucharist (CCC: 1324). Through the sacrament of Holy Communion, one is allowed to share with

the other baptized Christians the blessed Eucharist in the liturgical celebrations. Before baptism, one cannot fully commune with other Christians. This means that, one can attend the mass but he is excluded from sharing the Holy Communion with other Christians. One will share in the liturgy of the word but not in Eucharist. The analogical symbolism of *idumi* circumcision ritual can be used by the agents of evangelization to bring about the importance of one believing in these sacraments without which one cannot belong and partake fully in community life.

5.9.3.3 Idumi and Christian Confirmation

Through the *idumi* circumcision ritual, the initiates are totally bound to the Tiriki community as its genuine members. They are identified as the Tiriki people through circumcision and given a sense of belonging. Through the sacrament of confirmation, the faithful are perfectly bound to the church and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they can spread and defend the faith by word and deed (*Lumen Gentium*, 11).

Basing on the moral significance of the Tiriki circumcision ritual, *idumi* becomes the foundation of all moral responsibilities and obligation of the initiates (Personal communication, October 12, 2023). Confirmation is a sacrament that those who receive it are regarded as mature Christians and ready to be commissioned to work for the church as witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ by participating fully in the Eucharistic sacrifice which the apex of the Christian life by offering the divine victim to God in worship (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). With confirmation, one's duties and obligations are quite clear in the church like becoming a soldier of Christ to spread the gospel without fear, becoming God parents to those who want to be baptized and allowed to be witnesses of Christian marriages.

The same is true to the Tiriki initiation rite because, after going through it, one is now allowed to shoulder other responsibilities in the community. Formally, the warriors were to take a role of defending the community in case of any incursion by the surrounding communities. With the *idumi* circumcision ritual, the initiates become the defenders of the community just like after confirmation, one is made to be the soldier and defender of faith. Through the *idumi* circumcision ritual, one is declared to be mature and an adult person with responsibilities. Confirmation makes one a mature Christian ready to go and preach the word of God (*Lumen Gentium*, 11).

5.9.3.4 *Idumi* and Christian Confession

There is a lot the Catholic Church can learn from the *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County in relation to the sacrament of confession. According to the focus group discussion, the participants were in agreement that, the candidates of initiation were not allowed to go through the ceremony of *idumi* before they confess the offences they have committed. This is normally done before the elders of the community the night before the real circumcision. The initiates are encouraged to be faithful and ready to confess their sins failure to which, they may find it hard during the circumcision and the subsequent seclusion period (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

All the elements of the sacrament of confession can be identified in this Tiriki rite of confession. They mention the sins committed and the elders advise them before giving their absolution. The penitents are also given some penance to do for the sins committed and sometimes they pay something to the elders in return. At the end of everything, there is a secrecy oath that each of the initiates take not to reveal anything about *idumi* to any stranger or women (Personal communication, August 23, 2023).

The church can capitalize on this traditional way of confession to evangelize and preach about the importance of confession in the Catholic Church. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is clear when it comes to the sacrament of penance by stating that, all the people who approach it are pardoned from the mercy of God from offences committed against him and at the same time reconciled with the church which they have wounded through their sins (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). This clearly shows the importance of the sacrament of confession in the life of the whole church and the benefits it brings to all of its members by reconciling them into one community.

5.9.4 *Idumi* and the structure of Catholic Church

Idumi circumcision ritual is organized at the community level and therefore, the leadership and the structure of *idumi* is critical for harmony in the community. From our chapter three, we saw how the institution of *idumi* is organized from top to the village level. The organization is key due to the two factions that exist in Hamisi – Sub County. At the top we have the chairperson of *idumi* with his executive members. Before them we have the leaders of every sacred grove with his office and down, we come to the leadership at the village level of village elders. Again the roles of every level are outlined and clear to all the members. But most importantly, there must be proper coordination at all level for the successful celebration of *idumi* circumcision ritual in Tiriki community (Personal communication, October 12, 2023).

The Catholic Church can also learn something from the organization of the institution of *idumi* which is quite hierarchical in nature. It mirrors the structure of the Catholic Church that is also hierarchical but at the same time, taking a family structure where each person has a role to play. The most important thing in the Christian communities is that, all the members are called upon to participate fully in the life of the community (Personal communication, August 24, 2023). *Idumi* gives us an ideal example since all

the community members are involved at every stage of *idumi* circumcision ritual. The different ministries in the small Christian communities mirrors those in the institution of *idumi* where different people perform different duties but all for the welfare of the community and the initiates.

Taking the structure of the Diocese of Kakamega where Hamisi Sub – County is found, the Bishop is the head of the Diocese. Then we different parishes headed by the parish priests and their assistants and then, sub – parishes and outstations made up of small Christian communities. This can help us to see the organization of the entire Diocese is organized from the small Christian community to what is now called the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega (Personal communication, October 12, 2023).

5.9.5 Catholic perspective on moral issues

The Catholic Church finding itself in this cultural situation that raises moral issues must also give its right perspective of the same. These moral issues include; the dignity of the human person is questionable, the teaching of the church about alcohol and its use, the equality of all the people and the teaching on sexual immoralities and the sacredness of the human body

5.9.5.1 Dignity of the Human Person

During the focus discussion group, the participants articulated the issues related to the question about human dignity of the human person. It is quite clear that during the initiation period, the initiates are subjected to some dehumanizing conditions especially during the seclusion period. These include the medical and physical conditions experienced during *idumi* circumcision period. For instance, the initiates were not allowed to use the utensils but the leaves of trees to take their food, use of animal hides

and skins for clothing and beddings, dancing nude in public prior to the circumcision ritual (Personal communication, August 15, 2023).

They use the animal skins as their clothes and sleeping mats and are not allowed to use the plates and spoon for eating. Instead they are provided with the banana leaves as their plates throughout the seclusion period which they use for eating (Personal communication, October 13, 2023). There is also an exposure to hard conditions of the initiates especially when it rains on them. Some develop some health problems and some even succumb to death.

The above conditions of which the initiates are subjected to raises some pertinent moral questions especially with the Christian teaching about the human person. There is a need for all people to know that, the dignity of the human person is rooted in him or her being created in the image of God made manifest in his vocation to divine beatitude (CCC:1700). Therefore, through their deliberate actions, people do not conform the good promised by God and attested by the moral conscience (CCC: 1700). It important to note that, the initiates are human persons and therefore, they must be treated as persons during idumi circumcision ritual. It is because of this Christian awareness that the Christian faction decided to adopt less elaborate rite of *idumi* circumcision ritual where the initiates are treated in a humane way with respect and dignity (Personal communication, November 23, 2023).

5.9.5.2 Teaching on Alcohol

Teaching of the Catholic Church on alcohol is important since alcohol is at the center of idumi circumcision ritual among the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County. The celebration could not be complete without the beer brewing at different stages of the circumcision season. The reason why, grain harvest must be considered before the

elders declare the *idumi* circumcision ritual to commence. The use of alcohol was one of the reasons why the early missionaries were greatly opposed to the *idumi* circumcision ritual because of the abuses. At the same time, the elders accepted that those who were adamant and stuck to the use of beer during their circumcision ritual were referred to as the Tiriki – Traditionalist or *Vamasero* while those who abandoned beer in their celebrations referred to as the Tiriki – Christian faction of Tiriki *Nusu*, literary meaning a half – Tiriki or *Vasomi* (Personal communication, November 21, 2023). When it comes to alcohol, the church teaches the virtue of temperance or moderation where people are allowed to use but responsibly.

5.9.5.3 Teaching on Gender Equality

There is also an issue of gender equality that arises in the Tiriki community based on the *idumi* circumcision ritual. From the social organization of the Tiriki people, it is clear that not all people are regarded with the same respect especially those outside the age – group categorization which is based on *idumi* circumcision ritual. Without going through the ritual, one is not taken and accepted as a member of the Tiriki community. The reason why, all those boy born out of wedlock must be brought back to their paternal parents' home for circumcision to claim a sense of belonging in that family otherwise, he does not belong. These are among the category of people who are discriminated in the Tiriki community while the Catholic Church teaches that, all people are the same and equal before God. The equality of the human beings is also based on the fact that we share the same human dignity given to us by the God who created us. The CCC (1995; 357) states that:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person who is not just something but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace

to a covenant with his creator, to offer him response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.

The human person's dignity is from God and not acquired through the circumcision ritual such as *idumi* ritual that discriminate against women and children who have not gone through it.

5.9.5.4 Teaching on Sanctity of Human Body

The issue of the sanctity of the human body is also wanting during *idumi* circumcision ritual which attracts all the community members to fully participate. Due to the use of excessive alcohol in the celebration, it has affected majority of people as regards to their moral life. There are many cases of sexual misbehavior during this season is alarming. The sexual norms customs are very relaxed during *idumi* and it is common to hear about the occurrence of some objectionable behaviour among the people. This is because, sometime the dances end very late in the evening almost in the dark hours and creating opportunity for people to involve themselves in irresponsible sexual activities (Personal communication, November 22, 2023). The result of such irresponsible sexual acts include; early pregnancies for girls and early marriages for both. There are also cases where young people are forced to terminate their education resulting from these irresponsible sexual acts during *idumi* circumcision ritual. Because the people are not in control and conscious after taking alcohol, sometimes, we have had some incest being committed by the young men and women during *idumi* which creates a very complicated situation to handle after *idumi* (Personal communication, November 21, 2023). This goes against the Catholic teaching about the human body which is seen as sacred and dignified because we were created in the image of God. The effects of these immoral acts are far reaching and has affected individuals by entering early marriages and dropping out of schools.

5.9.5.5 Teaching on Sanctity of Work

John Paul II, in 1981 released an Encyclical letter entitled *Laborem Exercens* “On human work” presenting a beautiful Catholic vision of the dignity of human work and the worker. Man is made in the image of God the creator and placed in the world in order to subdue the Earth (John Paul, 1981). Therefore, sanctity of work is an element of society that must be considered sacred since through it, we participate in the creative activity of God. This is contrary to the Tiriki community when the entire community is in celebration mode with a lot of alcohol available for both men and women, the economic activities within the community suffers. During *idumi* circumcision season, nothing of economic importance takes place in the community. The majority of women are immensely involved in the preparation of food for the initiates in the seclusion while the men are just idling drinking beer from house to house. Literally, the farm work greatly suffers during this time (Personal communication, November 23, 2023).

5.9.5.6 Teaching on Human Culture

The Catholic Church teaches that, the human person can only achieve true and full humanity by means of culture (GS, 53). Therefore, the Church teaches about the sanctity of the human culture and therefore, the cultures of people to be sacred since it is a gift from God himself. All people are born and nurtured in their own cultural environment that provides for their sustenance. Culture is good although not all aspects of culture are good and so, the church must come in to purify some of the negative aspects of culture. Among the Tiriki community, and especially regarding the *idumi* circumcision ritual, there are good and bad customs or taboos that accompany the ritual that the church must address.

5.10 Summary

This chapter brings out the relationship needed between the church and culture for effective evangelization by explaining the concepts of culture, inculturation, the need for inculturation and models of inculturation to contextualize the topic of research. This was facilitated by Richard Niebuhr's consultative/dialogical critical approach to culture explained through the five different ways. It identified the agreeable socio – religious and cultural variables of *idumi* circumcision rituals in relation to the cultural and Christian values, the pastoral dimension, sacramental dimension and the Church's perspective of moral issues involved in *idumi* circumcision ritual. Therefore, apart from the contested variables of *idumi*, there are many other socio – cultural aspects that can be beneficial to the church's mission of evangelizing the world. The church can adopt these cultural aspects and utilize them in the process of evangelization such as the cultural values and the symbolism of *idumi*.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This section deals with the summary of the entire study. It brings out the conclusion of the research based on the findings from the field, it gives the recommendation informed by the data and finding of the research.

6.2 Summary of the Study

Despite the fact the Christianity has been in Vihiga County for over a hundred years *idumi* circumcision ritual has persisted. This research sought to examine the Catholic perspective of *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County.

Chapter One provided the basic background to this study such as the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and the purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, theoretical framework, literature review and lastly the research methodology. The also provides the related literature reviews about the study that brought out some of the gaps in knowledge.

Chapter Two outlined the background information about the Luhya people, their culture and religious practices. Later, it expounds the Christian missionaries' effort in evangelizing East Africa and Western part of Kenya in general. The section also addresses the settlement of the Tiriki, the Tiriki cultural way of life, the social organization as a community and the religious life. Chapter Three addressed the first objective on the moral and normative foundation of *idumi*, explaining the meaning and significance of *idumi* and its stages. This is explained along Stuarts Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity. The fourth chapter deals with the second objective of this study; the Catholic Church's Perspective of Idumi ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub –

County. It examined the concept of circumcision ritual and its religious foundations. Subsequently, it explained the origin of *idumi* and the contested aspects by the Catholic Church.

Chapter Five addressed the third objective, exploring the Catholic Church's response to the socio-religious aspects of *idumi* ritual. It discussed the initiatives of the Catholic Church in responding to the challenges posed by *idumi* ritual by adopting R. Niebuhr's consultative/dialogical critical approach to culture. Chapter six brings out the conclusion of the research based on the findings from the field.

6.3 Summary of the Findings of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to find out the Catholic perspective of *idumi* circumcision ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi sub – county, Kenya. Specifically, it sought to examine the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual, the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* ritual and the Catholic Church's response to socio – religious aspects of *idumi* rituals among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County.

On the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision rituals, the study revealed that there is a moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision ritual. It found out that, *idumi* circumcision ritual is the source of cultural identity and cultural unity, social interactions and relationships, moral responsibilities and religiously connecting the initiates with the ancestors.

On the Catholic Church's perspective of *idumi* circumcision rituals, the study expounded on the attitude of the early missionaries towards African culture, the positive and negative reaction of the Tiriki to Christianity. The study unveiled that, the Catholic Church is not against circumcision *per se* but the rituals that accompany this rite of passage.

The study revealed that, the influence of Catholic Church led to the origin of two distinct groups; the traditional Tiriki and the Tiriki – Christian group. The traditionalists value elaborate rituals prior and after the circumcision such as public nude dancing of the initiates with the masks on their heads. The Tiriki – Christian faction does not have public dances of the initiates and does not have beer festivals like the traditional group. The differences between the two is the basis on which the contested aspects of *idumi* were identified by Catholic Church as opposed to the message of the gospel and therefore, a need for cultural transformation and inculturation.

About the Catholic Church's response to socio-religious aspects that can be utilized for inculturation, the study revealed that there is need for a proper relationship between the church and culture for effective evangelization. The study indicated the need of inculturation in general followed by Richard Niebuhr's five approaches to cultural transformation. It unveiled agreeable variables of *idumi* that can be used to enrich the process of evangelization in moral, pastoral and sacramental dimensions.

6.4 Conclusion of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to find out the Catholic perspective of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi sub – county, Kenya. The study concluded that, there is moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual that include; the socio - cultural and moral significance responsible for the tribal identity and unity of the Tiriki and the moral, where boys were inducted into the good moral values and given social responsibilities.

The Catholic Church also maintains that circumcision as an act is not bad in itself but the rituals that accompany it may contradict to the gospel message. For this reason, the study outlines the religious foundation and noted the initial attitude of the Christian

agents of evangelization which was quite negative. It also brought out some of the socio – cultural aspects that are contrary to the gospel message.

The study concluded that, there are some socio – cultural aspects of *idumi* ritual that can be used by the Catholic Church in the process of inculturation to make evangelization effective such as cultural and moral values and offerings and prayers. The ancestral veneration can deepen the church's doctrine about the saints and their role in the lives of the people. The teaching about the saints can encourage other members of the Church to emulate. The Tiriki traditional community sacrifices and prayers have been replaced by the community masses presided over by the Catholic priests or community services done by the catechists. The rigorous period of seclusion and its moral teaching can be likened to the process of catechumenate in the Catholic Church.

This study adopted Stuarts Hall Theory of Cultural Identity (Cultural Continuity) and Niebuhr's consultative/ dialogical critical approach to culture transformation. Throughout the study, one can notice how the Tiriki people have been persistent and consistent with their cultural heritage of *idumi* despite the fact that Christianity has been in the region for over hundred years. Part of the reason is to uphold their culture and pass it to the future generations. *Idumi* circumcision ritual provides the medium and means through which this cultural identity is maintained and continued to the next generation through the moral induction during the seclusion period. The Cultural identity theory was in tandem with the Tiriki understanding of their culture and the struggle to keep their cultural identity. The theory can rightly explain why the Tiriki people have kept their culture regarding *idumi* for a long time even with influence of Christianity and modernity.

Through Richard H. Niebuhr's consultative/ dialogical critical approach to culture transformation, the study was able to identify and categorize the socio-religious and cultural variables of *idumi* into those contested by the church and those agreeable by the church. Christ against culture approach is intolerable to any cultural inclusion since Christ is the only authority. Christ of culture approach makes no distinction between Christianity and culture, both Christ and culture are authority. Christ above culture approach respects the cultures of the people but Christ takes precedence over culture. Christ and culture paradox is the continual struggle between Christianity and culture sometimes leading to Christians living a double life standards. Christ and culture transformation, Christ and culture paradox, Christ above culture approaches helped to reconcile the gospel message and culture through continuous integration and purification of the cultural elements in Tiriki culture.

Therefore, the study concluded that, there has been a catholic perspective of *idumi* among the Tiriki people as follows:

- i. The Catholic Church acknowledges that *idumi* circumcision ritual as an act per se is good.
- ii. Christianity and specifically, Catholic Church has greatly influenced *idumi* circumcision ritual leading to the origin of Tiriki – Christian *idumi* ritual.
- iii. Therefore, in conclusion, there are many socio – cultural aspects of *idumi* that are in agreement with the teachings of the church. However, the church has not taken enough initiative to convince their members on the contested aspects and their harmful effects to the community. On the other hand, the community has also been reluctant to let go some of these harmful aspect by not being open to dialogue.

6.5 Recommendations of the Study

In relation to the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* circumcision ritual and owing to the testimonies given by most of the respondents interviewed, it is evident that *idumi* circumcision ritual is very important cultural practice among the Tiriki people of Hamisi Sub – County and therefore, a ritual that has been there for a long time, with cultural, social, moral, political and religious significance among the people, and so, it must be carried out without its extremes identified with the original Tiriki faction to embrace christianity and modernity on one side and the care and welfare of the initiates should be considered as a priority.

In relation to the Catholic perception of *idumi* circumcision ritual, it is true that circumcision itself per se has no problem since it is biblically founded. But the church and the community need to do something to improve this cultural practice due to the contested socio – religious and cultural aspects that go against the teaching of the gospel. Therefore:

- i. It was noted that, there are some socio - cultural aspects that impact negatively to the people and therefore, the Church and community should collaborate to improve on the beliefs, taboos and customs that discriminate, dehumanize, cause death and are objectionable behaviour in the community.
- ii. It was noted that *idumi* ritual interferes with education and therefore, the organizers should put into consideration the school programs to avoid interfering with the learning.
- iii. *Idumi* circumcision ritual is coloured with beer festivities and therefore, the church, the government administration and community should collaborate to moderate the use of alcohol and drugs.

- iv. *Idumi* ritual brings almost everything to standstill in the community and little productive activities are done leading to idling life of men and young men. Therefore, people should be encouraged to continue working very hard to involve themselves in both community and church programs.
- v. It was found out that the cost of circumcising a boy is quite high impacting negatively to the family. Therefore, to ease the economic burden, some of the elaborate rituals of *idumi* should be done away with such as beer festivities.
- vi. It was also found out that there were some physical complications that initiates experience during circumcision. Therefore, the community should encourage qualified medical practitioners into the seclusion huts in case of any complication.
- vii. During *idumi*, there is that moral laxity leading to immoral sexual behaviours among the young people leading to early pregnancy and early marriages. Therefore, the community should help the victims to continue with their studies maybe after delivery.
- viii. It was found out that, there is a social discrimination between the circumcised and those who have not gone through the ritual bringing about disparity in the community.

In relation the catholic response to socio – religious and cultural variables of *idumi* circumcision ritual, it is true that christianity has had some difficulties with encounter with the Tiriki cultural heritage of *idumi* that need to be reconciled with the church teachings. Therefore:

- i. It was found out that, there is a conflict between Tiriki culture and Catholic teachings. Therefore, both the church and the community should reconcile the two to make the faith local and avoid blanket condemnation of *idumi*.

- ii. To approach *idumi* with a united front, the Christian churches within Hamisi Sub – County should be ready to have inter – religious dialogue with the Tiriki people, especially elders to avoid the violence between the two distinct *idumi* factions.
- iii. It is true that the approach of the Catholics and other Christian churches to *idumi* is not the same. Therefore, the Christian churches working in this region must have an ecumenical approach towards the cultural heritage of *idumi* rather than doing it alone.
- iv. Sometimes, the agents of evangelization working in this region may not be Tiriki, hence, there is a need for proper training and preparation of ministers of evangelization in matters of Tiriki cultural heritage.
- v. There are some cultural and moral values found in the Tiriki cultural heritage and therefore, the church together with the community should endeavour to identify them in order to enrich the work of evangelization in the region.
- vi. During the seclusion period is where the moral induction is done to the initiates and so, the church should accompany the initiates by praying for them. The Catholic Church should organize for mass for all the initiates to attend and given blessings by the priests. This should also happen during the graduation ceremonies when the initiates are incorporated back into the communities and their families.
- vii. It was noted that if one has not gone through circumcision in a Tiriki way, he remains a stranger and therefore, the Catholic Church should assign some of the priests from the same region to act as chaplains to the initiates during the circumcision period where they can go into seclusion huts to teach the initiates some of the Christian morals and virtues.

- ix. It was found out that seclusion is a time of moral instruction to the initiates and therefore, the ministry of the male catechists will be quite important to the initiates during the seclusion period since they are Tiriki and can be allowed to enter the seclusion huts without any restrictions. They can pray for the initiates, encourage them and also give them both the moral and Christian teachings to reconcile with the cultural and traditional lessons given to them by the elders.
- x. It is true that currently there is no pastoral program for those involved in *idumi* ritual and therefore, the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega should be encouraged the pastoral attention to the initiates during all the stages of *idumi* circumcision ritual especially by engaging the priests who are originally Tirikis to journey with the initiates throughout the circumcision season.

6.6 Suggested Areas for Further Study

For future research, the suggested areas for further research could be about the Tiriki worldview of *idumi*, ecumenical approach to *idumi* by Christian churches and the future of the original – Tiriki circumcision ritual.

REFERENCES

- Adamo, T. D. (2011). Christianity and the African traditional religion(s): The post – colonial round of engagement. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 32(1), 1 – 10.
- Amatsimbi, J. M. (2013). Christian mission, government and local council’s partnership in educational development: The case of Western Kenya 1911-1938. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(9).
- Amin-El- Gohary, M. (2015). Circumcision: History, philosophy and facts. *Open Journal of Oology*, 5, 114-117.
- Anderson, W.B. (1977). *The church in East Africa 1840-1974*. Nairobi: Uzima Press.
- Asitiba, A. O. (2017). Role of African indigenous education on social harmony: A case of Tiriki community’s initiation practice, Kenya. *Journal of African Research and Development (JARD)*, 1(2), 107-118.
- Auger, D.M. (2016). Cultural continuity as a determinant of indigenous people’s Health: A metasynthesis of qualitative research in Canada and United States. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(4), 3.
- Azevedo, M. (1982). *Inculturation and the challenges of modernity*. Rome: Center “cultures and religions.” Pontifical Gregorian University, 62.
- Azevedo, M. (n.d). A Workshop: Inculturation and the world church. *Woodstock Theological center Washington, D.C.* 122-128.
- Barasa, N. P. (2018). Significance of circumcision in modern/ current Bukusu society: A case study of Bungoma County in the Republic of Kenya. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 246-251.
- Barbara, T., & Jürgen, P. (2007). Culture influence of forest perception and forest use among the Tiriki community in West Kenya. *Institute of International Forestry and Forest Products, Germany*.
- Bariu, M. R. (2017). Transformation of Christianity in Kenya: A historical survey. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 5(11).
- Baur, J. (2009). *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African church history*. (2nd Edition). Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Bediako, I. K. (2000). *Jesus in Africa*. Accra, Ghana: Regnum Africa.
- Bediako, I. K. (1992). *The relevance of a Christian approach in Africa*. London: Routledge.
- Bediako, I. K. (1996). Five theses on the significance of modern African Christianity: A Manifestato. *Transformation*, 13(1), 20-29.
- Breasted, J.H. (1933). *The dawn of conscience*. N.Y.Scriber.
- Burgman, H. (1990). *The way the Catholic Church started in western Kenya*. Mission Book Service.
- Bureti, P.K. (2019). Christianity in colonial and post-colonial era: Evidence from Kenya. *Journal of Religion*, 1(3).

- Burnard, P., Gill, P., Kate, S., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British Dental Journal*, 204(8), 429-432.
- Burrett, D.B., Mambo, G.K., McLaughlin, J., & McVeigh, M.J. (1973). *Kenya Church Handbook; The development of Kenya Christianity, 1498-1973*. Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). (1995). New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.
- Changah, J.K. (2013). Influence of Keiyo traditional circumcision of aspirations for higher education among boys in secondary schools, Keiyo South District, Elgeyo – Marakwet County, Kenya. *International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(4).
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd Ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crollius, R. A. (1978). What is so new about inculturation? *Gregorianum*, 59, 721-737.
- Crouch, M., & McKenzie (2006). The logic of small samples in interviews – based qualitative research. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 56(12), 735-742.
- Daugherty, D.B. (2014). Assessing Christianity in Africa's transforming context. *International Review of Mission*, 103 (2): 348-362.
- Daudu, M., & Gbule, J.N. (2000). *An outline of the history of Christianity in West Africa*. Zaire: Mission Press & Publications.
- Doyle, M.D. (2012). The concept of inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A theological consideration. *Religious Studies Faculty Publications*.
- Egesah, O.B., Wanyama, M., & Muange, V. (2014). The relevance of intangible cultural heritage in modern times: Evidence from Babukusu male circumcision. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 2(7), 273 – 283.
- Eldar, S. (2014). *Can culture justify infant circumcision?* By CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College.
- Fatokun, S.A. (2005). Christianity in Africa: A historical appraisal. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 26(2).
- Faupel, J.F. (1969). *African holocaust: The story of Uganda martyrs*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- George, F.E. (1990). *Inculturation and Ecclesial communion: Culture and the church in the teachings of Pope John Paul II*. Rome: Urbaniana University.
- Gill, P and Kate, F.S. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, 204(6), 291-295.
- Gumo, Sussy. (2009). The theology of inculturation and the African Church. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(5), 90-98.
- Hankins, C. (2006). *Overview of the current evidence on male circumcision and HIV prevention: Strategy and approaches for male circumcision programming*. Geneva: UNAIDS Report.

- Hanh, P. (2018). A brief critical review of theories and models of cultural identity and adaptation in cross-cultural transition. *ARECLS*, 5, 97-112.
- Hastings, A. (1966). *Church & mission in modern Africa*. Great Britain: William Clowes and Sons, Limited, London and Beccles.
- Harriet, D., & Kirsten, T. (2012). The social penis. Traditional male circumcision and initiation in South Africa, 1800-2000: A literature Review. *Centre for Social Science Research*, 1-145.
- Hildegarde, H.F. (1991). *African perception of the missionaries and their message: Wesleyan's at mount coke and butterworth, 1825-1835*. [Unpublished M.A. Thesis]. University of Cape Town.
- Jones, D. A. (2017). Infant male circumcision: A Catholic theological and bioethical analysis. *The Linacre Quarterly*.
- Kakai, P.W. (1992). *Social concepts in the initiation rituals of the Abatachoni: A historical study*. [Unpublished M.A. Thesis]. Kenyatta University.
- Kakai, P.W. (1995). Cultural Aspects and social integration: A study of Tachoni initiation ritual ideas. *Transafrican Journal of History*, 24, 216-223.
- Kanu, I.A. (2012). Inculturation and the Christian faith in Africa. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(17), 236-244.
- Kasomo, D. (2009). An analysis of the rites of passage and their relation to Christianity. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1(8):156-166.
- Kassilly, N.F. & Tsingalia, M.H. (2009). Persistence and loss of cultural values of Tiriki sacred groves in Hamisi District Kenya: Implications for management. *J Hum Ecol*, 27(2), 137-141.
- Katoke, I. K. (1984). Christianity and culture: An African experience. *Sage Publications Ltd*, 1(4): 7-10.
- Keller, W. (1956). *The Bible history*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 162.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2009/2019). Kenya population and housing census, Volume 1: Population by County and Sub – County.
- Kimani, V. (2010). *The transformation of circumcision and masculinity among the Agikuyu of Kiambu, 1945-2008*. [Unpublished M.A. Thesis]. Kenyatta University.
- Kirmayer, L.J., Brass, G.M., Holton, T., Paul, K., Simpson, C., & Tait, C. (2007). Suicide among aboriginal people in Canada. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 13(920).
- Kirwen, M. (2008). *African cultural domains*. Nairobi: MIAS Books.
- Kaczor, C. (2018). Philosophy and theology: The ethics of circumcision. *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, 357-362.
- Krieg, B. (2016). Understanding the role of cultural continuity in reclaiming the identity of young indigenous women. *Girlhood Studies*, 9(2), 28-45.

- Larue, G.A. (1991). *Religious traditions and circumcision*. Presented at the second international symposium on circumcision, San, Francisco, California.
- Lipa, H., Imrul, B.O., Thamim, R.C., & Shahim, M. (2021). Research methodology and methods: Theory and practice. *Methodical Research Journal*, 2(5), 201-227.
- Lo Liyong, T. L. (1972). *Popular culture of East Africa*. Nairobi: Longman Kenya Ltd.
- Lufti & Maslakci. (1996). *Islamic ruling on male and female circumcision*. World Health Organization (W.H.O).
- Magesa, L. (1998). *African religion: The moral traditions of abundant life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Makila, F.E. (1978). *An outline history of Babukusu of Western Kenya*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Mandela, A. (1994). *Long walk to freedom: The autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. London: Abacus.
- Mayende, G.B. (2022). Age-Set System among the Babukusu of Western Kenya. *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR)*, 8(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra9288DOI No: 10.36713>
- Ministry of Education. (1994). *Report on perceptions and opinions of selected staff of ministry of education on wastage in primary school education*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Masumbuko, Y.M., Ipyana, H.M., Alexander, R., & Ainory, P.G. (2013). The male circumcision: The oldest ancient procedure, its past, present and future roles. *Tanzania Journal of Health Research*, 15(3).
- Mbachi, F., & Likoko, S. (2013). Traditional male circumcision and its implications on the socio – economic and psychosocial life of the Bukusu community in Kenya. *Research on Humanities and social Sciences*, 3(1).
- Mbefo, L.M. (1989). *Towards a mature cultural heritage*. Coskan Associate Printers and Publishers, Anambra.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Book Ltd
- Mbiti, J.S. (1991). *Introduction to African religion* (2nd Ed). Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Ministry of Health, Kenya. (2007). *Policy on male circumcision in Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Mokhoathi, J. (2017). From contextual theology to African Christianity: The consideration of Adiaphora from a South African perspective. *Religions*, 8(266).
- Morrison, M. (2023). Old Testament Laws: Circumcision: A new way to keep an old law. *Grace Communion International*.

- Moywaywa, C.K., & Akaranga, S.I. (2017). Pre-modern and modern male circumcision rites among the Tharaka of Eastern Kenya. *Journal of Education & Entrepreneurship*, 4(10), 48-59.
- Moywaywa, C.K. (2020). Inculturation in African Christianity: The need for global model. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Sciences (IJRISS)*, 4(8).
- Mugambi, J. (Ed) (2002). Christianity and African cultural heritage: In Christianity and African culture. *Nairobi: Action Publication*, 516-542.
- Mugambi, J., & Kirima, N. (1976). *The African religious heritage*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Mukhongo, A. (2003). *Influence of circumcision ceremony on education of primary School pupils in Kanduyi Division, Bungoma District, Kenya*. MEd Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Mutiso – Mbinda, J. (1986). *Inculturation: Challenge to the local church*. In Waliggo, J.M., et al., *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*. Kampala: St Paul-Africa.
- Mutsotso, S.A. (2013). *Pupil's teacher and parent's perception of the influence of circumcision on academic performance: A case of Webuye Division of Bungoma District, Kenya*. Unpublished MPhil Thesis, Moi University.
- Muzorewa, G.H. (1985). *The origin and development of African theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Mwanzi, H. (1977). *History of the Kipsigis*. Nairobi: EALB.
- Narulla, R. (n.d). Circumscribing circumcision: Traversing the moral legal ground around a hidden human right violation. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 12(2).
- Natasha, E. (2017). Brought to manhood: Christianity and male initiation in South Africa in early 20th century. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43(2), 251-265.
- Natasha, M., Cynthia, W., Kathleen, M. M., Greg, G., & Emily, N. (2011). Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide. *Family Health International*.
- Nche, G.C., Okwuosa, L., & Okuosa, L. (2016). Revisiting the concept of inculturation in a modern Africa: A reflection on salient issues. *HT/Teologrese Studies/Theological Studies*, 1-6.
- Ndeda, M.A.J. (2019). Population movement, settlement and the construction of society to the east of Lake Victoria in precolonial times: The Western Kenya case. *East African Review*, pp, 83-108.
- Ng'ang'a W. (2006). *Kenya's ethnic communities: Foundation of the nation*. Gatundu Puplishers Limited: Nairobi.
- Niebuhr, H.R. (1975). *Christ and culture*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Nyuyki, S. P. (2018). Conflict theory in the inculturation of the Gospel in Nso'1 of Cameroon. *Stellebosch Theological Journal*, 4(2), 655-682.

- Obeten, M. (2020). *The indispensability of inculturation for effective evangelization: Revising the evangelization of Sub – Saharan Africa*. School of theology and Seminary Graduate paper/Theses.
- Ogutu, M and Kenyachui, S.S. (2007). *An introduction to African history*. University of Nairobi Press.
- Okure, T. (1990). Inculturation: biblical/theological bases, in Okure, T., Van Thiel, P., et al, *Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*. Eldoret, Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 55-88.
- Onwubiko, O.A. (1992). *Theory and practice of inculturation: An African perspective*. Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press.
- Omare, S., & Kamaara, E. (2023). Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: The Role of Church Leaders during Political Electioneering Periods in Kenya. In: Kilonzo, S.M., Chitando, E., Tarusarira, J. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36829-5_27
- Papu. J., & Verster, P. (2006). A biblical, cultural and Missiological critique of traditional circumcision among Xhosa – speaking Christian. *Acta Theologica*, 178-198.
- Pawlikova, V. (2011). The role of early missionaries of Africa or White Fathers in the study and development of African language. *Asian and African Studies*, 20(2), 267-288.
- Pew Research Center. (April 2010)
- Pope John Paul II. (Sept 14th 1981). Encyclical letter on human work *Laborem Exercens*.
- Pope John Paul II. (Oct. 16th 1979). Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae (CT)*.
- Pope Paul VI. (Oct. 24th 1965). Declaration on the relation of the church to non-christian religions *Nostra Aetate*.
- Pope Paul VI. (Oct. 28th 1965). Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*.
- Pope Paul VI. (Dec. 8th 1975). Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.
- Sangree, H. W. (1965). *The Bantu of Western Kenya*. In James, L. Gibbs (Ed). *People of Africa*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Sangree, H. W. (1966). *Age, prayer and politics in Tiriki*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sangree, H. W. (1962). *The social functions of beer drinking*. In John, J. Pittman and Charles, R. Snyder (eds). *Society, Culture and Drinking Patterns*.
- Shahid, K. (2014). Qualitative research method – Phenomenology. *Asian Social Science*, 10(21): 298-310.
- Shiyuka, E. K. (2012). *Continuity and change in the funeral rites of Abatirichi of Western Kenya*. M.A Defended at Kenyatta University.

- Simani, S. (2005). *Tiriki community customs and traditions*. Nairobi: Kul Graphics Limited.
- Sitawa, H.W., & Langat, D. (2022). Morality and community behaviour in Africa: A case study of Bukusu circumcision. *Jumuga Journal of Education, Oral Studies and Human Science (JJEOSHS)*, 5(1): 1-15.
- Sitawa, H.W. (2019). The emergence of Bukusu – Christian rite of initiation and its implication on societal value system among the youth in Bungoma County, Kenya. *Jumuga Journal of Education, Oral Studies and Human Sciences*, 2(1), 1-12.
- Shilabukha, K. (2006). Ingolobe: Tiriki circumcision mask. In Langat, Kiprop and Julie Hudson (Eds.). *Hazina: Traditions, trade and transitions in Eastern Africa*. London and Nairobi: British Museums and National Museum of Kenya, pp: 80-81.
- Shorter, A. (1988). Towards a theology of inculturation. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Stuart, B. (1994). Inculturation: The local church emerges. *Missionalia*, 22(2): 93-117.
- Sultana, C. M. (2018). Catechesis and its six tasks. *The Person and Challenges*, 8(1): 23-44.
- Sundukwa, P., Ekwenye, J., & Mulinya, C. (2021). An interlace of African traditional religion practices among the Abatirichi people of Western Kenya in mitigating climate change. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 26(1), 12-18.
- Sweet, W. (Ed) (2016). Cultural clash and religion. In Mclean, G.F. Cultural heritage and contemporary change series 1. Culture and values. *The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*, 16, 1-19.
- Republic of Kenya. (2010). *The constitution of Kenya, rev. ed.* Nairobi: Kenya.
- Republic of Kenya (2009). *National Policy on culture and heritage*. Government Printer. Nairobi: Kenya
- Talbert, M. (2022). *Moral Responsibility*. In Edward, N. Zalta & Uri, Nodelman (Eds). The Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy.
- Thanduxolo, N., & Kang'ethe, S.M. (2021). The impact of traditional male circumcision challenges on newly initiated men's advancement in education: Implications for human rights and social work in South Africa. *Journal of Human Rights and Social work*.
- Tikoko, B. J. (2021). Teacher perceptions of the influence of male circumcision on academic performance of the boy child in Baringo County, Kenya. *Kabarak Journal of Research & Innovation*, 11(1), 1-8.
- The Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/EN/3/2/4:1929-1935.
- Ugwukah, C.A., & Ohaja, I. O. (2019). The impact of Christianity, Islam and colonialism on indigenous African religion and culture. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 41.
- UNAIDS. (2001). Male circumcision: Context, criteria and culture. Retrieved on 24th Dec. 2023 from www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2007.

- United Nations Development Goals (UNDP) (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to transform the world*. FAO Regional Office for Asian and the Pacific.
- Uprety, L. P. (n.d). Qualitative data collection, analysis and presentation: A theoretical overview. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(83):83.
- Vihiga County (2018-2022). County integrated development plan.
- Vatican II Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (1966), AAS 58.
- Vatican II Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (1966).
- Vatican II Council, Decree on the church missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (1966).
- Wagner. G. (1949). *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*, vol 1. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wandiba, S. (Ed) (1985). *History and culture of western Kenya: The people of Bungoma District through time*. Nairobi: Gideon, S. Were Press.
- Wanyama, M., & Egesah, O. (2015). Ethnography and ethno-music of Bukusu traditional male Circumcision: Messaging, symbolism and rationale. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(1), 6-18.
- Wanyama, E. (n.d). *Traditional male circumcision and education: An analysis of the impact of traditional male circumcision on education*. The case for the Bagisu region in Eastern Uganda.
- Waliggo, J. M. (1986). *Making a church that is truly African*. In Waliggo, J.M. et al., *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*. Kampala: St. Paul Africa, 11-31.
- Waliggo, J. M. (1986). *Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency*. Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa.
- Were, G. S. (1967). *A history of the AbaLuhya of western Kenya c. 1500-1930*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- Were, G. S. (1967a). *Western Kenya Historical Texts: Abaluhya, Teso and Elgon Kalenjin*. Nairobi: EALB (1969). *A history of the Abaluhya of Western Kenya*, Nairobi: EALB.
- Wandusin, M. F. (2015). Christianity in Africa: A beacon of hope for Christianity in Europe. *Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education*, 2(1).
- Whitehouse, O. C. (1952). *The religious institutions of Israel*. In Peaker's commentary on Bible. Edinburgh: Nelson, 53, 57.
- World Health Organization (2009). *Traditional male circumcision among youth people: A public health perspective in the context of HIV prevention*. Geneva: W.H.O Printing Press.
- Yang, B., Zhao, D., & Liu, L. (2012). An analysis of Hall's theory of cultural identity and its application in flipped class. *Advanced in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 588.

Yokself, P., & Yildirim, S. (2015). Theoretical frameworks, methods and procedures for collecting phenomenological studies in Educational setting. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative inquiry*, 6(1).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction

BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE
MOI UNIVERSITY, ELDORET
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION and THEOLOGY
P.O BOX 3900 – 30100 ELDORET – KENYA

JULY, 2023.

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD RESEARCH

I kindly ask for your assistance in helping me carry out field research on the topic: **CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE OF IDUMI CIRCUMCISION RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKIS OF HAMISI SUB - COUNTY, KENYA**. This is in partial fulfillment of the course requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Religious Studies at Moi University, Eldoret. I therefore kindly request you to respond to the questions in the attached questionnaire faithfully and truthfully so that I can get your honest responses concerning the subject of the study. Note that the information you shall provide will strictly be treated with utmost confidentiality, and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your assistance and ultimate cooperation will be appreciated greatly. Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully,



Bonface Wanjala Ifire.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Opening:

My name is Bonface Wanjala Ifire and a PhD student at Moi University, Eldoret. I am undertaking a research on the topic: **The Catholic Perspective of Idumi Ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County, Kenya**. I would like to ask you some questions about your background, cultural heritage of idumi, its cultural, social, moral and religious, the Catholic perspective of *idumi* and the Catholic response to socio – religious and cultural variables of idumi. I hope to use this information to help the scholars, pastors, evangelizers, the people of God to better understand the underlying values of this important ritual and Christian ideals. The interview should take about 20 minutes. Please air your views as honestly as possible. Let me begin by asking you some general questions.

Body:

1. What is the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County?
2. How has the Catholic Church understood *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County?
3. How has the Catholic Church responded to the socio-religious aspects of *idumi* ritual of the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County?

Closing:

I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know so that I can successfully get more information about idumi circumcision ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County?

Appendix 3: Profile of the Informants

INTERVIEW: CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY INFORMANTS/BUYANGU

Respondent	Age	Education	Marital Status	Village
Priest	40	University	Single	Buyangu
Tiriki Elder	69	-	Married	Buyangu
A lay woman	84	-	Widow	Givole
Initiation Chief	78	-	Married	Hamisi
Initiate	25	University	Single	Jepseri
Female Teacher	53	University	Married	Musoywa

FGD: CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMANTS/BUYANGU

Respondent	Age	Education	Marital Status	Village
Counselor/ Guardian	55	Form Four	Married	Chepnunyuni
Tiriki Elder	73	-	Married	Givole
A lay man	57	Form Four	Married	Jepseri
A lay woman	65	Form Four	Married	Gisambayi
Catechist	72	Form Four	Married	Hamisi
Sub - Chief	50	Form Four	Married	Givogi
Ritual Elder	70	-	Married	Munzatsi

INTERVIEW: CHARACTERISTICS OF KEY INFORMANTS/ERUSUI

Respondent	Age	Education	Marital Status	Village
Priest	50	University	Single	Erusui
Tiriki Elder	74	A -Level	Married	Isahosi
A lay man	54	Form Four	Married	Cheptulu
Initiation Chief	70	Form Four	Married	Iseremi
Initiate	24	University	Single	Kisasi
Male Teacher	45	University	Married	Shamakhokho

FGD: CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMANTS/ERUSUI

Respondent	Age	Education	Marital Status	Village
Counselor/ Guardian	32	Form Four	Married	Iseremi
Tiriki Elder	76	-	Married	Cheptulu
A lay man	57	Form Four	Married	Erusui
A lay woman	55	Form Four	Married	Isahosi
Catechist	50	Form Four	Married	Erusui
Sub - Chief	50	Form Four	Married	Shamakhokho
Ritual Elder	70	-	Married	Musutwi

Appendix 4: Focus Group Guide

Opening: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Bonface Wanjala Ifire and a PhD student at Moi University, Eldoret. I am undertaking a research on the topic: **The Catholic Perspective of Idumi Ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County, Kenya.** I would like to ask you some questions about your background, cultural heritage of idumi, its cultural, social, moral and religious, the Catholic perspective of idumi and the Catholic response to socio – religious and cultural variables of idumi. I hope to use this information to help the scholars, pastors, evangelizers, the people of God to better understand the underlying values of this important ritual and Christian ideals. The interview should take about 1 hour. Please air your views as honestly as possible.

Background information of the informants: Tiriki elder, Catechist, Counselor, Catholic teachers, sub –chief, ritual elder.

Body: Questions based on the specific objectives of this study

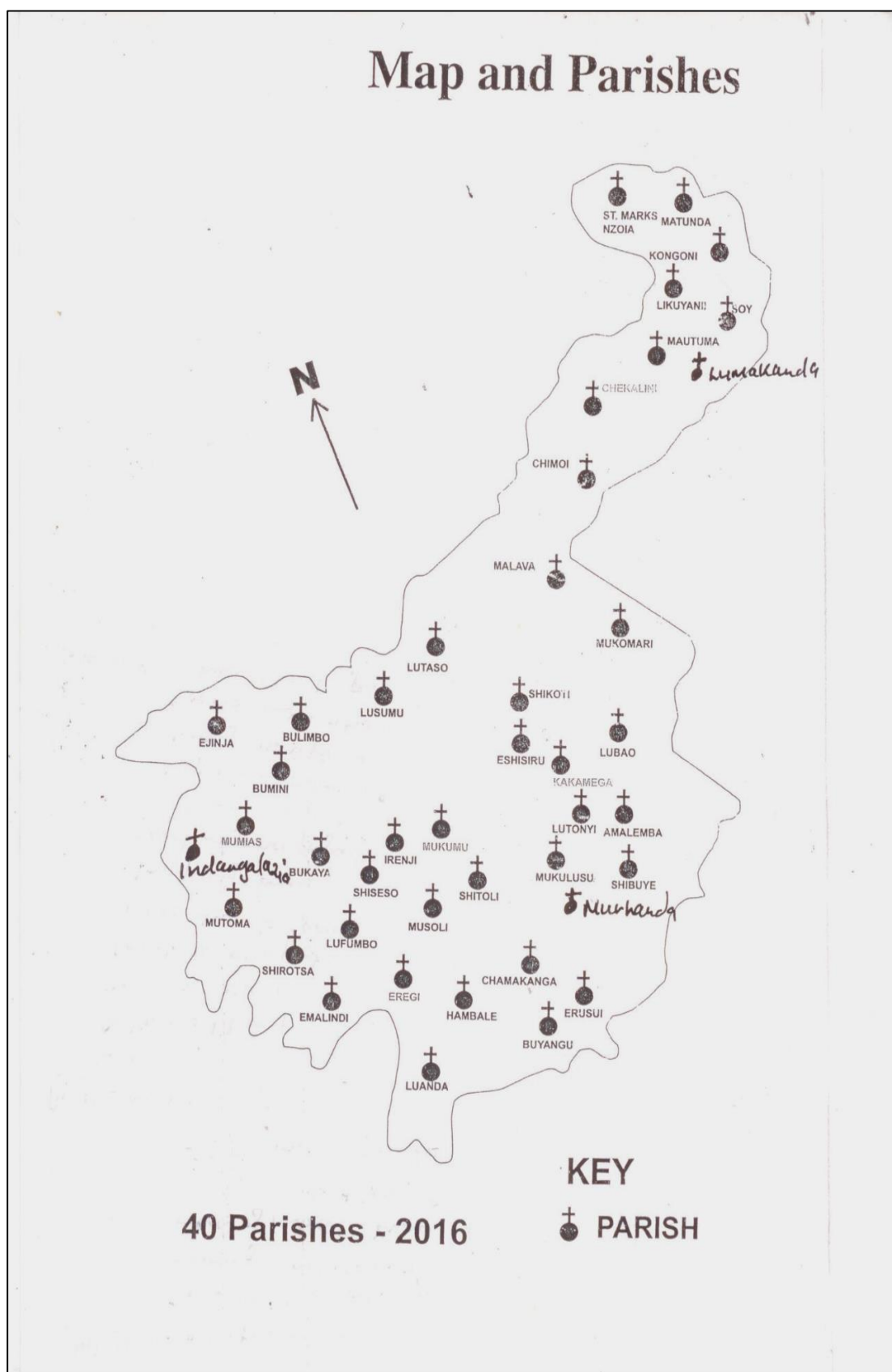
Objective 1: What is the moral and normative foundation of *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County?

Objective 2: How has the Catholic Church perceived *idumi* ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub - County?

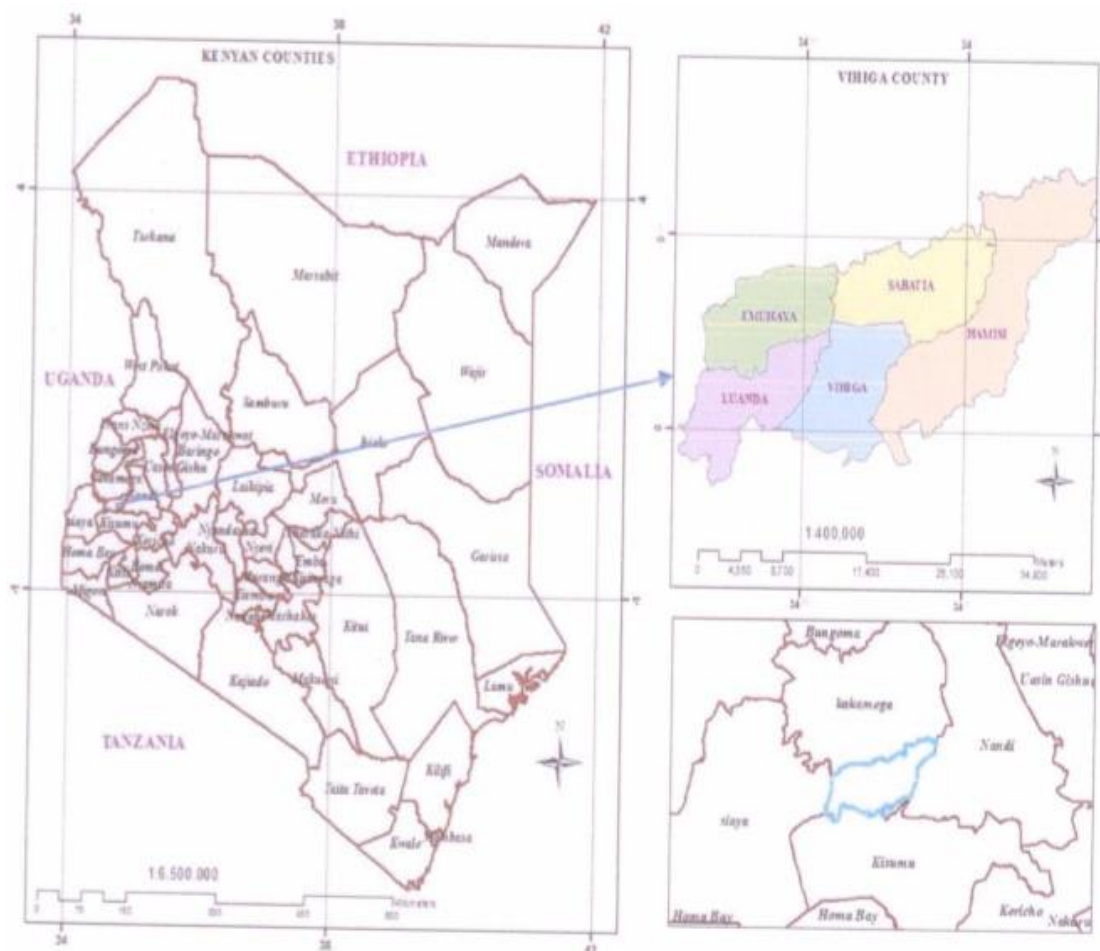
Objective 3: How has the Catholic Church responded to the socio-religious aspects of *idumi* ritual among the Tirikis of Hamisi Sub – County.

Closing: I appreciate the time you took for this discussion. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know so that I can successfully get more information about idumi circumcision ritual among the Tiriki of Hamisi Sub – County?

Appendix 5: Map of Kakamega Diocese



Appendix 6: Map of Kenya Showing the Location of Vihiga County



Source: Vihiga County: County Integrated Development 2018 — 2022

Appendix 8: University Recommendation Letter

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)



MOI UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Tel: (053) 43093
(053) 43620 Ext 2515
Fax: (053) 43047
E-mail: deanarts@mu.ac.ke

P.O Box 3900
ELDORET
KENYA

28th July, 2023

NACOSTI (National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation),
P.O. Box 30623,
Utalii Hse,
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir/Madam,

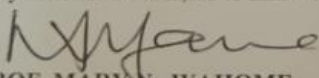
RE: BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE - PHD/REL/5374/21

This is to certify that the above named is a bonafide student at Moi University,
School of Arts and Social Sciences. He is pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion (PhD)

He has completed his coursework component and proposal and has now embarked on Thesis writing.

His Thesis is entitled: **“Catholic Perspective on Idumi Circumcision ritual among the Tiriki of Vihiga County, Kenya”**

Any assistance accorded to him will be appreciated.



PROF. MARY N. WAHOME
DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEAN
SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
MOI UNIVERSITY

(ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution)

Appendix 9: Nacosti Research Authorization Letter

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 201514	Date of Issue: 08/April/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr.. BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Vihiga on the topic: THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE OF IDUMI CIRCUMCISION RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI OF VIHIGA - COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 08/April/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/34270	
201514	
Applicant Identification Number	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Verification QR Code	
	
NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.	
See overleaf for conditions	

Appendix 10: Authorization Letter from the County Commissioner

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE PRESIDENCY

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
State Department for Internal Security and National Administration

Email: vihgacc1992@gmail.com
Telephone: +254728294705
When replying please quote

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
VIHIGA COUNTY
P.O. BOX 75-50300
MARAGOLI.

REF: VC/ED/12/1 VOL.IIV (54)

18th April, 2024

All Deputy County Commissioners
VIHIGA COUNTY

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION: MR. BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE

This is to introduce to you Mr. Bonface Wanjala Ifire of Moi University to conduct research on the topic "*THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE OF IDUMI CIRCUMCISION RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKI*" in Vihiga County for a period ending 08th April, 2025.

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance.




G.J. SIMIYU
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER
VIHIGA COUNTY

Cc. MR. BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE
ID NO. 10727917

Appendix 11: Authorization Letter from County Director of Education



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

Telegrams:
Telephone: (056) 51450
When replying please quote

COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE,
VIHIGA COUNTY,
P.O. BOX 640,
MARAGOLI.

REF: CDE/VC/ADM/VOL.2/39/158

18TH APRIL, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

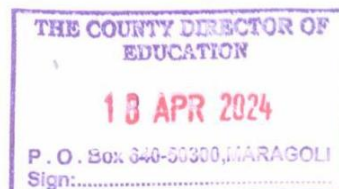
RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
BONIFACE WANJALA IFIRE

Reference is made to letter No NACOSTI/P/ 24/34270 dated 8th April 2024.

Permission is hereby granted to the above named student from Moi University-Eldoret to carry out research on "***The Catholic Perspective of IDUMI CIRCUMCISION RITUAL among the Tiriki of Vihiga County, Kenya***" to enable him write a project as required of him by the Institution.

Kindly note, in order for the office to be informed a copy of the same be shared with the County Education office for intervention purposes upon completion of the research.

DAVID K. KOECH
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
VIHIGA COUNTY



Copy to:
County Commissioner
VIHIGA

Appendix 12: Picture of the Original Tiriki Initiates



Source: <https://www.tuko.co.ke/editorial/feature/474688-idumi-death-madness-dreaded-consequences-invading-tiriki-circumcision-forests>

NUDE KIDS ESCORTED FOR CIRCUMCISION



Source: www.youtube.com/@kiddy-tv 135

Appendix 13: Picture of Initiates during Graduation



Source: Cyrus Indombero, www.youtube.com/@cyrusindombero9330

Appendix 14: Picture of Sacred Grove

Gimude forest in Jepkoyai



Source: Collins Mmbulika, TUKO.co.ke

Appendix 15: Plagiarism Test Certificate from Moi University



SR593

ISO 9001:2019 Certified Institution

THESIS WRITING COURSE

PLAGIARISM AWARENESS CERTIFICATE

This certificate is awarded to

BONFACE WANJALA IFIRE

PHD/REL/5376/21

In recognition for passing the University's plagiarism

Awareness test for Thesis **entitled: THE CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE OF IDUMI CIRCUMCISION RITUAL AMONG THE TIRIKIS OF HAMISI SUB – COUNTY, KENYA** with similarity index of 2% and striving to maintain academic integrity.

Word count:60459

Awarded by

Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu

CERM-ESA Project Leader Date: 18/07/2024