

u
AFRICAN SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO WESTERN
CHRISTIANITY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
ABAGUSII AND THE SEVENTH-DAY-ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN OGEMBO DIVISION, KISII
DISTRICT, KENYA

BY
BOAZ KARIUKI ONYANCHA

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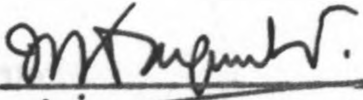
DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.


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Date: 22nd Aug 1991

This Thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signed 
DR. J.N.K. MUGAMBI

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Date: 28/8/91

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ABSTRACT

When the Western S.D.A. Missionaries came to Gusii in early twentieth century, they ignored the previous Abagusii traditional cultural experiences, beliefs and practices. All Abagusii customs and values were treated with contempt as heathenish, anti-God and damnable. So the missionaries embarked on converting Abagusii from what they thought was an unworthy cultural-religious system to what was a sound cultural-religious system or a civilized religion.

This unfavourable S.D.A. missionary attitude to Abagusii cultural experiences, beliefs and practices was based on three major wrongful and ethnocentric assumptions, namely cultural, theological and scientific.

At the cultural level, the Western S.D.A. missionaries did not find it important to study and understand or respect the values and ideas cherished by Abagusii. Instead they simply looked down upon all and sought to impart Western values and ideas to Abagusii through organized Western education.

At the theological level, the S.D.A. missionaries confused western civilization with christianity. This was in contravention of the Biblical great commission in which the Lord had sent out Seventy-two-disciples to proclaim God's kingdom in all places. The Lord had instructed the disciples to survive on whatever small they were given in the places they went (LK. 10:1-17). (R.E.V). Instead of

proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the S.D.A. missionaries proclaimed western civilization. Instead of relying on material provided by Gusii cultural beliefs and practices, they relied on what they brought from the west.

It was a major distortion of St. Paul's teaching that a Gentile did not necessarily have to become a Jew before becoming a christian. (Gal. 2:11-17). (R.E.V.). The S.D.A. missionaries lacked these theological insights. In essence, they bestowed upon themselves two tasks, to proclaim western civilization at the same time with the Gospel of Jesus.

Even worse still, the S.D.A. missionaries were determined to believe that they brought God to Gusii and that before their coming, Abagusii had been worshipping idols and not God as they (missionaries) conceived of him. Subsequently, they introduced a "new" God who they identified for Abagusii with the Luo name Nyasae and took him to the church where he remained confined.

At the scientific level, western S.D.A. missionaries branded Abagusii beliefs and practices superstitious. Subsequently, they sought to liberate them (Abagusii) by means of western education. It was wrong on the part of the S.D.A. missionaries to think that matters to do with a people's religion or culture could be tested scientifically. They also failed to learn that each religion is sustained by a specific world-view.

This S.D.A. missionary attitude has been retained till now. Conversion to christianity is thought to be the same as becoming "civilized" and looking down upon traditional beliefs and practices in favour of western ones.

This missionary trend of thought has over time, in the period between 1912 and 1980's, attracted varied responses from among Abagusii, which have often occurred concomitantly.

The earliest, and, first response took a form of a cultural protest. In 1914, on the eve of the first world war, the Gusii attacked and demolished the first outpost mission erections at Nyanchwa and Nyabururu. At the same time they organized themselves into the cult of Mumboism, which defied anything western.

The second form of response is non-compliance with the teachings of S.D.A. christianity. This response is typical of Mumboism except that it is not organized as such. It is 'a response of the general Gusii Community as distinguished from S.D.A. church members. The people who constitute it have over-time seen the S.D.A. church as an agent of western civilization with its alienating influences. They have deliberately chosen to do the opposite of S.D.A. church teachings.

The third form of response is double-standard behaviour. It

characterizes a greater majority of Abagusii S.D.A. adherents. This group has found it difficult to either reject or accept decisively a christianity that advocates the abandonment of traditional values and beliefs. Subsequently, they have remained consciously and unconsciously attached to traditional values and beliefs while professing S.D.A. christianity. This is an estranged group with regard to the S.D.A. church and tradition. they are neither perfectly S.D.A. christians nor traditionalists.

The fourth, and, last form of response is acceptance. This response has been there, especially after 1920, and can be seen at various levels. First it is constituted by a group which tend to, implicitly and explicitly think that, it is possible to accept the values of S.D.A. christianity, without necessarily relinquishing traditional ones as the church expects.

The second level of this response is constituted by a separatist movement, Ime Y'Omwana, within the S.D.A. church. the movement neither recognizes western values nor African ones. Naturally, however, the movement finds expression within the Abagusii world-view and it constitutes an acceptance of christianity within the Gusii cultural context.

This diversity of Gusii response to S.D.A. christianity would have been averted had the S.D.A. missionaries approached them (Gusii) with understanding. This is in view of the fact that their

responses were, and, are unfavourable to S.D.A. missionaries' intentions of converting Abagusii.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is based on a research done in Kisii District in the period between 1987 and 1989. Its theme is how Abagusii have continued to respond to S.D.A. missionary christianity. The study is divided into six chapters.

Chapter one, is the description of the scope of the study. Among other things, the problem is defined, Research Hypotheses, and theory behind the study stated.

Chapters two and three describe the background within which Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity is treated. Herein, a wide range of Abagusii traditional religious concepts are discussed as they constituted deep rooted experiences for the entire community. Traditional practices and related beliefs such as witchcraft, initiation, death are discussed within Abagusii traditional world-view. Discussed also, especially in Chapter three, are some aspects of Abagusii traditional conceptions of man, God and the universe. these practices, beliefs and conceptions have a deep socio-psychological and religious impact on the life of Gusii people such that they continue to determine their response to S.D.A. christianity.

Chapter four, discusses the historical and theological background of S.D.A. christianity in the U.S.A. in the 19th century before

coming into contact with the Gusii people. It also delineates the nature of early contacts, and particularly the S.D.A. missionary assumptions and Abagusii responses.

Chapters five and six deal specifically with the theme of Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity at the time of the study. They analyse, among other aspects, the attitudes of Abagusii to the S.D.A. Church, the persistent attachment to traditional inclinations, and the nature of hope fulfilled in these inclinations as against the christian hope.

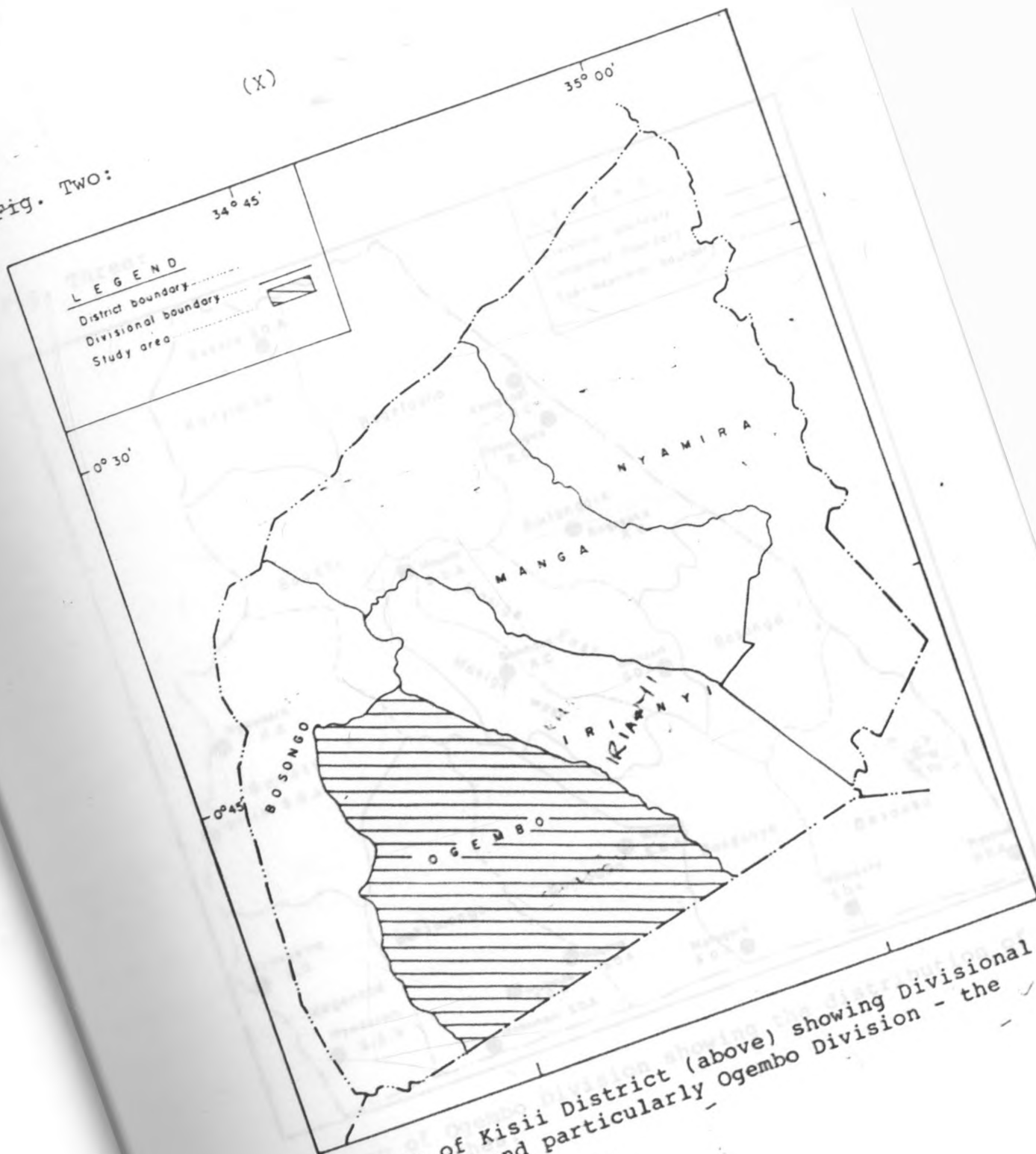
A major theme of response is also described in chapter six. It discusses a movement out of the S.D.A. Church in Gusii which is a manifestation of internal socio-psychological and spiritual dissatisfaction. The last part of this study is comprised of the conclusion, and recommendation for further research.

Fig. One:



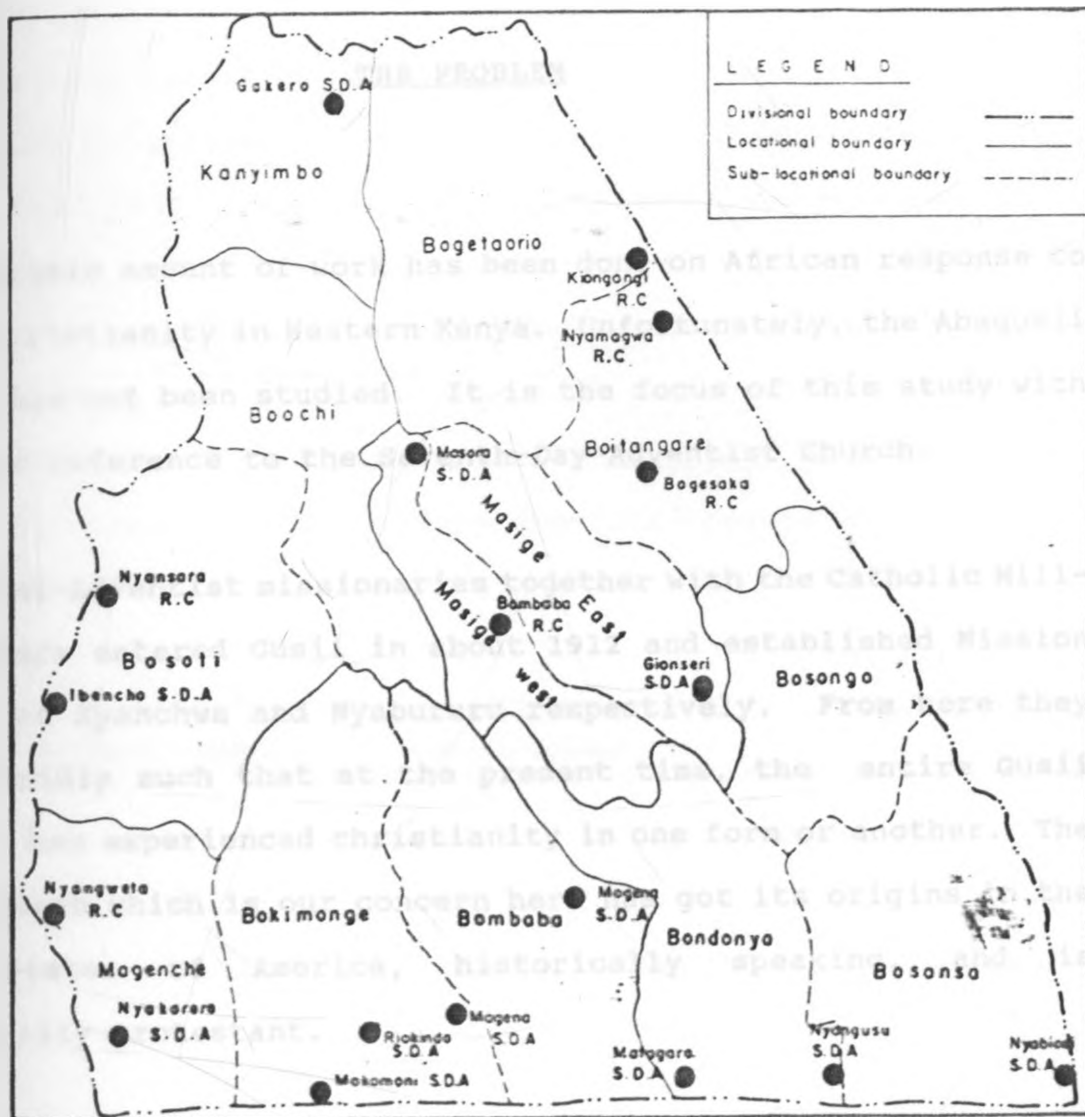
The map of Kenya (above) showing the location of Kisii District.

Fig. Two:



The map of Kisii District (above) showing Divisional boundaries and particularly Ogembo Division - the study area.

Fig. Three:



The map of Ogembo Division showing the distribution of S.D.A. churches.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDYTHE PROBLEMa.

A considerable amount of work has been done on African response to western christianity in Western Kenya. Unfortunately, the Abagusii response has not been studied. It is the focus of this study with particular reference to the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church.

Seventh-Day-Adventist missionaries together with the Catholic Mill-Hill fathers entered Gusii in about 1912 and established Mission stations at Nyanchwa and Nyabururu respectively. From here they spread rapidly such that at the present time, the entire Gusii Community has experienced christianity in one form or another. The S.D.A. Church which is our concern here has got its origins in the United States of America, historically speaking, and is theologically protestant.

While evangelizing and converting the Gusii people, the S.D.A. missionaries assumed that they had brought Abagusii a civilized religion. Abagusii cultural and religious values were overlooked and considered "heathen" and evil in the face of the new religion.

The missionaries failed to see that the same values they considered heathenish were so important that they shaped Abagusii world-view. An attitude of converting Abagusii from heathenism to a civilized religion was assumed by the missionaries.

This missionary attitude amounted to an imposition of a new cultural and religious system which required Abagusii to abandon all the values that were previously cherished. They were not given time to decide on what to accept or reject from the new faith and neither were they allowed to interpret it within their cultural milieu. As a result, Abagusii accepted and still belong to the christian religion superficially, while they are deeply attached to the traditional religious values cherished before the coming of christianity.

The second result is that the Gusii have found it difficult to embrace and be fully intergrated into a christian faith which alienates them from their cultural and religious realities.

In summary, the problem to be investigated by the present study is stated in two ways below.

First is the fact that a few studies dealing with African response to western christianity in Kenya and in particular its western region have concentrated on schismatic movements. One example of such studies is that by F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot, A place to

feel at Home¹. There has not been much research on established mission churches regarding response. M.N.S. Getui's study, "The Historical Establishment and Activities of the S.D.A. church among Abagusii of Western Kenya" is historical and did not deal with response². It infact told the story of Missionary Movements and achievements implicating Abagusii simply as recipients. The present Study lays emphasis on Abagusii phenomenon - their response.

Secondly, most studies on African response to western christianity in western Kenya have been done among the Luo³ and Luyia communities. Abagusii response has not been studied and it is the concern of the present study. This is an omission which may lead to wild assumptions, for example that Abagusii were christianized without much difficulty and possibly that Abagusii did not have a deep rooted world-view. It is partly the purpose of this study to unearth these facts.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

b

Any study is justified by its objectives. Five reasons listed below justify the present study. First, it is concerned with Abagusii response to western christianity which has not been researched. Most of the studies dealing with Abagusii in relation to christianity have concentrated on the history and achievements of Christian Missionaries with minimal attention to Abagusii responses⁴.

Secondly, studies on African response to western christianity in Kenya have given much attention to schismatic movements in the Roman Catholic church⁴ and certain protestant churches. The aim of the present study is to analyse African and, in particular Abagusii response to christianity within the Seventh-Day-Adventist Church to show how they have appropriated the new faith.

Thirdly, the present study is primarily dealing with the problem of converting Africans from a well established cultural and religious system into a new way of life that is totally new and alien.

Fourth, it is partly the aim of the present study to contribute to the current academic concern for evolving an African Christian Theology.

Fifth and last, this study will illuminate the African Conception of the value of religion in daily life and how it contrasts with that of western christian missionaries.

c

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The major hypothesis to be tested by the present study was that missionary christianity among Abagusii Seventh-Day-Adventists is still superficial. It had three aspects as stated below:

1. Despite a wide exposure to christianity, a large section of Abagusii have not yet embraced the new faith
2. A large section of Abagusii have a divided loyalty, with regard to the S.D.A. christian faith being also attached to traditional beliefs.
3. Christ's message has not been well presented to Abagusii in categories that meet the situations within which they exist or live.

These aspects were tested in various ways. The first one was tested by discerning the level of attachment and participation of S.D.A. christians in traditional religious beliefs and practices in the light of christianity.

The second one was tested by exploring the attitude of the S.D.A. members to the church and its teachings, the levels of motivation (which can be known through the private lives of the individuals) and interests.

The third aspect which is the pivot of christian life was tested in various ways. First it was important to know where the individual placed Jesus Christ in his programme of daily life, and especially how individual christians understood his person. For example, a simple question could be asked. How important is Jesus to you as a christian? The nature of response here was taken to be important. Second is the frequency of Bible reading in the individual christian's daily life. This helped us to interpret the levels of commitment to the christian life among the church members.

THEORY

d.

At the background of this study is the Freudian theory of 'Transference' which presupposes a divided psyche in an individual when confronted by new experiences or situations. It presupposes the existence of "depth" and "surface" aspects of total psychic life of the person⁵. Within the depth of human psyche are forces or energies which are often transferred or carried over into the conscious or surface life of the individual.

The concept of transference also refers to how various states of mind develop or how one state of mind develops out of another. States of mind are seen as deriving from the impact of a present situation on a mind already patterned by previous experiences each of which has had its impact that has left some "residue"⁶. (The impact of earlier experiences is seen as having equipped the mind with residues, expectations or fantasies that affect subsequent experiences in important ways.

Mission christianity in Africa did not fall in a religious vacuum. It found Africans well and deeply equipped with the cultural and religious experiences which shaped their world-view. The point to be emphasized here is that for Abagusii, mission christianity was not the first but the second religious experience to which they were exposed and still continue to be. The African and the christian world-views contrast so much that placide Tempels says.

The gulf dividing Africans and Whites will remain and widen so long as we do not meet them in the wholesome aspirations on their own cosmology⁷.

The African world-view has made it difficult for christianity to penetrate fully and shape the African personalities because it is deeply rooted as the first experience prior to christianity. The S.D.A. missionaries overlooked this fact when they went about converting Abagusii into christianity. In essence, the missionaries ignored the previous Abagusii cultural and religious experiences. This made, and still makes christianity among Abagusii either superficial, alien or both. The S.D.A. missionaries failed to penetrate the depths of Gusii personalities and in the words of Fr. P. Tempels⁸. They did not enter into "spiritual contacts" with them or make themselves "intelligible".

When converting the Gusii to christianity, the S.D.A. missionaries not only ignored the latter's cultural and religious experiences but also branded such experiences "heathenish" and damnable. However, Abagusii did not stop holding their previous experiences as the missionaries would have expected. They were simply repressed or suppressed to the unconscious while christianity and its cherished western culture occupied the conscious part of Abagusii. It is within this understanding that Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity is analysed and described in this work. In the traditional world-view, and Africa in particular, all life

is religious for the sacred presence is immediate. In the words of A. Vergote, "It involves an awareness of the world as a cypher of God, the divine"⁹. This was the Abagusii and African religious situation in general prior to the introduction of western christianity. The divine presence was felt and not thought. All life was religious with rare secularism. Regarding this, J.S. Mbiti says, "Africans are notoriously religious for religion permeates into all departments of life so fully that it is not possible to isolate it"¹⁰.

African converts in mission churches have found difficulties in reconciling the previous religious experiences with the requirements of the new faith. This in effect makes them appear psychologically divided regarding christian practices. In their christian worship their whole personality is hardly involved. It is a struggle in which one part is devoted to christian worship (the worship of the christian God as understood) and the other devoted to the traditional worship (the worship of the African God as understood"¹¹. This is the psychological dilemma that is characteristic of Abagusii African Christians.

Two categories suggested by G.W. Allport to denote two types of religious people fits well into the description of Abagusii African christian converts. One is the intrinsic genuine christian person who applies religion to every aspect of his life. Second is the extrinsic religious person who is religious by appearance only"¹².

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

e.

The location of the field of the study was Kisii District. The field study lasted between November 1988 and February 1989.

The first two weeks of November were spent on surveying the potential areas of study and particularly where S.D.A. had relatively taken deeper roots. After engaging three research assistants, various places were visited to identify the S.D.A. adherents and where they lived. They were visited for short interviews - on a sample of questions related to the study. Sengera, Sironga, Kiogoro, Keroka, Ibacho, Nyanchwa and its environs of Kisii town were visited. Out of this effort, three things were realized.

First, the area Kisii District, was too large to cover within the limited time given for the study. Second, the response of the few S.D.A. adherents interviewed all over the District during the survey to a sample of questions administered was found to be typically the same. Third, owing to the poor communication system in rural Kisii District, the endeavour proved to be not only too expensive but also time wasting. The means of transport which are usually "Matatus" to certain places were scarce. Subsequently, and with the approval of the supervisors of this study, Dr. J.N.K. Mugambi, and Dr.C.M. Mwikamba the field of study was narrowed down to Ogembo Division of Kisii District.

Earlier on, during the survey period, questionnaires were distributed to identified S.D.A. adherents with a view to discovering what attitude they had towards the S.D.A. church's teachings on topics encroaching traditional values and beliefs and in particular what they understood to be the meaning of being S.D.A. christians. Later, we discovered that questionnaires were never taken seriously. Some potential respondents simply kept them and forgot, others never bothered to return while others lost them. In the long run, only a few questionnaires were returned, about 30% of what was originally handed out. However, the response indicated on those received was invaluable.

The very valuable tool of the study was neither found in the interviews nor the questionnaires. It was found in the closer observation of the S.D.A. adherents in their natural surrounding, in their unawareness of somebody somewhere watching them, in their suffering and in their interaction with all people in the community. A lot of time during the field research period was spent on interacting closely with Abagusii christian individuals, families and groups, homes, at church services and even in the fields of work when it was possible. A lot of interesting information surfaced itself from here.

Several church services were attended in Ogembo Division and a lot of notes taken relating to punctuality in church service

attendance, the nature of sermons, their contents and aims, the levels of emotional presence among the attendants, and most important, their sexual and age composition. The period gave the author an opportunity to be baptized into church membership and this became an added advantage. The fellow christians became so free with him that he did not have problems in investigating their levels of commitment to the S.D.A. church. It was possible to interview church adherents in groups as they related. The various comments were well noted informally.

Frequent church attendance and acquaintance with individual christians provided the research team with ample opportunities to administer interviews with much ease. They identified themselves with the adherents. Interviews were conducted both informally and formally as the prevailing conditions dictated. Informal interviews were found to be very valuable. The respondents hardly knew that they were being interviewed. So they gave vital information freely which very much benefited the researchers.

Prior to the formal interviews, the respondents were requested to be frank. Most of them showed reasonable co-operation. In most cases each respondent was visited twice. The first visits were aimed at achieving two things. One was for self-identification and personal acquaintance, in case of those who had not met with the research team at any church service, or elsewhere. Second, to request for opportunities when the respondents found themselves

free and ready to respond. Interviews were largely conducted in the homes of the respondents or in appointed places for purposes of privacy.

One thing came out clearly when carrying out the interviews. This was the question of age on the part of respondents. It was promptly realized that young people of below roughly twenty two years of age could not respond effectively. They belonged to church but did not take it seriously. The possible reason we found to account for this behaviour was that, this group of people had not met any challenges in their life which could shape their opinion on matters of religion. On the other hand their world-view is not yet refined.

This did not mean that their response was ingnored. It was considered and it was evident that African values* were obvious regardless of what the church taught. Most of those who responded effectively were above twenty-two years of age and were married people leading semi- or independent lives, while others were ordinary church adherents, others played small leadership roles in the church. Furthermore it was discovered that church leaders and particularly pastors required slightly different interviews. The questions related to the religious behaviour elements of the flock.

From the pastors, we sought to know the levels of religious commitment among their flock, the problems they faced daily, what

weakened their faith and finally threw them out of the church, the kind of sins they confessed at any time and so on.

In total, one hundred and twenty S.D.A. lay christians and leaders were interviewed and thirty-five questionnaires recovered bringing a total of one hundred and fifty-five respondents in all.

Most of the time, about three quarters, allocated to this study was spent on reading books, papers and magazines at the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi, Kenya National Archives and some material provided at S.D.A. Central Church, Maxwell. The study took two years to complete between September 1987 and October 1989.

A few problems were encountered during the research period in the field. S.D.A. christian population in rural Kisii is not living in any known specific areas - where they could be contacted easily. They live scattered among non-christian believers. This made it difficult to contact most of them for interview. For some time it was difficult to decide on the approach.

Secondly, meeting potential respondents either in their families where they lived scattered did not mean that they were ready to respond. They found themselves committed to small pieces of work which did not seem to get finished. They showed impatience when interviews took long. Some forgot appointments made especially if

it was made a few weeks earlier prior to the interview. The exercise however ended smoothly.

f.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A considerable amount of work has been done on African response to western christianity. Unfortunately, very few of these touch on Abagusii and in particular, their response to Seventh-Day-Adventist christianity. S.N. Bogonko's thesis¹⁶ "Christian Missionary education and its impact on the Abagusii of Western Kenya 1909 - 1963" deals with christianity in Gusii generally, both Catholic and Protestant and particularly their educational impact on Abagusii social cultural systems of life. The study gives little emphasis on the Seventh-Day-Adventist approaches and Abagusii responses. These responses need be analysed in the light of Abagusii world-view.

G.N. Amayo's thesis¹⁷ "A History of Adventist Christian Education in Kenya 1906 - 1963 illustrated in the light of its impact on the African social, economic, religious and political development, has covered the role for the S.D.A. church in the development of education in Kenya. It did not deal with Abagusii response to that new faith.

M.S.N. Getui's thesis¹⁸. "The Establishment and History of the activities of the S.D.A. church among Abagusii of Western Kenya

1912 - 1985", analyses the influence of the S.D.A. church on the life of the Gusii and in particular their cultural practices to do with namely, initiation, marriage, and death. The study observes that Abagusii have often expressed dissatisfaction and discontentment with some S.D.A. doctrines and policies.

Another study by R.A. Levine and B. Levine¹⁹;

Nyansongo, a Gusii community in Kenya, comments on early Abagusii response to western christianity. They ignored S.D.A. church instructions against cultural practices such as drinking habits, sacrifices, hiring sorcery, and marrying many wives although they accepted the christian religion. Abagusii responded slowly to the new faith (christianity) because religion was not a matter of daily concern. This study is more anthropological and covers many other areas of Gusii community life.

W.R. Ochieng also briefly describes the early encounter between Abagusii and S.D.A. missionaries held a contemptuous attitude toward the Gusii customs and traditions. They considered them heathen and anti-God²⁰. This study lays emphasis on the history of Gusii Community."

More general studies on African response to western christianity need be cited as well. F.B. Welbourn, East African Christian²¹ comments that the western christian missionaries assumed that they represented the highest civilization and no civilization existed

in Africa. The result is that christianity has remained a foreign religion and irrelevant to the African situation. From Europe, Africa received a divided church and have subsequently believed in sects and not in christ the head of the church.

In his study, "Some perspectives of Christianity in the context of Modern Missionary enterprise" J.N.K. Mugambi observes that the 19th and 20th century Missionary Movement confused the christian message with western civilization²². Africans were made to abandon their cultural heritage as a pre-condition of conversion to christianity. This became difficult for Africans. While they accepted the basic christian teachings, they did not necessarily abandon their ideas and values²³. These values and ideas continue to be part of the religious life in Africa south of the Sahara.

T.O. Ranger says that Africans in Tanzania founded their own churches because mission christianity failed to accommodate their customs and traditions²⁴. In their own churches, the Africans could freely hold their values (customs and traditions) together with the christian faith.

The attitude the western missionaries assumed in Africa influenced African response to christianity. In a sociological study, E. Muga says that the missionaries believed in their cultural and religious superiority which they wanted Africans to absorb unquestionably. Subsequently they enjoyed a higher social status with the colonial

officials, introduced their values to the Africans and preached christian brotherhood and equality. Unfortunately, however, the same missionaries never gave Africans opportunities to be equal with them²⁵. In response, Africans resorted to other means to achieve that equality leading to the founding of separatist church movements which exist in Africa. This study lacks in specificity.

J. Mbula's thesis, "The Penetration of christianity in Akamba family" concludes that it has been a slow penetration. The reason is that the missionaries used methods which contrasted with Akamba cultural values and beliefs²⁶. The Akamba responded either by founding their own churches for example the African brotherhood church or by withdrawing from the church while still professing christianity.

More studies on African response to Christianity have been done by J.S. Mbiti. He says that mission christianity has failed to penetrate African religiosity²⁷. Consequently, Africans have formed independent church movements in attempts to make christianity both practical and meaningful to them. In a study, New Testament Eschatology in an African background²⁸ Mbiti blames the christian missionaries for not only distorting the New Testament concept of Eschatology but also for not interpreting it within the African concept of time. The missionaries gave it only a futuristic interpretation which contrasted with the African concept of time. This distortion has the consequence of alienating the Africans from a real Christian life which must be lived here

and now.

In another book, Bible and Theology in African Christianity²⁹ Mbiti concludes that 'Christianity made a shallow penetration in converting the whole African man with all his historical-cultural roots, social dimensions, self-consciousness and expectations²⁹. These are very valuable studies in the light of the present.

S.G. Williamson has blamed the western christian missionaries for the response the Africans have made towards christianity. In his book, Akan Religion and the Christian Faith³⁰. He observes that the missionaries were bent on drawing converts away from traditional life toward what they thought was a civilized way of expressing the christian faith. The Akan became a christian by craving to the new order instead of working out their own salvation within their own traditional milieu.

F.B. Wellbourn and B.A. Ogot in a study of two independent churches in Kenya, in a book, A place to feel at Home, conclude that the Catholic and Protestant forms of christianity have meant separating Africans from the community and put them on the side of Europeans evidenced by taking up European names, joining mission churches, and receiving literally education³¹. These forms of christianity made no attempt to incorporate any element of African culture into its scheme. Subsequently, it failed to convert and has only been able to present to them nothing less than its western image.

Africans resorted to the formation of independent churches so that they could provide for themselves places to feel at home. Their customs and traditions could be accommodated.

J. Pobee, Toward an African Theology³² says that there is need to contextualise the universal good news of Jesus Christ in Africa. Independent church movements are attempts to achieve this end. Furthermore he raises the question of the need to use African symbolism in the interpretation of christianity in Africa so as to rid the church of what he identifies as a north Atlantic captivity.

S.G. Kibicho has concluded that despite the much pressure exerted on them by western christian missionaries, the Kikuyu never abandoned their traditional and cultural conceptions of God and have continued to do so although in different ways³³.

9. AREA COVERED BY THE STUDY-GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.

As noted earlier, the area covered by the study was Ogembo Division of Kisii District - and not the whole District as conceived earlier. It was hoped that the located area would be representative of the whole District. Although the whole District had been surveyed earlier it was important that emphasis be laid on a Division in order to make the study more effective.

According to the last National census, 1979, Ogembo Division had

a total population of 93,772³⁴. Out of these, 11,108 were S.D.A. adherents (at the time of the study) according to church statistics³⁵. Others belong to the Catholic church which has a long serving station at Sengera, a few to the church of God and the rest to the Abagusii traditional Religion. We need to note that Abagusii traditional religion or African traditional religion is not another faith to which people belong consciously in the sense of christianity. It is simply at the background. Those who do not belong to either of the new faiths (christian churches) have room to respect, participate and hold traditional religious values deliberately. All these groups of people, Seventh-Day-Adventist, Catholics, Church of God, and traditional believers live together in rural villages, interact so frequently at funerals, weddings, initiation and other communal functions, to use the words of Priscilla Were³⁶.

Ogembo Division lies to the south western part of Kisii District bordering with Narok District. Geographically the area is mostly hilly with a few ridges rising between 1500 and 2350 metres above sea level³⁷. There are a few permanent rivers and streams draining the area - the most important among them being rivers Kuja and Mugunga. Most of the soils are loamy especially on the hilly places while the low lying areas have clay soils. Both soils are put on some form of land use.

Agricultural land use is the most important economic activity in

Ogembo Division. The peasant farmers who own most of the land here grow a series of crops ranging from traditional ones such as Wimbi, sorghum, Sweet potatoes - to Irish potatoes, beans, coffee, tea, bananas, sugarcane, maize and pyrethrum. All these are largely grown on subsistence basis. The peasants also keep animals of traditional breed which include dogs, cats, goats, sheep, cows and donkeys. These animals provide security in the villages, milk, meat and also some form of transport particularly donkeys.

These economic activities rely on a good and reliable supply of rainfall of relief nature. Its distribution ensures an evergreen vegetable cover. However, most of the natural vegetation in Ogembo Division has been cut down for agricultural purposes and it is rapidly being replaced by crops and exotic trees.

Ogembo Division is largely rural and poor in communication network. Telephone communication is virtually absent. Most of its roads are seasonal. This is roughly the picture of the area that was covered by this study.

b. STUDY LIMITATIONS

In order to see sense in the sample of the population taken for study, the organization of the S.D.A. church in Gusii and how it affects Ogembo division need be known. According to the S.D.A. church administration, Kisii District is divided into 5 stations,

82 Districts, 290 churches, 442 sabbath schools and 68,846 adherents (as by the records of 1985³⁸

Ogembo Division alone has got 1 S.D.A. station, 5 Districts, 30 churches and 11,108 adherents. There is therefore 1 station director manning the station, five pastors for the 5 Districts and a series of church elders running local churches³⁹.

It is within this population that a sample size was selected. Random interviews proved ineffective. There had to be limitations relating to age, period of adherence to the S.D.A. church, location of within the S.D.A. administrative structure and position or role played in the church. First we identified 24 respondents in each of the 5 S.D.A. administrative districts. They had to be above 22 years of age and most of them were married. Sex composition did not matter as long as one was an S.D.A. adherent.

In each District, the 24th respondent was the District pastor whose response was found to be invaluable. In total, 120 people were interviewed and since there were no serious divergent views, they could be logically taken to represent those of any population. Note that in each respondent the capacity to respond was given considerable valuation since we discovered that not all people were capable of responding. Not even the standard of education mattered because the response of both the educated and the uneducated seemed to add weight to our object.

As said earlier, the same facts sought by the interviews were illuminated through close observation of hundreds of S.D.A. Christians during church services, in their daily life outside the church through continued interaction and working together when opportunities arose. This helped to confirm even more the hypothesis of the study.

DEFINITIONS

To avoid unnecessary perplexities on readers of this work, the definitions of a few employed terminologies is vital here.

First is "Abagusii world-view". This term will be used to refer to Abagusii mentalities, conceptions, religious and cultural behaviours or philosophy before coming into contact with foreign influences and in particular, European or American or western in general. This is what chapter two and three of this study will illuminate. The other terminology is "missionary christianity". This will be used to denote the 19th and 20th century missionary enterprises in Africa and the kind of christianity they introduced. It will therefore be used interchangeably with western christian missionaries, mission christianity and western christianity.

The term religion should also be defined here. Since a complete and wholesome definition of religion is impossible, an operational one will be adopted for this study. "Religion is the serious and

social attitude of individuals or communities toward the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies⁴⁰.

j. PRESENTATION

Regarding the presentation of this study, one thing need be noted - namely, it is dealing with a present reality employing the psychological method. Basically therefore, its presentation is a descriptive analysis of the collected data with a few statistics wherever necessary - or as the particular topic may require.

The psychological analysis requires maximum objectivity. This is the way this study has been presented - both from within and without. Subjectivity, if there is at all, is an acceptable weakness on the part of the author, who is a member of the group that was selected for study. This is one of the problems that often faced social scientists the world-over. Largely however, the work is presented as objectively as it was possible.

Language is also important. Owing to the object of the study, the presentation is in "present tense". Past tense expressions are employed when dealing with a phenomenon that is no longer present, let us say a tradition. Whenever past tense expressions are employed, it means therefore that the fact referred to is no longer observed.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

This piece of work taking on a psychological approach is meant to analyse Abagusii response to mission christianity within the S.D.A. church. It is assumed that at the background of this response is Abagusii traditional religion or simply the traditional Abagusii world-view. The study comprises six chapters. Chapter one has been covered by the introduction and we can now go through the rest briefly.

Chapter two looks at the social, psychological and religious factors determining Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity. Here, the historical evolution of the Gusii people is discussed as a factor. Other factors discussed include Abagusii world-view and religious beliefs, life and ceremony in the traditional community, and lastly mystical beliefs and practices such as magic, witchcraft and sorcery.

Chapter three is a continuation of chapter two. It discusses three basic concepts underlying Abagusii Religiosity namely the conception of man, the universe and God. These very much influences Abagusii response to western S.D.A. christianity. They constitute the psychological foundations of Abagusii being.

Chapter four introduces the S.D.A. phenomenon. It traces its

historical and theological background and finally its coming into Gusii and the latter's responses. This chapter highlights some of the basic S.D.A. missionary assumptions and errors made during approaches to convert Abagusii. The achievement of unintended consequences is noted.

Chapter five deals with aspects of Abagusii response to western S.D.A. christianity. Some aspects of the response are analysed therein under three subheadings namely attitude to the S.D.A. church, attachment to traditional beliefs and practices, christian hope and salvation.

This theme of response is continued to the sixth chapter which analyses what has been identified as a positive response. A schismatic movement is the subject of this chapter. It is an underground movement but has had a deep felt impact upon the western S.D.A. church in Gusii. This is the last chapter of this study. Last is the conclusion of the study and recommendations for further studies. A new approach has been suggested.

FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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4. See A HASTINGS, A history of African Christianity (Cambridge university Press, 1979). See also, Schism and Renewal An analysis of six thousand Religious movements in Africa. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969) P. 69.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS

FACTORS DETERMINING ABAGUSII RESPONSETO S.D.A. CHRISTIANITY

The purpose of this chapter is to trace briefly the historical evolution of Abagusii as a community with particular emphasis on historical circumstances which predisposed them to certain temperamental states on which their world-view is based. It will also give a social and psychological analysis of the emergency and development of certain religious beliefs and practices which characterize this world-view. Ideas to do with ancestors, God and the universe will be discussed here and will be continued in the next chapter. Lastly, this chapter will also discuss psychological aspects of mystical practices among the Abagusii.

a. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF GUSII COMMUNITY

For the historical evolution of Abagusii as a community, I shall largely rely on W.R. Ochieng who has made intensive studies and published a book on Abagusii pre-colonial history¹. According to this study, the Gusii pre-colonial history was characterized by a series of migrations and settlements. Currently, Abagusii occupy the cool fertile region of south-western Kenya bordering with non-Bantu speaking communities namely the Nilotic "Luo" to the west and north-western frontier, the Maasai to the south and south-west and

the "Kipsigis" to the east and north-east.

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Abagusii, who are linguistically designated as Bantu trace their origins to a place called Misiri, somewhere to the north of Mt. Elgon. Here they were one with the Ganda, the Soga, the Kikuyu, the Meru, the Embu and the Kamba of Central Kenya and the Baragoli and the Bukusu of western Kenya and finally the Abakuria of South Nyanza.

The entire Gusii community claim to be descendants of Mogusii, a person after whom it takes its name. Mogusii's father was osogo, son of Rubiaka, son of Kintu (variously called Mundu or Wantu, or Muntu) who led the migration from Misiri to Mt. Elgon region where they camped for about two generations before finally dispersing. Among other reasons which led to the migration from Misiri included overcrowding, epidemics and drought.

In about 1500, Abagusii dispersed from Mt. Elgon together with the Kuria, the Suba and the Lagoli moved and settled at Goye in Yimbo Kadimo Location of present day Siaya District in Nyanza Province. They erected a settlement here which stretched across Ulima Ulowa, Sare to Got Ramogi. The period of their stay here is not exactly known but it is estimated at two generations. Later, the Luo section of Jok-Jok moved into the area and posed a tremendous security risk to the Bantu tribes who had settled earlier and those yet to come.

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The intensified insecurity posed by the Luo raids was a major reason behind migration from this region. The Luos were bent on making small raids against Bantu tribes aimed at getting illicit cattle to add on to their cattle wealth. Subsequently, Abagusii led by Mogusii crossed river Yala and erected their settlement along the shores of Lake Gangu in Alego. Here again they did not stay long before they were attacked by Luo migrants from the direction of Ramogi. Still feeling insecure, Abagusii and the Lagoli moved and settled at Kisumu. This is where Mogusii and Nyakomogendi, his mother, are believed to have died.

Kisumu was the most cruel of the places Abagusii settled during their migrations. It was both very hot and over crowded. To express this condition, Abagusii described it by the name Ekemunto (a place of hotness and congestion). To commemorate their settlement and suffering at Kisumu, children who were born then were named Kemunto². This is a very common name in Gusii community and its historical significance notable. Kisumu's conditions of survival were themselves enough to set the Gusii moving. Apart from its hotness and congestion, the Luo and Luyia clusters flew in and the former intensified cattle raids against the Gusii making them feel more insecure. There was also increased famine resulting in diseases and deaths not only of human beings but animals as well. The next target of their settlement was Kano Plains.

It is important however to note that, at Kisumo, a few changes took place among Abagusii which was a further step in their evolution as a community. This came after the death of Mogusii, their father and leader up to Kisumo. The concept of Sub-clan leaders emerged who led small bands into various directions out of Kisumo in search of food and new settlements.

Secondly, because of the natural uncertainties and insecurity posed by Luo cattle raids, there evolved the need to oversee and foretell the future. This probably led to the evolution of seers and diviners. The former to foretell the future in terms of the security of the next direction and spot of settlement and the latter to tell the will of the ancestors who were the invisible guardians of the community. The overseers foretold the advances of the enemy and prescribed the safe means of escape by deciding the right direction³. After Kisumo, Abagusii moved to settle at Kano plains where they stayed for a period estimated at two generations.

W.R. Ochieng says that into Kano, Abagusii were led by Kimanyi who took over from Mogusii. People like Oibabe, Mochorwa, Mobassi and Mogusero had began to take shape in Gusii historical horizons. These people are regarded in Gusii community, as brave warriors and leaders but also as founders of sub-tribal groups as they currently are in Gusii.

Kano was characterized by among other things adequate water and grass for animals, plenty of game for hunting and some seemingly good security. Because of these reasons, Abagusii stayed there long enough which enabled them to evolve as a community. Ochieng estimates their stay here at five to seven generations, 1640 and 1755 A.D. They settled at the Lake shore from Dunga to Nduru and spread to the interior along streams. Their farthest inland settlement was at present day Kibigori. Their population was thin and so they lived a scattered life in the vast Kano parklands in family units comprising of a man, his wife and their children. They had very little contact except during emergencies. One important aspect of Abagusii evolution as a community at Kano was the emergence of the clan concept resulting from the transformation of individual family units into small but distinct groups. Secondly, the small groups which had migrated from Kisumu under recognized leaders evolved into a number of corporate clans later developing into sub-tribes headed by clan elders, but regarding themselves as separate clans or corporate groups around them.

Abagusii had not yet evolved complex political structures; since they were simply scattered family units. The day to day leadership and authority was generally vested in the hands of family heads. However, when clans drew together during emergencies, general leadership responsibility was shifted to the senior member of the leading family. Such a member was believed to be closer to the ancestors.

Increased population led to the need for differentiation and identification between clans and lineages. This led to the emergence of the totem concept to give each clan exogamy and a sense of kinship. Clan members were endowed with a duty to help protect each other as sisters and brothers. They could not shed each other's blood and they could not inter-marry for this could weaken the bonds between them⁴. The Gusii Clans adopted the names of various totems (animals) with which they identified themselves. These totems should not be confused with the names of the ancestral beings who were the founders of the clans⁵.

The names of totems adopted by the various Gusii clans are as follows. Abagirango and Abagichorwa adopted Enqo (Leopard) as their totem, Ababasi took up Enchage (Zebra), Abasweta, Abanyaribari, Abagetutu and Abamachoge took up Engoge (Baboon), Abanchari adopted Encubo (Hippo). The totems played social-religious and psychological roles in the relationships between members and clans. Some names of people or members of each clan attach them not only to their clan but to their totem as well. This explains why some names in Gusii are only found in certain clans.

The role of totems in the relationships between clans and among clan members is made clear by the definition of a totem. It is a class of objects which primitive societies regarded with

superstitious respect believing that there exists between individual members of their society an intimate obligatory and altogether special relationship⁶. The members of a clan that revere a totem believe themselves to be of same blood, descended from a common ancestor, and bound together by a common responsibility for each other and are united by a common faith in the totem. Herein is the Abagusii sense of community which is deeply psychological and religious.

Although the sense of community had evolved to greater heights during their stay at Kano, Abagusii still had to migrate. Among other reasons prompting their migration from here included boredom. They had been used to migrations hence staying in one place for so long became difficult. There was, however, a more pressing reason. The Luo flew in and started raiding the Gusii for their animals while the Nandi, who were nearby started doing the same. Faced by this cruel situation, Abagusii moved and settled at Kabianga near the present day Kericho.

Kabianga by all means proved very unfavourable for their stay. It was even cruel than the previous settlements. It promoted among Abagusii feelings of insecurity and helplessness. They were subjected to a series of diseases which took a great toll of their children and livestock. They found themselves exposed to forces of devastation and extinction. Famine struck in and took many human lives following the death of animals and the failure of crops

resulting from drought. The universe of existence appeared cruel, uncertain and unpredictable.

Not only did Abagusii face these natural calamities but also were subjected to rapid Maasai and Kipsigis cattle raids. They made attempts to improve their security by constructing Chiburi (plural, eburi-singular) or kraals to surround their homes. In fact this marked the beginning of Ebisarate (Kraals)⁷ in the Gusii community which lasted up to and shortly after the coming of Europeans and Americans into Gusii. These institutions were meant to bring people together along with their animals so that they could be able to defend themselves against the enemy. Note that in some places within the Gusii community, the Ebisarate system lasted up to late 1970's when there was increased and forceful Maasai and Kipsigis cattle thefts and inter-tribal wars.

The absence of Ebisarate systems in Gusii presently could be explained by reasons among others - improved relations with the Maasai and Kipsigis neighbours, improved government security, increased population and the subsequent need for more land for cultivation, the schooling of the young boys who would be warriors and last but not least, the intervention of western intruders.

The unresolved security situation led to magical-religious practices among Abagusii. In the first place, they made attempts to stop Maasai and Kipsigis raids by performing some magical rite

in which Esasi (a dry cow-dung) was burnt together with Rirongo (a drug made from several ingredients including soil, grass, shoot etc) and some dry leaves from a specific natural tree (Omosabakwa) that had never been tampered with by man⁸. These things were burnt in an open field where animals grazed so that smoke flew to the direction of the enemy. This was believed to make the enemy mentally numb and incapable of raiding them (Gokireka - noun, Kobakireka - verb). If they came to raid, they could behave foolishly so that they were killed. The rite was believed to have yielded the desired ends. What Abagusii desired to achieve was peace and harmony.

The magical rites were used in the control of many undesirable situations including natural ones for example hailstones, lightning and the danger posed by wild beasts such as hyenas and leopards. This is partly the historical basis of magical practices among Abagusii.

In Gusii language, Kabianqa means to reject. They used the name therefore to signify their rejection of the place. They then moved to Transmara-Migori region and settled at Nyangaro. Although the Maasai from Kamagambo direction continued to raid them, here Abagusii were determined to fight back and settle permanently. Most of them turned north and settled at Rinani ria Nyagoe (Nyagoe's forest), Manga and Isecha. By early 19th century, the Abagusii had evolved as a community and settled at their present

home although some other clans continued to move and search for places to settle. Very often, members of particular clans, on sensing population increase and scarcity of land moved to Borabu (open land without people) and settled leaving their fellow clan members behind⁹. Places of earlier settlement are referred to as Chache whose opposite is Borabu. Members of the same clans both in Chache and Borabu continue to cherish strong bonds. The remaining parts of this chapter will analyse the practices and beliefs which have their foundation in the Gusii history.

b.

GUSII HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

As a community, Abagusii had evolved complex social, political and economic institutions which are not our concern here. It suffices, however, to point out that all Abagusii cultural and religious practices pointed to past experiences in history. Their world-view is accordingly shaped by past experiences. The knowledge of the past provided the means of interpreting the present and the future. This knowledge was in the custody of the ancestors who were the brave heroes and founders of the tribe. The only people who could have part of it were the elders of the families, lineages, clans and the tribe.

Within the above understanding is found the Abagusii reverence to the ancestors not only as founders of the tribe but also as people who were and continue to be responsible for the existence of the

tribe - Esokoro nero Kera egento (the ancestor is everything).
 Their will was the lifeblood of the clans and the community.

For Abagusii, knowledge constituted the community's traditions as established by the ancestors during their history. It was passed orally, the sources being the elders who not only knew the ancestors personally but had participated in difficult experiences through which the community had undergone. Among other things, the elders had participated in inter-clan and inter-tribal wars, had resolved conflicts and kept peace, had attended tribal rituals and participated in sacrifices to ancestor spirits. These qualified them to be authorities and custodians of the law and traditions of their people¹¹. Therefore the best the youth could know was the origin of his lineage, its heroic founders and his duty to protect and perpetuate the purity of that image.

This no doubt was the kind of education given to the youth at initiation, which itself (initiation) was a symbol of identification with Mogusii ancestry as we shall see later. Marriage understood at this level, was seen as a means of recapturing the lost generations, by perpetuating the lineage clans and the community.

Most important was the emergence of Abagusii religious perceptions of the universe. In their history Abagusii had been predisposed to natural and human threats which put them in a constant feeling

of insecurity. Natural calamities such as the outbreak of epidemics, resulting in the death of their animals and children, famine, hailstones destroying crops, thunderstorms with sudden destruction of life and property all this coupled with pressure from their neighbours who wanted their animals by force, made Abagusii to feel helpless and insecure in the universe. They were caught up in a state of inevitable fear and dependence on forces or powers beyond their control.

In the Abagusii Language, there is the term Chinquru (powers - plur. and enguru - sing.). They perceived a more powerful and one force controlling all others in the universe. This could be the possible origin of the term Engoro which was used to refer to God - who is the controller of the universe and all forces in it. Engoro is a power¹². These two concepts - (the universe and God) will be discussed later in the next chapter.

c. PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF RELIGION AND GUSII WORLD- VIEW

Some psychological theories may help to explain the foundations of Abagusii world-view and Religious belief seen within their history. According to the social learning theory, religious behaviour, beliefs and practices are simply part of the culture and are regularly transmitted from generation to generation¹³. Abagusii had seen the need to preserve and transmit their historical experiences as part of their customs and traditions. In any case, there is

little difference between Abagusii historical experiences and cultural practices. In their myths, emphasis is laid on the beliefs and practices adopted during their period of migration and evolution as a community.

S. Freud suggested the frustration theory as the basis of religious behaviour¹⁴. The frustrations may be caused by either social, political, economical or natural conditions of existence. These frustrations lead to projections of a phantasy father figure in heaven who is the protector. - Nature, which is the source of frustrations is endowed with fatherly characteristics. The father figure is feared yet he is propitiated for protection.

Max Muller suggested that religion reposes upon an experience from which it draws its authority¹⁵. It is based on sensuous experience. It is a system of ideas and practices well founded on reality. The various spectacles which nature offers fulfil all conditions necessary for arousing religious ideas in the mind directly. For the primitive man, nature seems less natural, the greatest surprise, unpredictable and unintelligible. These natural phenomena supplied the impulse to religious thought and language¹⁶.

Religion contributes to giving the primitive man security for he believes that it arms him with extended powers over nature. His rites are in part destined to aid him in imposing his will upon the world. Abagusii magical beliefs and practices such as those to do

with stopping hailstones, lightning and preventing cattle raids may be seen and understood in this light.

Emile Durkheim points out that all religions have the idealistic effect of reassuring men in their struggle with things. This is reflected even in the Bible when it teaches that faith is itself able to move mountains. This is the same as dominating nature. This puts the origin of all religions in feebleness and impotency¹⁷. The cosmic powers such as the sky, the sun, the stars and the moon can be divinized as the greatest cosmic powers.

Threats to normal existence were part of Abagusii historical experiences. These threats contributed to the foundation and interpretation of reality. Anxieties of fear and death were inevitable as part of existential realities¹⁸. Death caused the anxiety of being forgotten, of being separated and isolated from the community. This is the basis of religious practices and beliefs.

In the face of the threat of death, man becomes aware of his finitude, his estrangement, his being a mixture of being and non-being leading to the search for ultimate reality which transcends the power of death¹⁹. For Abagusii, this is where Engoro came in as the supreme being nad creator before whom all other things were creatures.

During their history, Abagusii had devised means of coping with some of these threats to existence which were both ontological and cosmological. Death for example had come to be accepted as an inescapable reality which could not be beaten. Sayings such as makweri makoro (death is age old), Bororo mbwanyene eamate echan bosa igo (it is the bereaved who feel the bitterness of death and the community can only worry). These are some of the words adopted to express despair in the face of death.

However, to compensate for death and give it meaning, marriage and procreation became essential. To contribute children was the greatest blessing to the community. Death no longer was a worry for new ones were born hence the death reincarnated. One who died without contributing children to the community earned the community's curse.

The anxiety of fear was given meaning by the discovery of mysterious forces in the universe on which magical practitioners such as witchcraft and sorcery derived. Diviners and overseers came in to tell the unknown. Diseases were discovered and treated magically.

The heavenly bodies such as the sun, the sky, the moon which escaped ordinary understanding and control were conceived as higher powers beyond the human beings' imagination, hence they were manifestations of the supreme being, Engoro (God) who was conceived

as being responsible for those heavenly bodies themselves, the universe and men. It was to him that Abagusii addressed their prayers through sacrifices and offerings while the ancestors played the middleman position.

R. Lowie has suggested in a theory that, magical practices are based on wish fulfilment by the primitive people²⁰. There was need to accommodate forces such as thunderstorms, wars, epidemics which were dangerous to existence. Wish fulfilment therefore became the basis of religious beliefs and sacrifices such as those to ancestors or to God, prayers, sacred incantations and so forth.

TOTEMS

In section "a" of this chapter, we saw that totems played an important role among Abagusii in their historical evolution. According to R. Smith²¹. Totenism presupposes a likeness in nature, either natural or acquired of men and animals or plants. This idea accordingly is the origin of the sacrificial systems. It is to totemism that humanity owes the principle of communion meal. Abagusii treat animals with reverence. It is the highest present of honouring the supernatural. The shedding of an animal's blood is significant.

R. Durkheim discusses some basic totemistic beliefs which bear a lot of relevance to the present study. One such belief is the

concept of clan²². The individuals who compose the clan consider themselves united by a bond of kinship which is of very special nature. It is not necessarily determined by blood but the mere fact that they have the same name. They think themselves as forming a single family. They recognize such duties as aid, vengeance, mourning, the obligation not to marry among themselves (exogamy), not to injure and so on.

Totem names would also be used to commemorate the acts and performances of ancestor heroes. The ancestor serves as a totem directly. The clan takes its name not from a thing but a mythical being or beings. Mogusii for example is the mythical being after whom Abagusii took up their tribal name. The various sub-clans also took up the names of their founders. Within this context, sub-clan names such as Abamachoge, Abambaba, Abamotoro, came from Omachoge, Ombaba, and Omoturo respectively.

Every member of the clan is invested with a sacred character which is not materially inferior to that in the animal. This personal sacredness is due to the fact that the man believes that while he is a man in the usual sense of the word, he is also an animal or plant of the totemic species²³.

At this point, we can in a way point out that Abagusii world-view and religious beliefs as founded in history were utilitarian in

principle. They served the immediate needs of man in his existence. Their functions were to sustain, and unite members of the community in peace and harmony²⁴. This search for unity is evidenced by the value attached to ancestors, religious ceremonies to extend brotherhood beyond its natural limits for example communion with ancestors.

RELIGION AND UTILITY

Abagusii world-view and religious beliefs were based on their experience of the natural world both in its beneficence and malevolence²⁵. Religious beliefs satisfied needs which would not be satisfied elsewhere for example the need for security, love, self esteem and the created need by the inevitability of death.

The purpose of Abagusii world-view and Religious beliefs would be summed in the words of H. Monteforce

In the face of apparent chaos and frustrations in the world, we want frustration in the world, we want to be able to see that the universe makes sense. We need our focal point and our security without which we are people spinning helplessly and hopelessly through a fearful void²⁶.

In summary, Abagusii world-view and Religious beliefs are rooted in the history and activities of the people in the community. They sustained them through wars, famine, sickness and death and in all concerning life. their function is essentially to restore or

rectify the world order to its original appearance. They are concerned with attempts to recreate and maintain social harmony in the present and recapture some aspects of lost paradise.

c.

LIFE AND CEREMONY

Under this sub-heading, we are going to discuss some three aspects of ceremonial life in the traditional Gusii community namely initiation, marriage and death. These three and many others are uniquely tied to Abagusii history, world-view and Religious beliefs as they have been indicated in section (b) above already.

Among Abagusii, the rites of initiation constitute central values through which individuals are developed and transformed into full members of the community. It is only after these rites that they are charged with social and religious responsibilities. These rites characterize the individual's life right from birth to death. In this section, and for the purpose of this study, we shall deal with one major rite through which the individual goes before marriage. We shall call it initiation - (gochi nyanqi) for purposes of convenience.

For purposes of introduction, it need be noted that, Abagusii linguistically identify some stages of human or individual growth or transformation. Omwana (a child of up to and less than 10 years) Omoisia or Egesagane (uncircumcised young boy or girl),

Omomura or Omoiseke (a boy or a girl ready for marriage). These are also called Abasae. Omosacha or Omokunqu (a married man or woman). Omoqaka or Omonqina (Aged man or woman with children). The last ones are titles of respect and honour. To call one Omonqina or Omoqaka is a great honour. It means one is respectable by virtue of his age, experience and wisdom.

INITIATION

All rites to do with childhood including birth and the naming of children culminated at circumcision or clitoridectomy when the individual was introduced to adulthood. While some of the childhood rites are no longer observed, ogochi nyanqi or gochi iburu (circumcision or clitoridectomy) is still going important. It is our concern here. Envanqi va ogoch iburu (the rite of circumcision for boys or clitoridectomy for girls) in the traditional Gusii society came at the age of between fifteen and twenty²⁷. This rite was and still is a function of the whole community and not an individual affair.

Every young person, boy or girl looked forward to this rite of initiation anxiously. The community prepared them both psychologically and emotionally. A lot of leisure time was spent on teasing and tuning the youth on the significance of the rite of initiation. When the youth cried around after being offended or subjected to some pain by their immediate seniors, they could

simply be scolded, Ekio nakio kegokoreri, naki, ekeru orachi iburu?

(Is that enough to make you cry, what of when you will be going for initiation? At the mention of this, the crying child could bear with the pain of insults and beatings.

Initiation was the gateway to adulthood, manhood and womanhood²⁸. Before it, the individuals coped with despise, abuses, and so on since they knew that they were still young.

The immediate process of preparing the girls and boys for initiation was characterized by temporary seclusion and grouping for relevant tutorials and mock examinations. Those who failed would be excluded or disqualified. The exams took the form of deliberate infliction of pain, being forced to walk long distances in the night, to lie naked in dewing grass and so forth²⁹. This kind of education prepared the individuals to cope with hostility. They made them to be more tolerant to pain. It made them dispel fear.

During the time of preparation, the candidates were tutored on what was expected of them during the period of seclusion (after the surgical operation) and thereafter. They were taught how to relate with one another and with other members of the general community according to their sexes and ages, what kind of communal functions they were free to attend as men and women and what their new roles and responsibilities would be.

It is not the concern of this study to go into so much details regarding the rite of initiation. Suffice it to point out briefly its religious significance and implication for the Gusii community. It was a deeply rooted social, religious and psychological function with rules and taboos whose contravention could fetch the initiates misfortunes in their later life. For example, if the initiates were seen by people before they were formerly freed from the seclusion houses, they were believed to become impotent or barren or suffer bad health.

More important is the role seclusion played. It signified withdrawal from families to live lonely lives during which instructions of rejoining the community were given. The period prepared the individuals for rebirth. They became new persons charged with new rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities. It was a period of transformation into adulthood from childhood³⁰.

The rite of passage was a ritualistic way of preparing individuals for matrimony. It was a ritual qualification for matrimony³¹. An uncircumcised boy or girl could not marry within Gusii. They were directed to Luoland where they could meet their counterparts. It stood for ritual purity.

Above all, the importance of the custom of initiation lies not in the surgical operation or its details (which were skipped), but in

the tribal psychology of the people, namely, that this operation is regarded as the very essence of an institution which has enormous education, social, moral and religious implications quite from the operation itself³². It was an important traditional school through which the values and ideas of the community were passed on to its members³³. Before the intervention of western missionaries.

The basic social significance of the right of initiation is the strengthening of community solidarity. They youths were initiated into age-sets which among others observed deep respect between themselves. The members of each Ekiare (age-set) freely abused one another without feeling bitter, could inherit widows at the death of any one of them and freely co-operated in general communal duties. They respected those they followed and could not go about joking with them.

As an important educational institution, the expectations of the community from the individuals (initiates) were instilled into them not solely by quiet tutorials but by songs and hymns as they were led into seclusion houses. Songs were cited which among other things informed the candidates that they had become men and women ready to take up challenging responsibilities in the community, to marry and to be respected. Below are two such Songs for boys and girls respectively.

The song for initiated boys went as follows:

Obeire Omomura
 Bono Mambia
 Oigure bororo bono
 Mambia Omoisia
 Anyiome Omokungu
 Amoire borere
 Ngina Amosike
 Tamotoma roche
 Ise mokami Oirire
 Chimboro chiabo
 Otureirwe Itimo
 Naunguba Mbibo.

This is literally translated:

He has become a man
 very early in the morning
 He has experienced
 pain early in the morning
 He should marry and
 take a woman to bed
 His mother to respect
 him by not sending him
 On household errands
 His grandfather has taken
 his penis

He has been given

a spear and a hard shield.

The song for initiated girls went as follows:

Orange egesagane

Obeire Omoiseke

Oreng moka abaisia

Obeire moka abamura

Otigire egosorio

Getii

Ise amosike

Anyore Omosacha

Amorende anyore

Abana.

This is literary translated:

She had been a lass

but now she has

become, a woman,

she had been a wife

of boys but now she

is of men,

She has stopped

jokes in the field

Her father to respect her

she should marry and

get children.

These songs are very significant to the initiates as they inform them of their responsibilities and obligations to the community. They were and still are important as they are sang in all parts of Gusii where western influence has not much penetrated through the missionary christian church. Even where christianity has gained significance, they are still sang. One piece of education they emphasize is that full community membership is achieved through pain, responsibilities and obligations. Oqochi iburu or Myangi (circumcision) is a gate to maturity, adulthood and full community membership, with new rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities. Youths born to the community must of necessity undergo it otherwise they risk being counted outsiders³⁴. A young girl who had been initiated and found the pains unbearable regretted why she did not accept to be a Luo.

The rite of initiation which in Gusii is done twice a year provides occasions for the renewal of community solidarity. The occasion brought together families, relatives and members of the living dead in a communion. Great amounts of foods which are collected and prepared for the occasion were eaten extravagantly. Generosity heightens during such moments. Even the mean persons are disposed to give all they have accumulated over time for they cannot afford to be mean during such times. All is given with deep pride. There is a popular song cited during such occasions to show that, the mean release their food freely without reservation.

"Ekiomogoko no Onwano ogetoire"

This is translated:

"The mean person's food is given by the child's occasion."

This song also adds weight to the value Abagusii give children.

Initiation has a deep religious significance for Abagusii. It is a covenant established between the initiatees and the rest of the members of the community who include the ancestors³⁵. The sacred blood that is shed symbolizes their readiness to defend the community even at the point of death. It constitutes a personal sacrifice for the values of the community. Cutting of foreskin or the clitoris is a bitter experience and painful too - but the candidates are encouraged to show courage and accept them as means of accepting the values of the community. Therefore the means of instilling community values and religious traditions is a painful experience and the members have got to live by them throughout their lives.

The experience constitute a sacrifice made by the individual for the community. It is a crucifixion or burial of self and taking up selflessness. the blood that is shed cements the relationship between the initiatees and the ancestors of the community. The feasts that follow in which animals are slaughtered for meal caters for the relationship between the initiatees and the living members of the community. All the food eaten is attributed to the initiatees - Ekeragerio kia Onwano (The feast of the child).

Even if neighbours had harboured long lasting differences, when it came to such feasts they ate together for that is the child's food.

The significance of the rite of initiation among Abagusii should neither be overrated or underrated. Its full meaning takes on psychological dimensions. It gives the members a sense of belonging and identification. To be is to belong to the community membership and identify oneself with its goals and aspirations. Abagusii members staying in urban areas go back home to circumcise their children so that they can be initiated into the community. By these means, they grow to know and appreciate the values of their community. It gives them a sense of attachment to it. During Abagusii history of migration, they absorbed some Luo clans through initiation. Later we shall see that despite the contrary feelings of S.D.A. christianity, Abagusii have persistently observed the rite of initiation as part of their essential and central values. It is part of their being and consciousness.

MARRIAGE

After initiation we now deal with marriage. Marriage like initiation among Abagusii is a very important ceremony that characterized not only the life of the individual but that of the entire community. It is a thoroughly religious institution through which life is renewed and continued in the community. It is the only institution through which each member of the community

contributes the most sacred value to the community, namely life through procreation. Failure to contribute this nobly religious requirement is a big let down to the community such that the individual live a frustrated life because he is treated with contempt.

The task of preparing the individuals for marriage was the responsibility of the family and the community in general. All life before marriage constituted the period of preparing individuals for marriage for this was the focus of existence³⁶. At the level of the family, preparation took the form of division of labour. The fathers spent most of their leisure time with their sons and this gave the latter the opportunity to know manly tasks. For example, they went out grazing together, hunted together in the fields and in the homes they constructed houses together, fenced the compound and made defence weapons together. This helped the young males to identify their tasks psychologically and this climaxed at marriage.

Furthermore, the young males were brought up to believe that the females were weak and need protection and that became their province in married life. Abagusii have a saying which defines male and female responsibilities in a family. Gosacha (searching and gathering for the family from the field). Men are called Abasacha (a verb got from the roun Gosacha). Similarly, there is the term Gokunga (preparing and cooking what has been searched and

gathered). Women are called Abakunqu (a verb got from the noun Gokunga). This helped to define and differentiate the provinces of work for men and women. That of men remained outside the house while that of women remained in the house³⁷.

The training of girls for household responsibilities such as water fetching, collecting firewood, cooking and feeding the family (husband and children), house cleaning and washing of utensils and cooking facilities, personal hygiene and behaviour. They were taught how to sit with legs stretched before men. This reflected how they would behave in marriage. Most of the education was by imitation.

The period of preparing individuals for marriage climaxed at initiation. This provided an opportunity for the transmission of sexual education to the individuals. When they came out of it, they were well equipped with the essential knowledge concerning marriage. One thing that was clear to the initiates after it (initiation) was that they were expected to marry. The preparation here took on psychological dimensions in which marriage was seen as the goal and climax of life in the community for all life pointed to it.

For the purpose of this study we shall not be concerned with some of the minor details and features of the institution of marriage among Abagusii such as the go-between, marriage negotiations,

bridewealth, the wedding and so forth but with its psychological and religious significance.

Marriage among Abagusii has got not only social dimensions but also psychological and religious. Through marriage, the individual is believed to establish Enyomba (a house) which develops into egesaku (a lineage) and then into a clan. These developments are traced back to the founder of the house (Enyomba). This is an important contribution of the individual to the community. The great clans now in Gusii are attributed to their mythical founders after whom they take their names. To die without having established enyomba is disastrous. It is equivalent to depriving the community of the most sacred and God-given thing which is in every person. That is why Abagusii see man as people as we shall see later in the next chapter. A person is life and must contribute life for dying with all life is regrettable. It means that both the individual and the community have missed it.

It is this Religio-psychological significance of marriage that bestows upon each member of the community the obligation to marry. In this light, it is a religious and psychological obligation. Any individual failing to marry becomes a subject of gossips in the community.

Nevertheless, the purpose of marriage is heavily religious and it is pre-eminently one namely to procreate and contribute to life.

Children and in particular male children (abamura) are basic to the foundation of a lineage (Egesaku). Barrenness therefore remains a misfortune which may lead to the dissolution of the marriage. It may lead to divorce or polygamy. The barren woman laden with a sense of guilt could advise her husband to take up a second wife to bear children for him. The resort to polygamy is partly negated by the need for male children if the first marriage was not blessed with them. With reference to this great need, Abagusii have a saying Yaa. Bamura mbanqa bande (boys are not like girls)³⁸.

The psychological and religious dimensions of marriage go beyond the present existence. It goes beyond the "sasa" period. It is the meeting point for all members of the community, the departed, the living and those yet to be born³⁹. It is a partial recovery of man's lost original immortality. Therefore marriage has got both backward and forward looking dimensions.

From the individuals point of view, there is the wish not only to perpetuate his father's lineage but to found his own as well. In this sense, marriage points individuals to life after death for the couple feel that they are biologically reborn in their children. When married and had children, individuals were no longer scared by death for they have insured themselves in their children. If one died in this case, his children would survive him and perpetuate his lineage and many children born either to him or his kinsmen would be named after his Ekerecha (spirit). This was and

still "is" what Abagusii expect after their physical death.

As discussed earlier in Section (b) of this chapter, marriage and procreation was a means through which Abagusii had psychologically coped with the threat of death. It provided a form of psychological insurance mechanism against death. New born children would not be named after a person who never married since he failed to contribute to life.

To die without having married constituted and still is an unbearable threat to a person's life in the Gusii community. They are simply buried and forgotten. This is a living threat to existence for to be forgotten in the living human community simply because of death is a worst misfortune. It is the major threat underlying or supplying the driving force behind marriage practices among Abagusii. Marriage is part of Abagusii religious consciousness.

DEATH

Within the concept of life and ceremony in the Gusii community, we shall lastly deal with death. We can not talk about death to exclude its major cause namely disease. The two go hand in hand. Disease and death were among other things that underlay the evolution of Abagusii world-view. Abagusii had accordingly devised mechanisms and philosophies to deal with them. They had for example

come to be accepted as inescapable realities of human existence. In the traditional Gusii community, and even at present, disease is no longer a problem as long as its symptoms show that its causes are natural. Such a disease respond to natural treatment and hence quickly heal. Abagusii have a mastery of medical herbs which they apply to a myraid of diseases and recovery is assumed to be obvious. Diseases affecting children such as mouth diseases, eye diseases, those caused by evil eyes, teething problems, diarrhea and vomiting, skin diseases and so on are no longer a problem. Each type of disease is known to respond to certain herbs which are available almost everywhere in the human environment. Such diseases in the long run no longer caused alarm in the community.

In a general sense, therefore, diseases are accepted for they cannot miss in the human community. Abagusii have a saying which expresses this fact. It is normally expressed in daily greetings:

Greeting: Nyomba mbuya ere?

(How are people at your home?)

Response: (They are fine although there are slight colds).

Nevertheless, diseases are a cause of alarm and suspicion in the Gusii community. A disease, when it had insisently resisted natural herbal treatment, although its symptoms suggested that its causes were natural, caused panic and suspicion. This trend continues even at the present time, for example, when an ailment resists both modern and traditional treatment. If it is malaria

which has resisted treatment despair sayings such as - Kaa malaria kie eyio etari kobwena (which kind of malaria is that that does not recover?) This remark itself is suspicious. The cause of that ailment has got to be looked for elsewhere. This is when the desire for the services of the Diviner arises. If it is Esokoro (ancestor spirit) behind the ailment, the Diviner prescribes the right treatment. If it is witchcraft (oborogio), still the Diviner advises accordingly, otherwise the victim may die.

For Abagusii, a disease if unhealed could lead to death otherwise sudden death under normal circumstances was unknown. If it came, it caused more alarm than the one caused by disease. Death itself constitutes ogosira (disappearance or being lost from the world of the living into another world of Ebirecha (spirits). It was such a threat that meaning had to be made of. It was partly overcome by the creation of a psychological world, the world of spirits (ebirecha) which the living joined when they died. This other world is invisible but psychologically real.

The world of the spirits lived in constant interaction with the world of the living which is physically visible and real. The former belongs to the supernatural and it demands the constant attention of that of the living. It is more powerful and it is the source of knowledge and prosperity. It is next to Engoro (God). If it is denied the attention the living world, it may retaliate angrily. The interaction therefore takes a form of propitiation.

It may bring about evil and suffering or good and prosperity upon the world of the living depending on the latter's behaviour.

In one sense, the world of the living is dependent on the world of the spirits since the former owes its wellbeing to the latter. Abagusii have a saying, Esokoro nero (The ancestor is everything)⁴⁰. When one's mother or father dies at old age, well-wishers say, Nvoko or iso akorarere buya. (May your mother or father sleep well for you). If anyone of the parents goes, to the next world annoyed with his or her family members and their children in particular, he or she may find reason to punish them. This is what the living try to avoid by all means. The dead are treated with respect and reverence otherwise their punishment is severe and dangerous.

In another sense, there is interdependence between the world of the living and that of the spirits. The former survives the latter by giving it psychological attention which takes the form of a communion through libation and offerings. It is also survived by wishful thinking expressions such as Esokoro nero (the ancestor is everything), Esokoro ekorarere buya (May the ancestor sleep well for you) etc.

The other aspect of interdependence between the two worlds is that the world of spirits gets its supplies from the world of the living. Abagusii have come to accept life in this world as a

journey to death. A saying such as Ense eye ne esabari tore (In this world we are sojourners) is common at the sight of death. Everybody must join the worlds of spirits for it is the destiny of man. It is an inescapable destiny. Death is a reality towards which everyone moves. It is the final goal of life.

Another way by which Abagusii made meaning of death is marriage and procreation. Those who join the world of spirits are reborn to the world of the living through the birth of children who take up their Ebirecha (spirits) names. The born children and so named are assumed to carry all the traits of the dead. In a sense, the born child belongs to two worlds simultaneously.

While Abagusii accept death as an age-old and an inevitable human reality, it is generally a bitter experience that is devoid of expressive language. When death has occurred Abagusii simply say Amabe (bad and ugly occurrence). Death only makes sense when its victim is very "old" when he is blind, unable to walk and fend for himself or herself. At this stage, death is simply accepted and the community in fact celebrates with joy. Animals may be slaughtered and eaten, traditional brew drunk and so on. Such sayings as Enyangi or ekegeni kio omoqaka or omongina (The old man's or old woman's feast are common in Gusii). People generally celebrate in an atmosphere of happiness. Death is totally unacceptable when it takes the life of a child, of a person at the prime of his life. It gives rise to agony and bitterness in the

community. The death of a child, of a man at the prime of his or her age before old-age is not natural in Abagusii understanding. It has a cause which is preponderantly human. It is caused by witches and magicians. There is no single death which is not given a human explanation even if it is a road accident. Somebody somewhere must have ill-wished the victim, must have used a powerful magic and so on.

To illustrate the above fact, one incident need be related here. In about the end of 1986, an accident occurred along Kisii-Mugunga road in Kisii District of Kenya. Among those involved was a father, a son and a daughter-in-law. The last two died as a result, along with ten more other people who were in the same vehicle. In each home where a member was involved, there was a lot of speculation which attributed the cause to so and so. In the community of the father, speculation had it that he had had a quarrel with one of his neighbours prior to the journey. Although he was a christian, he also admitted the weight of speculation. Abagusii have a saying, Tiyana gokwa eteberegetie getondo (One has never died without taking someone on his back).

Among Abagusii, death is an evil that attracts both friends and foes. One cannot afford to harbour differences with the dead. One cannot express his or her disagreement or hatred for one who is dead. All ill-wishes are converted into good will at the point of death. The personal traits of the deceased are elevated at his

death. At death, one wins community veneration even if he or she was bad during life time.

Death being the greatest misfortune and an agonizing experience, is a communal experience. The community comes together not only to assist in the final disposal of the deceased's remains but also to console the bereaved members. It provides occasion for the renewal of community solidarity. The members of the general community identify themselves with the relatives and members of the immediate bereaved family. Identification is expressed through crying, screaming, mourning, wailing and the utterance of sympathy provoking words such as omwana ominto inaki gwatierire, inaki gwachandekire (my sister or brother you have remained lonely, you have suffered) and so forth. These words fill the funeral atmosphere with grief and they help to make the bereaved feel the depth of their plight. Nevertheless, such expressions are of much psychological benefit to them. They express the depth of the community's exceptional concern over the matter of death.

Furthermore, the expressions help to attach the bereaved members emotionally to the goals of the community. It gives the opportunity to feel that their plight is equally of the entire community. Death is a loss to the whole community. On the other hand, to miss such expressive acts may leave the bereaved with a feeling of dejection. These may lead to aggressiveness and suicide.

We need not go into all details regarding death except to point out that in Abagusii conceptions, it was the end of physical life in this world. Life's goodness was lived here and then. There was no much talk about hereafter for there was nothing to hope for. All man's hopes, expectations and desires were met in this world and not the other which did not belong to the dimension of real existence. One that was not physically testable, tangible and clear to consciousness. This is where western S.D.A. missionaries have had problems regarding the conversion of the Gusii people into their scheme of thinking.

d. MYSTICAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Under this subheading, I shall deal with three aspects related to Abagusii world-view and religious beliefs namely, witchcraft, magic and sorcery. Magical and witchcraft beliefs and practices are as rife in modern Gusii as they were in the pre-colonial Gusii community. They exert a lot of influence on the minds of Abagusii as part of their world-view.

Obanyanabi (magical practices) and Oboroqio (Witchcraft practices) among Abagusii are based on the mastery of the mysterious forces in the universe - of existence. They are both inherited and learned⁴¹. Wherever they are inherited, these practices are found in particular lineages and where learned, only a few individuals

Oboroqio

within lineages practice them. It is believed that those who learn the trades become more dangerous than the inheriters and they end up even destroying their lineages.

The magical practice in particular is capable of being learned and bought with animals in a form of exchange. Its purpose is personal welfare, family protection for good health and prosperity. It is seen as providing a defence mechanism against diseases caused by witches and evil eyes.

An individual who suspects his neighbours and thinks they are a threat to his welfare may hire a magician to protect him and his family together with their property⁴². Among other things the magician may do in the home of the client include burrying charms at the entrance gate or around the entire compound or he may equip each member of the household with some fetish attached to one's clothes. In other cases, the person may buy the magician's trade so that he takes care of these services on his own and he may himself become a practitioner.

Strong magic is the only weapon against witchcraft. In Gusii, there are many incidents in which witches or night runners, as they are called, have been caught redhanded. This is the work of magicians who are the only people with the power of dealing with witches. In the past the witches were beaten to death in daylight after being arrested by the magicians charms. The charm is

believed to make them numb and foolish so that they may go about making noise and confused. The modern British law has however made the practice illegal. The witches can only be killed at night by being hammered with nails⁴³. On the heads and to die or by other means even more brutal. Nobody admits responsibility and even the witch may not admit that he had been hurt at night. He may suffer silently till death.

Witchcraft still remains a mystery to many people who want to understand it. When a witch has been arrested, news spread fast. The author witnessed an incident where witches had been arrested (see photo No.). The victims were a mother and her son. They had with them the skull of a human head and some other funny and ugly items which escaped description. The victims looked shy and confused and were at the mercy of the public.

Magical practices among Abagusii remain of day to day value in as far as they protect the people not only against the ill-motivation of witchcraft but also against natural calamities such as thunderstrike and hailstones. In places where thunder has struck before, people don't feel secure till a magician has planted a magical thunder-preventing tree in the victims compound.

A thunder-preventing tree is treated with reverence or with superstitious respect. Among other ingredients planted together with it include a sheep's blood, together with its intestinal and

stomach contents⁴⁴. This tree is not to be cut down under any circumstances. Its presence constitutes the security of the household in psychological terms. One old man who held a lot of faith in this tree commented, "since I planted it, thunder surprises me no more. To me it is just rain rumbling."

Even more interesting is the fact that some magicians are believed to manufacture thunder attracting fetishes. These they can use against their foes or they may sell to those who want them.

Apart from these, there are many more magical practices. There is the love magic. This is mostly used by women to influence men, and in particular, errant husbands. It is popularly known as kababa. There is healing magic, silencing and surprising magic. All these brands of magic and many more others are common in Gusii and they exert a lot of influence on the peoples' thinking.

However, the practice of magic is very negative and very often equated with witchcraft. The magician may use one's belongings to cause him injury. Personal articles such clothes, finger nails, and hair are of value to the magician's art. He may even use cough, saliva, urine and feaces to cause the particular person ill-health and the victim may eventually die if the situation is not counter-checked quickly. The magician is believed to effect this through ogokenqa (burring one's personal belongings somewhere far or near the victim's compound)⁴⁵. This is where Omoragori

(Diviner) and Omoriori (Sorcerer) comes in.

The Diviner is consulted and may advise that Omoragori be looked for to discover where the victim's personal belongings are buried and unearth them. The success of the sorcerer depends very much on the mastery of his art and the strength of his "charm" or magic as compared to that of the responsible magician.

The phenomenon of witchcraft among Abugusii is such mystical that it may escape the understanding of an ordinary investigator as to its reality. Some men and women, young and old alike are believed to be practitioners⁴⁶. They are believed to undergo certain "biological" transformations at night such that they are hardly seen and can run very fast even when in their old age. They are also believed to use some funny nocturnal animals such as cats, hyenas, mongooses as means of transport to travel long distances visiting friends or to accomplish certain missions for example unburying corpses. These corpses are eaten and the rest used to make drugs for the promotion of the art. There are many stories in Gusii about human fresh and skeletons found in the homes of known witches.

Furthermore, witches are associated with other wonderful activities. They kill and eat people alive⁴⁷. They use magical strength to surprise and make people dumb so that such people are

not able to explain what happened when asked. They may remain in that state until a magician is called to treat them so that speech is recovered. To take them to hospitals is a waste of time for modern doctors don't find such people sick. It is only the magician who can discover their ailment.

The author had the opportunity to witness a case in which a young girl from a christian family became a victim of witches at night and she lost speech. Her face was smeared with cow-dung, allegedly by the captors. She remained speechless for two days and refused to respond to modern medicine. She only recovered when she was attended by a magician who claimed to be more powerful than witches.

Although witchcraft is a learned art, it very often becomes a compulsive force in the individual's inner-self. He or she cannot easily come out of it. It is a form of obsessional neurosis whose impulses climaxes at night. The individual is not responsible for his or her behaviours when in the art. He is controlled by a mysterious force beyond control⁴⁸. Many a time, the forces embarrass the victims in public and they disappear when they regain consciousness. In Gusii Language, the driving forces behind witchcraft behaviours are described by the term Ebirecha (spirits) whose origin is not clear. We shall understand their origin when we shall discuss Abagusii conception of the universe in the next chapter.

There are more mystical elements in the witchcraft practices in Gusii that need be noted briefly. A witch must wake up at night and knock her neighbour's door before the "Spirit" or force or neurosis in her comes to rest. Even a husband may not know when his wife leaves bed to go out and knock doors although they sleep together for the night. It is not uncommon in Gusii to hear that so and so's wife is a night runner yet the husband knows nothing. Some husbands only come to know when their wives have been arrested by the magician's charm.

Magical and witchcraft practices among Abagusii are as much part of consciousness as traditional religion is. It is however a mistake to call them part of Abagusii religion because they are not communal practices. They are a form of mysterious sciences based on conceptions of the universe. They constitute a form of knowledge available to a few people in the community. To equate them with religion is the same as equating western science with christianity.

Nevertheless, magic and witchcraft in Gusii constitute a threat to normal, peaceful and harmonious existence. They are a hindrance to happiness and development, civilization, christianization and rationality. They are forces of darkness.

In this chapter we have so far dealt with four traditional factors

namely history, world-view and religious beliefs, life and ceremony in the traditional Gusii community and lastly mystical beliefs and practices all of which helped and have continued to shape Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity. Emphasis was laid on the social-psychological role of these factors much more than the religious. These theme of determinants is continued in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

THREE BASIC CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTANDINGABAGUSII WORLDVIEW AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

This chapter is a continuation of the theme of chapter two. It deals with three basic concepts regarding Abagusii world-view and religious beliefs. They are namely, man, the universe and God. Understanding of these may help us interpret correctly Abagusii response to most of the western S.D.A. teachings.

a.

MAN

Omonto na abanto (Man is people). This is a basic Abagusii conception of man. Man, even a young child, female or male is a multiple being. Potentially, he has people in himself. To loose a person through any means is therefore to loose people who are potentially in him or her.

Abagusii have a special name for man which distinguished him from all other things in the world. He is Omonto (person) as distinguished from Egento (a thing). Omonto (sing.) abanto (plur.) is a general term meaning or referring to people regardless of sex or status. Egento (sing.) Ebinto (plur.) refer to all things including all animals, plants and rocks. Each animal, plant

or rock species has got a name which distinguishes it from others. This is however not the concern here. We are concerned with man. To call a human being egento (a thing) is the worst abuse. It amounts to equating one with something below human. It is called okonengeta (to underrate). A person is never a "thing" even when he is dead. Abagusii use the word Ogosira (lost) to mean dead in case of a person and ogokwa (dead) in case of any other thing for example an animal. This is partly due to the respect given to personhood.

A person is constituted by omoika (spirit or soul) and amanyinga (blood) which are the life force in man and omobere (body or matter). When a person dies, it is the soul or spirit that goes out of him and continues to live among the living. During a person's life-time, his soul or spirit permeates all personal belongings, articles and tools. It is both in his interior and exterior lives. His finger nails, hair, clothes, his working tools, his footprints, where he sits, excrements and all things associated with him. His soul is attached to what is associated with him. It is in him yet outside him¹. Witches and magicians work on these to cause injury or death to person.

Abagusii have a name for a dead person. He is called Egetondo (corpse) which no longer has life. When a person dies, life escapes along with the spirit.

The institution of personhood is conceived cyclically. It starts with birth which is itself a reincarnation of the living dead of the family, through naming, rites of initiation (Ekiarokio), marriage, (Enywomo), precreation, old age, death and rebirth or restoration of the youth. To miss one of those is a serious omission which causes alarm in the community. When death comes therefore at any age before marriage, it is a deeply regrettable misfortune. One did not have the opportunity to contribute to life and would go unrestored to life in newborn children. He did not have the opportunity to found a lineage. This is different from when one is aged for death is then accepted.

Personal wellbeing is dependent not only upon the well being of others but the total universe as well. Therefore to cherish personal economic and social well being while others are suffering may invite not only malevolence of the mysterious powers in the universe but also ill will from others who would like to see one in the same conditions as themselves. Life in the community entails complete surrender of individualism. It calls forth equality in all aspects of life². Witches and sorcerers come in to victimise those who don't want to share with others. Personal wellbeing must therefore of necessity be shared with others such that it is transformed into communal wellbeing. In all dimensions of Abagusii conception of man, individualism and selfishness are alien.

In the Abagusii traditional society and even to some extent at present, while all men are regarded and treated as human beings generally, personal worthiness is dependent upon character, social status and particularly, marital status and the size of one's family. Persons who were appointed to perform communal responsibilities such as priesthood had to be of sound moral character, having committed no vice during their life time³. However, personal traits such as generosity and kindness are still highly valued as part of the essential human character.

As a person grows in age, he is believed to have more experience and wisdom hence a source of valuable knowledge to the youth - monto monene ndiogo (an elderly person is like medicine). The elders in families and in the community are seen to provide not only spiritual links with the generations that have gone before but a biological link as well⁴. This, they arbitrate in important community matters. The youth are normally invited and encouraged to eat with the elders so that they could be filled not only with knowledge and wisdom but with blessings too⁵. In Gusii it is very common to find children staying with their grand-parents.

The supernatural blessings to the community flow in a hierarchy. They come through the ancestors, the eldest members of families and clans down to the youngest in that order. The blessings of an elder to a youth are highly valued. He simply asks the youth to open his palms so that he spits on to them. Words such as ochikare

(long life) or Esokoro (ancestor) may accompany the spitting.

In Abagusii conceptions, personhood is a very sacred institution. Human life is a reflection of the one from whom it proceeds forth - the supreme being. It is therefore sacrilegious to take one's life for it amounts to taking what one cannot either give or sustain. It may bring about misfortune or bad luck, Egesiomba in one's lineage as we shall see later. To commit suicide is also to contradict Engoro (God) whose discretion it is to give and take away life. It amounts to polluting it or discecrating it. Man can only contribute to life in the community through marriage and procreation but he is forbidden to take it. Accordingly those who commit suicide are treated with deep fear for they may contaminate their profane act against what is sacred.

Specific treatments are given to those who commit suicide. If he did it by strangling himself with a rope, a goat or a sheep is brought and strangled similarly⁶. This rite is aimed at transmitting the evil act to the animal so that life in the person's lineage and community remains sacred.

Man is not the controller of the universe. While he is aware that things in it are meant for his sustenance and wellbeing, he does not pose as its controller. He is at the mercy of the forces operating within it for example thunderstorms, hailstones, drought, malevolent spirits and so on. Man does not restrain such forces.

When Abagusii find themselves subjected to any of them, then a guilty conscience arises. Something has got to be done to overcome them. This is a communal concern for all the community is a victim. This becomes the basis of rain making ceremonies and sacrifices to ward off thunderstrike and malevolent spirits. The resort to rituals is a manifestation of complete surrender to higher forces. Nvasae bweka or Engoro yoka (Leave it to God). It is a manifestation of Scheiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence or R. Otto's Numen, *tremendum mysterium*⁷.

The total value of a person's life and contribution to the community is goodness (obuya). Accordingly, each person is expected to contribute both tangible and intangible goodness. The former may include children and founding a lineage, work and produce food for consumption. Laziness is discouraged for it may bring about famine and disease. There is a Gusii saying, Mominchoria imi tangani mosera ibu (The early bird catches the bird or literally, one who wakes up early and breaks dew is not the same as one who stays about warming in the fire or idling about). The latter intangible goodness may include ideas for the wellbeing of the community. Abagusii have a saying, semi tichingani nguru (wisdom is much more than energy).

On this understanding, each person in the community grows to understand that he has a responsibility to the community. Those who are older than others feel they have a responsibility of

transmitting good knowledge to the young. Those with special talents exploit them for the wellbeing of the community without pay. It was conceived unfortunate for one to die with all his talents before he had the opportunity to transmit them to his kinsmen so that they would continue to benefit the community.

Within this perspective, the presence of priests such as rain makers, diviners, magicians and herbalists and even sorcerers and witches is understood. All these groups of people had come into being during the historical evolution of the Gusii community and were of great benefit. Their continued presence up to the present time can be best explained by the transmission of wisdom and knowledge from one generation to another.

According to Abagusii conceptions, man is what he is because he is in the community with whose goals and aspirations he identifies himself. Man cannot be man in isolation from his communal aspect. I am because I participate - as opposed to I am because I am⁸. He is intergrated into the community by rites and ceremonies in the life cycle. The name attaches the individual to the ancestry, initiation attaches him to the community and its goals and aspirations, marriage challenges him to contribute to it and finally death puts him in a position of intercession between the supreme being and the living members of the community. To isolate oneself from this life process is to lose identity which is one of the worst misfortune.

Goodwill is also an essential element in a human relationships in the community. This value is expressed for example when one is offering food to a stranger. She must first taste it before handing over to the stranger. It is a token of goodwill. Lack of this behaviour raises suspicion.

Goodwill is also expressed in reconciliation ceremonies. Their aim is to win the good will of each other particularly when relations have been strained. The individual, the family, the clan and the tribe desires the goodwill of the ancestors to ward-off their ill-will. Those who die are given a warm send off to win their goodwill. A man who does not show goodwill to others is treated suspiciously. Goodwill ensures peace, harmony and the prosperity of the community. It is transformed into blessings hence each person contributes to blessing the community.

In the next few pages, we shall deal with Abagusii traditional conception of the universe which is equally important in trying to understand their world-view and religious beliefs.

b.

THE UNIVERSE

Ense eye nere nabanyene (this world has got its owners). Ense eye teri bosa (This world is not empty). These are key linguistical expressions for a proper interpretation of Abagusii traditional conceptions of the universe. The universe is believed to be inhabited by mysterious forces for which Abagusii have got no name. These forces, powers or energies may be tapped for good or bad.

J.S. Mbiti calls these powers mystical powers or energies⁹. which fills the psychic atmosphere of the whole Africa village life. Among Abagusii, it manifests itself in the elderly curses to the junior, communal curses to particular unsuitable behaviours, in magical acts, witchcraft, sorcery, evil eye, healing and warding off misfortunes. According to Mbiti, the mystical powers are exploited hierarchically with God having the largest share, followed by the ancestor spirits, special persons such as magicians, witches, diviners and elders.

These mysterious forces E. Smith calls Dynamism (the believe in and practices associated with the believe in impersonal pervasive power or energy)¹⁰ placide Temples calls these forces "vital forces" or simply a vital force¹¹.

On the believe in these mysterious forces depend human behaviour the community. It governs human relations and attitude to other persons. For example, it is traditionally forbidden to count one's

children, one's animals, to admire one's physical or moral wellbeing or to abuse an elderly person. One risks provoking the malevolent forces which may cause destruction not only to the admirer but to the victim of the admirer as well. Children may die, animals may die or cease to yield milk and so forth. Subsequently, it is allowed that if one admired anything to do with another person, he or she should keep it to his or her heart. It is almost unheard of to praise somebody's children in public.

The same forces are believed to deal with one who kills a member of his family, clan, community and any human being in general. To shed the blood of a kinsman may procure Egesiomba (bad omen)¹² in a particular lineage and these may continue for many generations in the same Enyomba (house) lineage. So when one either deliberately or inadvertently kills his brother, the cause is not looked for within the immediate surrounding circumstances. It is traced within the history of his descendants to establish who within that ancestry had done the same. It may be traced up to three to four generations by the still living elders.

If the cause is not established that way, then the killer's act constitutes the beginning of bloodshed in the lineage he himself may establish. It goes therefore that whoever sheds the blood of a kinsman must offer a cleansing sacrifice by strangling a white hen which he roasts and eats in an open field without salting it. It is roasted with feathers and bones all of which burn into

ashes¹³.

This practice is based on the belief that shedding a kinsman's blood offends the malevolent forces in the universe of which man himself is a part. Gusii young warriors, who shot and killed their Maasai or Kipsigis counterparts at the warfront ran back home to cleanse themselves before returning to the fight⁴. Those who had killed at the war-front were mostly forbidden to continue fighting for they would be killed in the process. They had already offended the mysterious forces hence equipped themselves with ill-luck.

On this is based Fr. P. Templel's Bantu philosophy of "vital force". "This force is distributed in all things according to their potency" he explains. It is the background of taboos which forbids doing of certain words, harbouring certain thoughts because they may release hidden forces and their reaction automatic¹⁵. Abagusii for example strongly believe that a member of the exogamous clan, may not have sexual intercourse with his or her kin for this may bring about suffering. An adulterous woman is forbidden to visit her rightful husband in his sickbed for this may cause his death. The same may happen if she visits her child in the sickbed. This also applies to unfaithful men. These forces are offended and subsequently weaken the potency of the sick person.

There are more taboos to do with human relations in families. If

a son offends a father and the latter wishes to curse him for example by deciding that the son should not see a child, simply utters it and it happens¹⁶. Suffering may continue until the son comes to apologize and then reconciliation may follow ceremoniously. The process of reconciliation is called Gosonsorana. They must speak words from the depths of their hearts to that effect and later cleanse themselves either by slaughtering an animal or by eating from the same dish. Curses may also come from step mothers and these are considered most serious.

At reconciliation, what happens is that the curses are withdrawn and converted into blessings. The believe in the power of curses makes Gusii elders approach the youth confidently by threatening them with curses. the youth on the other hand respect the elders deeply on this understanding.

Apart from these mysterious powers, Abagusii believe that the universe is endowed with spirits. (Ebirecha - plur. and Ekerecha - sing.). There is no clear distinction made between the mysterious forces and spirits but somehow, the beliefs are held simulteneously.

The spirits are of two types according to their attitude and role to the community. There are those of ancestors, generally believed to be responsible for the wellbeing and prosperity of the community

and those of the living-dead who are not happy either with the way they are ignored, the way the owners were treated when they were sick, when they were buried or have been annoyed by some specific conduct of the living members of their families¹⁸. These are responsible for diseases and general suffering in the community. Both types of spirits make demands upon the families, clans and the community or simply upon the living. The interpretation of these demands is the work of Omoragori (Diviner) or Abaragori (Diviners). When the interpretation shows that one of the spirits is making a demand, the Diviner may advise for a sacrifice and its ingredients or he he simply recommends remedies to be taken. Spirits do not have specific places of abode. They are everywhere where man lives. It is never imagined that one can escape their wrath by moving anywhere. Even those in urban areas may be called to be present when sacrifices are made to the spirits.

As a token of respect and appreciation, Abagusii name their children or newborns after the spirits of the living dead. The dead members are in the process seen as being reborn in the newborns. The Ekerecha name is a religious concern among Abagusii. For example, when one introduces oneself in a name that is not spirit oriented, people consciously and unconsciously seek to know the Ekerecha (spirit) name. Everyone is expected to have it for to miss it is to be disoriented. Those who don't have it feel embarrassed.

Ekerecha naming among Abagusii is therefore a deeply established religious and social tradition in which each born member of the family or lineage is named after a member of the family or lineage who died either recently or even after a generation depending on one's relationship with the living-dead. It becomes a pressing need.

A dead member of the family or lineage may be reborn in many newborns born either immediately or long after his death. Such newborns are believed to carry all the traits of the person after whom they are named. Ekerecha name is a symbol of identification with a lineage. When one says he is so and so, that helps one to trace his ancestry. When a person consults a diviner, she or he must identify herself or himself by Ekerecha name to enable the Diviner to communicate with the client's ancestor spirits.

Abagusii do not have Divinities or shrines in which spirits are known to reside, as said earlier in this section. Sacrifices to such spirits are mad anywhere and especially in homes of people. Through sacrifices their malevolence is warded off and their beneficiency brought home¹⁸.

Ontologically, the ancestor spirits occupy a middleman position between Abagusii and Engoro. They provide a link. They are addressed in sacrifices and offerings to avoid direct dealings with Engoro. It is believed that the behaviours of the ancestor spirits are controlled by Engoro so that they provide the means by which

he expresses his will to the people¹⁹. Engoro uses the spirits to forewarn the community of a coming catastrophe or to express his displeasure with certain conduct.

Some animals and birds are believed to symbolize bad omen. Examples of those animals and birds include a civet cat making peculiar sounds in the night and a crane standing with its young. It is common to find people speculating that a bird or a mongoose crossed the road prior to a road accident which killed so and so. It is again the role of omoragori to interpret these omen.

The ancestor spirits are always near and immediate, surrounding all existence. In acknowledgement of this, Abagusii offer them libation whenever they are eating any food or even when drinking water or beer. The rite of pouring down any food may be accompanied by words such as sokoro ndarere buya (ancestor sleep well for me). This sort of ritualistic act and many more others are meant to earn the blessings of the ancestors.

Among Abagusii, sacrifices meant to bring Esokoro (ancestor) in the house are common. During such sacrifices, these words may be uttered, sokoro twabere twakoretire nyomba (ancestor forgive us for we have brought you into the house)²⁰. Such words are addressed to the ancestor spirits which are believed to be roaming about around the families. No specific ancestor spirit is addressed in such cases. Human health and wellbeing is believed to be

determined by ancestor spirits. An illness which defies ordinary treatment causes alarm as seen in chapter two. Psychotic diseases for example are treated with suspicion and are not rushed to modern hospitals. The victim is believed to be possessed by the spirit or an angry ancestor whose demands must be met before the victim heals²¹.

Apart from the ancestor spirits, Abagusii also recognize the spirits of strangers, and in particular, those of the Luos as existing in the universe. These strangers (Luo) are believed to have been mistreated²². And banished from the community only to die on the way whether by a natural cause or by being eaten by wild beasts. The spirit of the Luo is recognized all over Gusii as most dangerous. It may cause a lot of havoc to the community for example thunderstrike, possessiveness and more other epidemics. Those possessed may scream so loudly even in the night when the spirit activates them.

The spirit of the Luo in gusii has historical origins - when the Gusii ancestors interacted closely with the Luo, fought and killed some of them. In recognition of this spirit as dangerous, Abagusii even at present handle their relations with the Luo very carefully. They do not encourage fighting for if a Luo dies inadvertently, that is the demise of a Gusii.

The author witnessed a case in which a Gusii homestead was struck

by lightning in 1986. When a Diviner was consulted, he explained that the spirit of a Luo was in the lineage of that homestead²³. The founder of the lineage had sent away a Luo who later died on the way. The sacrifice prescribed had to comprise two goats one red and one white which had to be bought from Luoland. Among other things.

Abagusii have traditionally been bent on avoiding any close interaction with Luo. Cases of intermarriage have been very rare although this trend is changing presently due to rapid interaction. To be called a Luo is a worst abuse.

Abagusii also recognize the spirits of animals especially that of the python which is recognized all over Gusii. To see a python, even where it has passed and left a track is simply a bad omen. It is a taboo whose consequences may be suffered later in life in one's own lineage. The author once stayed near an old mother who used to attribute her perpetual backache to her husband who had seen a python and thereafter did nothing to avert its consequences.

The python spirit, among other things is believed to cause impotency in men and barrenness in women, the dying of one's children when they are young, epilepsy and so forth. The author has been in contact with many more people in Gusii who have suffered maladies which they relate to this spirit. In one incident, a young married man took his animals to a nearby stream

to drink water. He saw a strange animal protruding its long neck out of the water. He imagined it was a python. The man ran back home trembling with fear.

The man was in high speed and fear when the author met him. "What is wrong Reuben? The author inquired. "Leave me alone. I have seen something bad." This was the man's response.

On arrival at home, the man chased a white hen and offered a small sacrifice to ward off the python's spirit. Still he did not believe that he was clean and free from it. Later when one of his children became ill and refused to respond to treatment, the man suspected the python's spirit. He went in for a big sacrifice. He claimed that the child healed.

Another man who had lived impotent for a long time consulted a Diviner who told him that he had seen a python early in his life. the man also recalled and offered the prescribed sacrifice. He recovered and now has several children²⁴.

A sacrifice to the spirit of the python is meant to cleanse its victim. A white hen is taken to the edge of a stream and there killed it in imitation of a python killing its prey - by strangling it. All of it is left at the edge of the stream no matter what eats it. The python is believed to have taken its share.

For Abagusii, the spiritual world is a reality. In the words of G. Parinder, "it is so real and near, its forces interwinning and inspiring the visible that whether a pagan or a christian, a man has to reckon with things invisible to mortal sight²⁵."

The spiritual world is therefore a real world such that to ask or force someone to abandon it is to deprive him of his essential being.

Being an abode of the mysterious forces and spirits makes the universe sacred according to Gusii conceptions. All matter, animals, birds, plants and soils and rocks are sacred. The universe owes its sacredness to the Creator - Engoro (God) who also sustains it. Abagusii believe that while they go about using matter in their daily life for example animals for meat, trees for firewood and land for growing crops, all these are potentially sacred. Their sacredness is invoked especially when they have been set aside to serve during a religious ceremony. An animal meant for sacrifice is treated with reverence. It is never beaten. It sleeps in the house. Similarly, the firewood set aside to serve during the occasion of sacrifice cannot be used for any other purpose unless the ceremony is over.

Acts of bloodshed such as death pollute the universe and those contaminated must undergo a cleansing sacrifice²⁶. This we have seen already in the previous part of this chapter. In the case of

death and burial, the sacred earth becomes polluted after it has swallowed a human body which is sacred. For two to three days after burial, all work on nature and in particular on the soil is forbidden. The situation remains so until cleansing rituals have been done.

The universe is also polluted when human relations in the community are strained. One dimension of reconciliation ceremonies in the human community is the cleansing of the polluted universe. Order, peace and harmony constitute the original nature of the sacred universe. It is deeply the wish of the community to preserve and sustain it in its original nature. All ritualistic functions undertaken by the community have the ultimate aim of korenta omorembe (restoration of peace, harmony and calmness). Disorderliness, disharmony and evils are brought about by human conduct²⁷. Wrongful acts such as shedding of human blood, theft, incest, adultery, spoiled human relations, vagrancy, and so forth may bring about disorder and disharmony and thereafter suffering in the community.

The author had the opportunity to visit a Gusii elder in his sickbed. He was a member of the local S.D.A. church. He had been ill persistently. His friends and relatives, convinced that he was facing death wondered what he had done to deserve that painful death. Some even demanded from him to disclose. The man claimed he was innocent and if anything, he didn't know. People who have

done a lot of evil for example killed others through witchcraft say much about their conduct when in intense pain. One woman was said to have named up to ten people she had killed²⁸.

In another incident, the author happened to be present when a group of S.D.A. women visited a homestead that had been a victim of lightning to console its members. They alleged that the head of the homestead, who had escaped narrowly was responsible for the incident. He had insistently lived in sinful life despite God's blessings and care which he enjoyed abundantly without acknowledging. It was a punishment from God. The implication the women gave is that the cause of the calamity is man himself. He is responsible for his suffering in the universe.

We can finally point out that the existence of the universe is central to Abagusii world-view and conceptions as it is to any other people and religion. H. Monteforce says, "Why is there something rather than nothing? Awareness of threats to normal existence leads to man's realization of his contingent character in the universe, and the contingent character of the universe itself."

This traditional Gusii conception of the universe prepares ground for understanding the Abagusii response to western S.D.A. christianity particularly in matters relating to the spirit world. In the few pages to follow, we shall deal with the Gusii

traditional conception of God which is also very important regarding response to western S.D.A. christianity.

c. GOD

Abagusii have been pre-eminently theists believing that, Nvasae no oyomo ore igoro (God is one in heaven) who was historically identified with the name Engoro. Engoro is the one who created and continues to sustain all his creatures.

Engoro is believed to live in the sky (Erioba) and his major manifestation is the sun (Ribaso). Abagusii however in their acts of worship often confuse the sun with the sky and with Engoro altogether. Erioba is synonymously used to mean Engoro on one hand and Ribaso (sun) on the other.

An illustration is necessary here. When a child was borne, the mother stayed indoors for a period of up to one week. She was referred to as Omware (Initiate). At the expiry of this period, she timed the sun rise one early morning, went out carrying the baby on one arm and the baby's food guard on the other. At this point, she held one of her breasts and squeezed out milk²⁹. Then she faced the sun and addressed it saying Rioba Nderere nainche nkorerere. (Sky nurse for me and I nurse for you). This prayer was not directed to the sky or the sun as such, it was addressed to Engoro whose major manifestations they are.

The sun in particular is conceived as God's eye. Animals meant for sacrificial meat are slaughtered at sunset and sunrise. Abagusii say, Ekerō Rikoriyeri (sun set) and Ekerō rigotongi (sun rise). These expressions specifically refer to the sun which is a major manifestation of God's presence and watchfulness. When it shines on the sacrificial animal, it is believed that Engoro who must acknowledge the sacrifice has seen it. Accordingly therefore, Abagusii traditionalists are fond of looking up to the sky when worshipping.

While Engoro resides in the sky or heaven he is not detached from the human community. He is a transcendent being yet immanent. Among other attributes he has include Kemanyi (omniscient) omonquru (omnipotent) ore kera ase (omnipresent), kirori (one who sees everywhere), omonene (the greatest) omogambi (the ruler), omorendi (caretaker) omorwa kera egento (The giver of everything or provider), omonyamabera (merciful), omwanchi (lover) and so on.

In their language, Abagusii don't have a name into which God's holiness can be translated directly. All his attributes given above as found in Gusii language point to the holiness of God. His holiness is the sum total of all his attributes. His holiness can only be explained in terms of Rudolf Otto's analysis of the numinous³⁰. Which cannot be explained by rational attributes. The

holiness of God is partly reflected by the sanctity of human life as conceived by Gusii.

These attributes do not essentially exhaust the Abagusii conception of Engoro. He is a power with which Abagusii did not favour direct deals³¹. The western missionaries deliberately replaced the name Engoro by the Luo name Nyasae and this had and continues to have undesirable consequences with regard to Abagusii response to christianity. A large section of Abagusii did not shift all attributes of Engoro to Nyasae (God).

God is the creator of the universe and all in it. Abagusii however do not have myths concerning either the origin of God, man or the universe. The commonest myth are those to do with their history. The fact that the universe and all in it including man are contingent upon a superior being who is the supernatural, and to whom appeals are made during crisis gives, Engoro not only the attribute of controller but the creator too. Everything therefore being a creation of God is potentially.

Some Gusii men and women claim to see Engoro in visions for he is always present in the human community. Such visions however constitute serious misfortunes in Gusii traditional conceptions. When Engoro makes such visitations, he is identified as Erioba (aky). These experiences are very common in Gusii as they are reported all over.

For purposes of illustration, the narration of one victim of such visitations is told here. She was sleeping in her grass thatched house one night when it happened. When she opened her eyes, she saw something very bright which escaped very fast before she could imagine what it was. Later she became very ill and it was a Diviner who made her recall what she saw that night. It was Erioba (God)³². In other cases, the victim's children may fail to walk long after birth or may fail to develop speech.

It is a sacrifice that wards off the misfortune that is procured during Engoro's visitation. The Diviner prescribes the requirements accordingly. The victim is advised to consult omokundekane (a specialist dealing with Engoro visitations). In many instances, the sacrificial ingredients include two male goats - red and white - which are slaughtered at sunset and sunrise respectively³³.

Other requirements need be mentioned. First is peace and harmony by the family members during the week prior to the sacrifice. Warlike behaviours are forbidden, no sexual intercourse in the victim's family and no long walks are made particularly across streams and rivers. Second is a traditional brew made from the victim's food stock. All other items used for the occasion including utensils and pots, drinking pipes and music must be traditional. Even the dancing style is traditional³⁴. The third requirement and most significant is Emuru (a natural long grass

that has not been tampered with by man).

The nature of these requirements is of special significance for they reflect how Abagusii conceive God. He desires peace and harmony. He does not like warlike behaviour. Even people who have had long lasting differences reconcile for purposes of the occasion. Engoro cannot yield if this requirement is not catered for. Engoro is a sacred being and items used such as Emuru, utensils, firewood and so forth become sacred since they are dedicated to him for the occasion.

The sacrificial function takes place in the victim's house or home. A huge fire is made somewhere in the compound near the sacrificial house and it is kept flaming throughout the night of sacrifice. All the meat is roasted here and eaten all by the participants. No piece of meat goes elsewhere outside the sacrificial home. The bones are collected and returned to the fire where they are consumed into ashes. After the ceremony, freedom is returned to the family members of the victim. They are now free not only to walk long distances but to work.

This is a very important sacrifice in relation to Abagusii conception of Engoro. He is himself believed to participate in it for he is the one who acknowledge the sacrifice. He shares the sacrificial food with the people symbolically. His share is contained in the sacrificial smoke that goes out of the fire

orchestrated by the roasted meat. All the remaining bones and all other pieces of meat not eaten by people are consumed by him. This is the essence of making fire outside the house to give Engoro the opportunity to participate. Engoro's presence is symbolized by the setting and rising sun.

Very often, Engoro never lets worshippers down after they have offered the traditionally prescribed sacrifices and more so when all observances are made accordingly. The results were always positive and immediate if nothing went wrong. the sick recovered, children walked, the barren became productive, rain came, thunderstrike never repeated and so on. The will of Engoro for the community is peace, harmony, calmness and continued life. Whether these consequences were psychological or real is not the concern here. The people remained satisfied psychologically, emotionally and spiritually.

It was beyond Abagusii conceptual concern to imagine or question the nature of Engoro. What he is lacks in Abagusii linguistical expressions. They simply say, Engoro nero (God is). Engoro is neither a thing nor somebody but he is what he is. Atmost he can be described as the greatest spirit (Ekerecha Ekenene Mono) - without a plurality since he is only one. Evidence of this is that he is potentially in everything, human beings, animals, plants and rocks. He is therefore essentially like wind.

Engoro is localized in the hearts of animals, birds and men - which take the name of Engoro. Abagusii call the heart Enkoro.³⁴ It is the most sacred organ of a creature and it is very uncommon to find it being eaten in Gusii³⁵.

God is pre-eminently the giver and sustainer of life. He gives men land, plants animals, and or created things. Abagusii for example believe that all that ancestral land is God-given. It is the will of the ancestors that they stay, die and be burried there³⁶.

Abagusii acknowledge the existence of evil in the universe but it is not attributed to God. It is therefore essentially human in origin³⁷. It is caused by men and women who have misused the wisdom, intelligence, power and goodness endowed on them by God himself. A witch for example is a symbol of evil in the community³⁸. Things meant for the good of the community are put to bad use so that they cause evil against the same community.

In Abagusii conceptions, evil essentially constitutes disharmony in the community. Diseases, wars strained human relations, death epitomize evil in the community. When such vices are on the increase, Abagusii worry. Ense yaberire bobo (something has gone wrong with the world). Morembe toivo (no peace). Evil is therefore going against the will of Engoro An evil that cannot satisfactorily be dealt with at the human level is left to Engoro

to decide.

On the interpretation of evil lies Abagusii conception of God's punishment. Increased evil in the community may fetch God's wrath. For example spoiled human relations, increased witchcraft, negligency of community norms of conduct which are authored and sanctioned by Engoro himself, bloodshed and so forth may infuriate him. God's punishment may take the form of thunderstrike, drought, hailstones, diseases and many more others.

Thunder is a manifestation of God's power. It is linguistically called Enkoba (the strongest power ever imagined). It is Engoro's tool of punishing the evil doers. In their imaginations, Abagusii call it etwoni Embariri (a red cock) which flies very fast. It is Engoro's messenger. When Abagusii swear to God, they say, Enkoba bori Nyasae ore igoro en yati onve ki nkongainererija (May God the thunder in heaven split me if I cheat). In this sense, thunder is closely associated with God. No wonder anything struck by lightning becomes unclean, even a human being.

This point need be illustrated further. A tree struck by thunder becomes unclean. To touch or even use it as firewood risks being struck down by thunder. It can only be used as firewood during a sacrifice meant to ward off thunder. A person struck by thunder becomes unclean and it handled with deep care. the victim's body is not removed from the spot of the incident elsewhere. Its body

is covered with soil above the ground at the spot. It is believed that to remove it from burial in a grave risks being unburied by thunder. At this point, thunder is personified for it is endowed with intelligence and rationality.

When people come together as a community after identifying a misfortune as God's punishment, the sacrifices are meant to cleanse the people from the contamination of evil so that God may forgive them. They are sacrifices of purification for Engoro is pure.

The worship of God is a communal rather than an individual affair. God being everywhere and all knowing, Abagusii do not have specific places for worshipping him. The nature, time and place of worship is determined by circumstances. The ways of worship include sacrifices and offerings, verbal expressions and so forth.

However, the term Engoro is presently not very common in Gusii. It has been unfairly repressed and replaced by the Luo term Nyasae. Later, in the chapter to follow, we shall see the consequences of this repression and possibly deprivation regarding Abagusii response to the christian God.

The concern of chapter two and three has been to open insights to Gusii world-view and religious beliefs which constitute social-psychological factors determining Abagusii response to western D.A. christianity. Equipped with these insights, we now proceed

to discuss the coming of S.D.A. missionaries, their contacts with Abagusii and the latter's responses. This discussion will take the next three chapters.

FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. See J.V. TAYLOR. The Primal Vision. (London, SCM Press, 1963) pp. 49-57.
Ibid p.4
3. MUSA NTINDI. Interv. 19/9/88.
4. J.V. TAYLOR op. cit. p.89.
5. D.W. SHENK. Peace and Reconciliation in Africa. (Nairobi, Uzima Press, 1983) p.13.
6. OMWENO SAKA. Interv. 16/9/88
7. R. OTTO. The Idea of the Holy. (London, Oxford University Press, 1958) p.9.
8. J.V. TAYLOR. Op. cit p. 85
9. J.S MBITI. African Religions and Philosophy. Op. cit. pp. 197-206.
10. E. SMITH (ed) African ideas of God. (Edinburgh house press, 2 Eaton Gate. S.W. 1, 1950, Revised 1961, 1966) p.16.
11. Fr. P. TEMPLES. Op.cit.
12. See also C. ACHEBE, Things Fall Apart, 82.
3. ELIJAH MOCHAMA. Interview, 2/9/88.
4. MACHOGU NYAGOKWA, INTERVIEW, 20/8/88.
5. Fr. P. TEMPELS, Op. cit. p.44.69.
6. MACHOGU NYAGOKWA, Interv. 11/10/88.
7. W.R. OCHIENG Op.cit p. 186.
8. OMOKI SILVER, interv. 11/1088.
9. W.R. OCHIENG Op. cit. p. 187

20. OMOKE SILVER, F.N. 18 (above).
21. MIYIENDA SAISI, interv. 17/787.
22. ELIJAH MOCHAMA, interv. 10/11/88.
23. NELSON ONYANCHA. Interview. 11/11/88.
24. MWEBI MOCHAMA. Interview. 9/10/88.
25. G. PARRINDER, West Africa Religion (London, Epworth press, 1949, 2nd Edition, 1961) p.10.
26. MZEE IGONYI. Interview
27. M.C. KIRWEN. The Missionary and the Diviner (New York, Orbis books, 1987) p.28.
28. PRISCILLA MBERA. Interview.
29. REBECCA NYANDUKO. Interview, 14/6/1989. See also M.S.N. Getui, op. cit.
30. R. OTTO. Op.cit. p.9
31. W.R. OCHIENG. Op.cit. p.186.
32. BATSHEBA MORAA. Interview, 11/10/88.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. W.R. OCHIENG Op.cit.
36. MUSA NTINDI, F.N. 3 (above).
37. M.C. KIRWEN. Op.cit. pp. 28-54.
38. Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE S.D.A CHURCH

The purpose of this chapter is fourfold. First it deals with the historical and missionary background of the S.D.A. in the U.S.A. Second, the coming of S.D.A. missionaries to Gusii, with particular emphasis on the nature of contacts and responses. Third, it assesses the theological, cultural and scientific assumptions as manifested in the S.D.A. conversion of Abagusii to christianity. Finally, we look into whether the S.D.A. actually, converted fed Abagusii to christianity.

a. THE S.D.A. MISSIONARY BACKGROUND IN U.S.A.

The S.D.A. church movement began in mid 19th century (1839's). Its name is based on two distinctive beliefs which its founders held, namely the observance of the sabbath of the scriptures and the imminent personal second advent of Christ¹. The major name behind the foundation of the movement was William Miller who lived between 1782 and 1849.

William Miller, the S.D.A. Movement founder, was born in 1782, in Pittsfield, Massachussetts and later moved to New York. He was a man of a humble family background, son of an army captain². His

poor family background denied him opportunity for higher education although he had a keen thirst for knowledge and had earlier been exposed to Deism which helped him develop intellectually³. He earlier did not trust the effectiveness of the Bible. He however changed this attitude in between 1812 and 1815 when he was involved in the U.S.A. war with Britain. He could not withstand the cruel experience and hence discovered God's promise of future salvation in the Bible⁴.

In about 1830, Miller was involved in what can be genuinely described as a psychological experience. The experience is summarised in the words, "I was thus brought--- to the solemn conclusion that in about twenty five years, all the affairs of our present state would be wound up⁵. It was a conversion experience.

At the height of the experience, Miller found himself with many questions regarding heaven, eternity, death all of which he did not find answers⁶. He became hopeless and frustrated. Out of this experience he had a conviction that the experience was a supernatural involvement. Later he wrote,

The character of the
saviour was vividly
impressed upon my mind
I imagined that I
could cast myself
into the arms of God
and trust in the
mercy of such a one⁷.

The Miller conversion experience and subsequent conviction is not typically different from that of St. Augustine, St. Paul and other earlier church Theologians⁸. It was both social, intellectual and moral. Social it was in as far as it involved a shift of loyalties from deism to christianity, intellectual in as far as it involved two systems of thought opposed to one another and moral in as far as it involved a change of attitude to the existing moral standards⁹.

The Miller experience and subsequent convictions has got to be seen within the general U.S.A.'s historical, social and Religious background. The nineteenth century was a period of turmoil both in continental Europe and the United States of America. The end of the Napoleonic era in 1815 did not mean the end of war in Europe. There was the crimea war 1854 to 1856 in which Turkey, Russia and Great Britain were involved. There was the Franco-German war of 1870-1871. In U.S.A. there was a long lasting civil war in which the south wanted to be independent of the north¹⁰. Many lives were lost during this turmoil.

It was also a period of industrial. Revolution following the discovery of advanced scientific technology in western Europe which later spread to the United States of America. There was rapid exploitation of the physical environment by advanced methods. The social conditions created by the industrial revolution such as the widening gap between the haves and havenots and other evils became

a moral concern. There was increased crime and disorder in the western society.

These historical conditions created the need to explain society in a different way than the religious one. This saw the emergence of atheist social scientists such as Karl Marx (1818-1883) with his economic theories of social evolution, Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) evolution of species and so forth¹¹.

There was also population growth and subsequent territorial expansion. The industrial revolution gave stimuli to the spirit of nationalism. In the United States of America, there was a rapid territorial expansion after 1783 when British formally recognized independence.

These conditions were too severe for the continued existence of the old order. The Marxist and Darwinist theories brought the Biblical stories of God's intervention in human history and creation into question. They could not be tenable. Christianity which had been the backbone of the civilization of Europe and America was being torn away with the old order - with which it had been identified. Subsequently, the old society was decaying along with the old order - for they could not cope with the trends of the new civilization. The church had been diverted to serve political ends¹². The trends were toward dechristianization.

This decay of society and the pushing of religion to the periphery of human existence necessitated religious revivalism both in continental Europe and the United States of America. This spirit was given impetus by the 18th and early 19th century Evangelical Awakening in Europe. Its passion was evangelism both at home and to the ends of the earth¹³.

One result of the Evangelical Awakening movement was the coming into being of voluntary christian movements which were committed to win the entire world for Christ. The compelling impulse which drew them together was the sense of their personal experience of salvation and the conviction that all men everywhere have need for Christ¹⁴. They had a mission to proclaim the redemption brought by Jesus for mankind. The second result was the encouragement of interdenominational colleges out of which came the foundation of several protestant churches both in Europe and America¹⁵.

The most important consequence was the foundation of the Evangelical Alliance Movement in 1846, out of which came yet important youth movements in England. They were the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) and the Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.). These movements later spread fast into U.S. and added stimulus to the spirit of revivalism¹⁶.

There were several issues to which Missionary revivalism and

theologies addressed themselves to. The major focus of protestant evangelism in America was winning all the population to the christian faith and revivalism was seen as the tool of attaining that goal. By this means, Methodism, Baptists and the disciples of Christ maintained a spectacular growth.

The American society was trending towards secularism in its constitution. This attracted the concern of the Christian church and in particular the Protestants who united for the purpose of changing the constitution of the United States of America to acknowledge almighty God as the source of all authority and power in the civil government¹⁷. It was a major attempt to christianize the civil society as a means of bringing religion once more to the centre of society.

There was also the need to revive the moral order which had decayed considerably in the United States. To effect this, the Protestant churches formed an ant-saloon league out to fight all obstacles on the way to the development of the kingdom of God¹⁸. Temperance boards were formed in the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Catholic churches. All called for temperrance. Although these movements were opposed by the episcopal diocese of New York they won the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Millions of Americans had embraced their values that they came to hate alcohol with a perfect hatred¹⁹. Intemperance was therefore a remarkable missionary background out of which came the missionaries to western

Kenya.

There were also certain theological trends which shaped the emergence of the S.D.A. Movement. Revivalism led to the coming into being of the "holiness Movement or puritanism." with their puritan Theology led by German and Dutch Reformed churches. The initial concern of this puritans in the early colonial period was the establishment of a church whose characteristics would be different from those of the early church in England - which they looked upon as temporalizing and adulterated²⁰.

The puritans developed a new covenant theology between man and God replacing the Calvinist theology in which man was considered finite, contingent and helpless before a sovereign, immutable and inscrutable God. The American theologians (puritans) explained God's relationship with man in terms of a covenant of grace. The christian church comprised of those bound to God in a covenant relationship.

Despite this theology and a multitude of other types of christian involvement in changing the decaying society, piety waned rapidly due to laxity in personal morality orchestrated by the growth of rationalism (which rivalled if not ridiculed revelation) and cultural transformation (as a result of material progress)²¹. The people lacked the spirit of revelation. Consequently, preaching turned from a stolid exposition of the scriptures and the reading

of sermons at the pulpit to the evangelistic dramatization of the evils in society all over the front of the congregation with a view to kindling the spirit of revvivalism in the people.

Keenly hauled by the people's spiritual decline, the third and fourth generations of puritans began to regard severe disasters or afflictions, both natural and human, as divine punishment for their collective backsliding. Church ministers and theologians capitalised on this understanding to enhance their preaching²².

Led by Presbyterians, many camp Meetings were organized in which emphasis was laid on the interpretation of disasters as divine punishment. What was preached in such Camp Meetings is best described in the words, "..... He would so array hell before the wicked - that they would tremble and quake imagining a lake of fire yawning to overwhelm them and the hand of the almighty thrusting them down the abyss²³.

Camp Meetings became popular in all denominations as means of enhancing the spirit of revivalism. By the same means, the Methodist church experienced rapid expansion, led by John Wesley who advanced the theory of sanctification and the possibility of Man's moral perfection. Man was accountable for his moral degeneration and depravity. Accordingly, man could help change it on his own²⁴. This theology stressed individual holiness and stated that the christian can attain sactification only when he abandons all efforts and allows the holy spirit to live with him - the life

of Christ.

It is within these historical and theological conditions that we see the coming into being of the S.D.A. Church Movement. In themselves, the historical conditions were "oppressive" and the theological trends liberative. The psychological and religious experience of William Miller was therefore not a surprise. It came within a chaotic historical and theological atmosphere.

The theologies of revivalism had a lot to do with the foundation of the S.D.A. Movement and its concerns. For example, it emphasised that one must be sought to be guided by the holy spirit in all matters of life and conduct, that revivals and camp-meetings have to be utilized for the purpose of winning converts and rejuvenating the spiritual lives of the faithfuls. It also encouraged believers to maintain a living hope in the imminent return of Christ, and to forsake and shun all manifestations of "worldliness"²⁵ as symbolized in extravagant use of alcoholic drinks luxury, and amusements.

Some of the influences the holiness movement struggled against were those engendered by the social gospel movement which among other things was turning the attention of the church more to social than theological issues and especially after the American civil war²⁶. There were also new ideas which challenged the Bible as the sole basis of faith for example Darwinism. From German theologians also

came a theology based on experience and not the Bible. It placed emphasis on community aspect of religion making sin corporate and salvation the same. The Bible was generally put in a defensive position by those movements.

Miller's S.D.A. movement was a kind of protest against contemporary trends. He emphasised the Bible as the basic revealer of God's truth and he subsequently devoted his time reading and interpreting the prophetic literature out of which he was convinced that the Lord's coming or second advent was imminent²⁷. On this prophetic interpretation of scripture and formerly fixing of the date of the second Advent in 1844, depended all subsequent Miller teachings:

Influenced by contemporary trends, Miller's preaching took a form of religious revivalism. He went preaching widely in protestant churches expounding the evidences to support his theory and convictions. The evidences he gave included natural disasters such as earthquakes as signs of the second advent. For example in 1833, there occurred a remarkable natural phenomenon in U.S.A. which gave strength to Miller's convictions. Heavenly stars fell heavily all over the United States of America. According to Miller, this was the last sign.

By and large, the consequences of the adventist movement were negative whenever it had reached. Anticipating the Lord's imminent advent, prayers were intensified by the Millerites, people resigned

from their jobs, shops were closed and major public services came to disarray²⁸. Nothing happened in 1844. The Lord never came. It was a total disappointment which left the movement in shambles. It was however saved from total extinction by people like Joseph Bates, James White and his wife Ellen G. White, Edson Fredrick Wheeler and S.W. Rhodes²⁹.

The failing of the second Advent in 1844 had to be explained if the S.D.A. movement had to survive. The explanation was given by E.G. White who brought in the doctrine of the sanctuary. She explained that at the anticipated time, the Lord was not coming to earth but rather was going to the "holy of holies"³⁰ to cleanse the sanctuary in preparation for coming to earth. Accordingly, the adventist movement has been survived by this new theory. The prophecies of E.G. White continue to be the lifeblood of the S.D.A. church.

In as far as the historical and missionary foundations of the S.D.A. church are concerned, a few things need be noted. Like any other protestant denominations that emerged as a result of Evangelical Awakening in Continental Europe and United States of America, it was a revival Movement. Its sole aim was to check a society that was rapidly trending to secularism and worldliness³¹. Its major tenet, was and is, the second Advent for which it voved to make people prepared. Among other things, the Movement emphasized were temperance and moral purity as biblically taught.

What differentiated the adventists from other protestants was not essentially what they taught and believed but rather how they came by what they believed - and taught. What they believed and taught was largely prophetic and in a way, more Old Testament oriented than New Testament. For Example, they read that the Seventh-Day (Saturday) is the God appointed day of christian worship. Out of this conviction came the name of the movement. In the writing of E.G. White, the name "Seventh-Day-Advent" carried the features of the movement's faith in front of it³².

The believe in the imminent personal return of the Lord Jesus by the Adventists was both prophetically and mathematically conceived. William Miller sat down several years to read into and interpret prophetic literature and especially the book of Daniel 8:14 (Unto two thousand and three hundred days then shall the sanctually be cleansed) and Thesolanians 4:16. (...and the Lord Himself will come down from heaven).

With regard to the second Advent belief, the adventists opposed the popular view of the spiritaul reign of Christ for a thousand years before the end of the world. for them, this could not be sustained by the word of God. This doctrine of a thousand years of righteousness and peace put off the terrors of the day of the lord. It also contradicted the teaching of the Lord³³.

The Adventists, unlike other protestants also held a belief that, the doctrine of the world's conversion and the spiritual reign of Christ was not held by the apostolic church. It encouraged moral laxity. It taught men to look far off into the future for the coming of the Lord and prevented them from heeding to the signs heralding his approach. It induced a feeling of confidence and security that was not well founded and led many to neglect the preparation necessary in order to meet the Lord³⁴.

The second Advent belief is explained thus, "the Millenium reign of Christ covers the period between the 1st and 2nd resurrection during which the saved will live with him in heaven for 1000 years. At the end of this period, they descend to earth, the wicked are raised and led by Satan, they come up against the Lord. Satan is destroyed, death and graves are destroyed along with sin by the purifying fire. The earth is then recreated and restored to original Eden. The saved inherit it and it becomes the eternal home of the redeemed of Adam's race³⁵.

In the next few pages, we discuss the forces that led to the S.D.A. engagement in missionary enterprise into Africa and in particular how the movement came to Gusii, the nature of contacts and Abagusii early responses.

b.

S.D.A. CONTACT WITH THE GUSII AND RESPONSES

The S.D.A. Movement did not spread into Africa until after 1900. This was so because of among other reasons the earlier conceived limited time before the personal second Advent of the Lord and lack of proper organization. the failure of the second Advent in 1844 as conceived earlier brought new dimensions to the S.D.A. Movement. For example, there was seen the need for proper organization and evangelism abroad to make known to the rest of humanity the imminent return of the Lord.

The movement subsequently saw as specifically bestowed upon it to proclaim the return of the Lord to the world. It had a conviction that the scripture pointed to them as the "remnant church" of the time to proclaim the Lord's second coming³⁶.

The year 1903 saw the arrival of the first S.D.A. missionaries in Tanganyika (present day Tanzania) led by J. Ehlers and A.C. Enns both of whom were Germans³⁷. In 1906, many more S.D.A. missionaries arrived some of whom penetrated into Kenya led by Grandvile Carscallen (a Canadian) and Peter Nyamo (a Malawian citizen who had gone to Britain for studies). This group had responded to the call for missionaries in Kenya.

To start with, they established mission stations at Gendia and Wire Hill in Luoland. For some time, these stations served the purpose

of training African evangelists who helped in the propagation of the S.D.A. Gospel both among the Luo and the Gusii³⁸. By 1912, the S.D.A. missionaries were contemplating establishing a mission station in Gusii township. Work there was completed in 1913³⁹.

In Gusii, the S.D.A. missionaries were not alone. They faced the Catholic Mill Hill fathers with whom they scrambled for territory. The S.D.A.s hurried and quickly established their mission station at Nyanchwa while the Catholics established at Nyahururu respectively. It was from these stations that both the Seventh-day-Adventists and the Catholics were to spread in the entire Gusii.

The disruptions of the first world war of 1914 reduced the first erections into shambles after the embittered villagers raided the stations⁴⁰. To the S.D.A. missionaries and the Catholics took refuge in Kisumu and Friends Mission Maseno respectively.

Real evangelistic work at the Gusii stations picked up in 1918 and especially after 1920 when the missionaries returned. The S.D.A. mission in 1918 was led by Jacob Rua, a Luo trained at Gendia Mission⁴¹.

The S.D.A. missionaries made their headquarters at Nyanchwa from where they spread their mission through the bush school system.

Rapid spread was made easier by the demand for schools and teachers further rural. The few Africans who had received missionary education and worked as lay evangelists and teachers provided incentive among many more other Africans who wished to be like them⁴². They knew how to write and read.

Before the outbreak of the second world war, the S.D.A. society had opened fifteen mission stations in North Mugarango, fifteen in Kitutu, eleven in Nyaribari, five in Bobasi, eight in Machoge, nine in South Mugarango and three in Bonchari⁴³.

The S.D.A. missionaries defined their primary objective to the Kavirondo District Commissioner as one of evangelization. Together with it and the furthering of the same, they coupled the industrial and educational lines⁴⁴.

For the western christian missionaries, the S.D.A.s and Catholics alike, evangelism went hand in hand with education. Education was meant to enlighten the native so that he could know to read and write his mother tongue apart from improving his moral wellbeing⁴⁵. Herein lay the missionary attitude to Abagusii, their customs and beliefs from which they needed to be converted. Anything to do with Gusii customs including religion was treated with contempt.

Among other practices the S.D.A. missionaries missionaries found in Gusii was witchcraft and related beliefs. There were practices

such as the power of bringing and preventing rain, the power of finding the perpetrators of crime by administering medicine, the power to kill or bring sickness upon persons or animals either by means of poison or incantations and also the power to cure diseases. There were also priests who were believed to be equipped with the power of doing certain things⁴⁶. All these practices and more others were shrugged off as superstition. The natives only needed to be educated to come out of the belief, was a missionary view.

The most impressive and remarkable feature of S.D.A. missionaries in Gusii was school education. However, then were two paternalistic being a means to an end. This schools aimed at isolating the pupils and young converts from the general community so that they could not be contaminated with what the missionaries had identified as unGodly traditions and customs⁴⁷. They were required to maintain cleanness daily by washing and cutting their hair. Traditional songs and dances were forbidden and they were also forbidden to marry unchristian women.

The spread of the S.D.A. church saw the emergence of several village school communities in Gusii in which young men, women and families moved to live⁴⁸. In these communities, the christian converts were encouraged to construct kitchens, houses with windows, pit latrines and toilets, to stop participating in sacrifices to idols and to abstain from polygamous marriages. They

were also encouraged to use better methods of farming for higher productivity. These were the economic, hygienic and health standards which were supposedly conceived essential for christian morality - which went hand in hand with Bible reading and prayers.

Each village school had a white S.D.A. missionary directing it. He appointed prefects and inspectors of the village. Although there was such missionaries in all villages, their free interaction with native villagers was limited. The Gusii villagers were forbidden to freely enter the missionary's residence⁴⁹. It was a kind of master-servant relationship.

In the school, the natives were taught geography, arithmetic, reading and writing in native tongue. They were also taught carpentry, blacksmith, timber sawing and brick making⁵⁰. The psychological impact of this life on the native villagers is notable. They were encouraged to look down upon not only their customs but also their fellow kinsmen who had rejected the christian missionary village life designs.

In the S.D.A. missionary understanding, Abagusii were not only far below the level of understanding the christian faith but they were unfit morally, intellectually and even materially. By implication, these are some of the aspects their education sought to improve among the natives. This is more so as far as religion was concerned. In the words of Jomo Kenyatta, "the African was

regarded as a clean slate on which anything could be written. He was supposed to take wholeheartedly all the religious dogmas of the whiteman and keep them sacred and unchallenged no matter how alien they were to the African mode of life⁵¹.

In any case, the S.D.A. missionaries did not imagine that Abagusii could understand the christian God without education. This attitude was not only held by the S.D.A. missionaries but also by all western christian missionaries to Africa and the colonial administration generally.

To illustrate the above point, the discussion E.W. Smith (a missionary) had with a prominent Biographer, Emil Ludwig, at Khartoum is reconstructed hereunder⁵².

- E. Ludwig: What does christianity do for the Africans?
Does it increase his personal happiness, and if so how?
- E.W. Smith: It releases him from fears.
- E. Ludwig: What fears and how release?
- E.W. Smith: We try to induce a personal trust in a living, present and loving God who is stronger than any other evil power.
- E. Ludwig: (Puzzled) How can the untutored African conceive God?
- E.W. Smith: There was no need to persuade pagan Africans of the existence of God. They

are sure of it, but not sure of him as a living power in their individual experience.

E. Ludwig: (Frankly incredulous) How can this be? Deity is a philosophical concept which the savage are incapable of framing? (He was not convinced).

This conversation is reformulated to its original appearance. It helps us to make generalizations regarding the missionary education in which christianity was introduced to Africans. According to E.W. Smith, missionary education was meant to release the Africans from "fears" and make them capable of understanding the basic christian concepts part of which was God

The worst consequence of this attitude was that it made the missionaries fail to penetrate the Abagusii world-view and work to convert them from within it. They made no attempt to understand the people they sought to convert. With the monopoly of education as a tool of converting Abagusii to christianity, the S.D.A. missionaries only succeeded in changing their surface life to christianity. Describing this situation, J.V. Taylor says,

This might well be the most terrible failure of the church in Africa - that it meets people only in their best clothes, see children only in their school uniforms, the clergy only in their robes, the ordinary people, only in their christian contexts...

Such christianity only becomes something to be put on at certain times and in particular circumstances

and has nothing to do with other areas of life⁵³.

Christianity became a religion that did not go beyond the classroom walls. Among Abagusii, christians were identified with values such as reading, writing and cleanness - generally. This group of people came to be called Abasomi (readers) and the village schools were called Bosomi (where who knew to write and read stayed) as distinguished from the general community which by implication was characterized by illiteracy, traditional practices and beliefs and uncleanness. Anybody who decried traditionalism was branded - Omosomi (a reader). This identification of christian worship with reading was common in many African tribes⁵⁴. Christian believers were the same as literates.

The impact of this type of missionary approach is that it placed christianity at the periphery of Abagusii life generally. The major cause is found in the missionary intellectual and theological limitations regarding Abagusii world-view. They were not trained theologians out to win the world for jesus, Lord of the dark as well as for the light⁵⁵. Work in the colonies was not conceived as required theologians or educated people generally. It required people of little education⁵⁶.

However well intended they were, they lacked in this important requirement which married their mission. They failed to understand how much Abagusii were attached to traditional religious values. They simply desired them to abandon and forget such values by being

confirmed in isolation. Ironically however, Abagusii even after being converted remained attached to the traditional values which the missionaries condemned.

Evidence shows that a gross selection of Abagusii were never and have been convinced fully that their cultural and traditional values were immoral for some of them could be likened to those biblical Israel before the coming of Jesus⁵⁷. Had the missionaries, understood Abagusii religious values, they could have used them as a background to the Christian Gospel. Such values prepared them for Christianity in as much as the Hebrew values prepared that community for Christianity. Christianity could have been seen as the fulfilment of Abagusii traditional religious values.

While the S.D.A missionaries were not theologically well informed, they even more distorted their image by showing more interest in commercial adventures than saving the Abagusii souls to Jesus whose work they claimed to have come to do. In the mission field, G. Carscallen and Barker who were among the first group of the S.D.A. missionaries to Kavirondo District, (present day Kisii and South Nyanza) are reported to have gone out everyday hunting buffaloes whose hides they sold to natives at five cows per head. Houses for worship were turned into stores for hides and other commercial goods⁵⁸. The native converts were used as porters to transport goods to distant places.

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As noted already the S.D.A. Missionaries used schools as a means to an end. Along with these, health centres, the press seasonal Camp meetings and Evangelism were effectively employed.

Education and health went hand in hand. Whenever an adventist village was established, there was a school and a dispensary⁵⁹.

Adventist village schools were established in many places in Gusii. They were self-supporting as far as social-economic needs were concerned. The converts were not allowed to be in touch with the surrounding communities for they had everything they wanted within reach. All this, when well intended was all good. But it was unfortunate that converts were encouraged to cut culturalties as

well.

The village school system worked as an incentive in many ways. While each village had a school and a dispensary, the teachers and nurses were supplied from the mission stations. The teachers in particular worked both as teachers and evangelists and this was an incentive to the local communities. The demand for teachers rose steadily⁶⁰.

The health facilities provided improved the health of the villagers such that more others were attracted into them. More than being given modern medical treatment in the villages, the native villagers were encouraged to shun traditionalism and live pure lives of temperance. This was an incentive for really more people turned up to join the communities and were converted.

Lastly, the S.D.A. missionaries used the press to propagate their church. The press eased not only the publishing of their magazines which were sent out and read widely in Gusii but also the translation of the New Testament and Gospel hymns into Kisii. This translation was the work of Pastor Beavon (the then head of Nyanchwa station) assisted by two early christian converts namely the late pastor Nathaniel Nyanusi and Abel Nyakundi⁶¹.

Here we need to note a few distortions made by the missionaries as regards the translation of the New Testament and the Gospel hymns

into Kisii. The Gusii name for God, Engoro was replaced by the Luo word Nyasae. Secondly the English word describing the nature of God - holy was translated into Kisii to mean Omochenu (clean). In essence, the missionaries distorted the Abagusii conceptions of God all of which were never shifted to Nyasae. The early Gusii converts who participated in the translation had been made to believe that they did not know God prior to christianity and that the christian God was simply clean. This has continued to be a problem in the church.

Regarding the Gospel hymns, the S.D.A. missionaries distorted the message of their Gospel by implying to some Abagusii converts that there was a "commercial" connection between the divine blessings one received and the amount of money he "surrendered to Jesus" on one hand and the Lord's coming on the other⁶². Such songs have remained so up to this moment and the effect is disastrous. One's loyalty to the christian faith largely came to be determined by how much money one gave during each church service.

EARLY RESPONSE

The christian faith had been "sown" in Gusii and Abagusii response is now our concern. First it took the form of a violent resistance. The missionaries had identified themselves closely with the British colonial administration. For example they came into Gusii in 1912 shortly after the Abagusii had been finally conquered and subdued by the British colonial administration who

used the barrel of the gun mercilessly against defenceless people⁶³. Several Gusii warriors lost their lives and a lot of property destroyed and some raided and taken away. Abagusii were obviously left very bitter. It was at this juncture that the christian missionaries flew in to establish stations at Nyanchwa and Nyabururu relying on the security provided by the colonial administration.

In the meantime, Abagusii hated anything to do with the whiteman and all his values. The opportunity to take action and wipe out the whiteman and his religion provided itself in 1914 on the eve of the first world war. The S.D.A. and Catholic missionaries fled their stations and took refuge in Kisumu and friends Maseno respectively. Abagusii attacked, raided and demolished the two mission stations. They destroyed down the erections and reduced them to shambles.

Abagusii cultural and religious protest against the Europeans and westernism generally clamaxed in Mumboism. It took a form of an anti-European sentiment shared by all Gusii people. The Mumbo adherents reflected exactly the opposite of what was reflected in the Adventist villages. For example, they kept their hairs long, they never bathed and dress themselves smart and were opposed to the idea of progress which took the form of western civilization⁶⁴. They also clung to Gusii traditional religious values, such as divination, magic - sacrifices to ancestors and witchcraft.

When christianity spread later with ease, the reason was not because it was a good religion "per se", so that it had come to be liked. What rather made it acceptable voluntarily was the education it offered in its guise. As the goodness of education was felt, the demand for more S.D.A. teachers farther rural grew steadily. These teachers, when they were supplied, went out not only to teach but also to preach S.D.A. christianity and convert many more Abagusii into the church fold⁶⁵.

These teacher-evangelists were themselves an incentive to win more converts. They were natives who had simply known how to write and read. Many elders who had earlier opposed the idea of missionary education as misleading their sons now changed their attitude and sent them to schools to learn and know how to write and read.

The best explanation for this abrupt change of attitude toward christianity by some Gusii is not difficult to come by. They had simply discovered that it was no longer difficult to accommodate what christianity required of them, particularly literacy, along with their traditional beliefs and practices. They were taken into the christian fold along with their beliefs. It therefore meant that some became christians while they remained witches and strong upholders of traditional beliefs and values. Their world-view remained as intact as ever before. This has remained the problem of the S.D.A. church in Gusii and it is likely to be there

eternally unless, a different and more meaningful approach to christianization is devised.

similarly, the adventist village schools stood more for social and economic revolution among Abagusii than they stood for religious revolution. The members were taught new methods of farming which led to the need for more land among the villagers. On the other hand, land came to be valued economically and not religiously as before. Those on whose pieces of land the villages were established wanted it left free so that they could farm employing the methods taught by missionaries⁶⁶. Those whose farms were far also joined their kin to hold on to their pieces of land before anybody else took them. One man at Riokindo Adventist village school - Peter Angima, is said to have put ablaze the first S.D.A. church erection because it was on his piece of land. This is an economic explanation for the disruption of adventist villages in Gusii.

The more important reason for their disruption were the religious beliefs Abagusii attached to ancestral land. To lose one's ancestral land is one of the worst misfortunes. the people on whose land the adventist villages were erected struggled to regain back - in fear of losing them. Those who had come from far to settle, went back home to regain their land.

The general Abagusii attitude to the adventist village schools also

constituted an important form of early response - to western christianity. The term Bosomi was employed to refer to those S.D.A. villages. This term had a negative connotation for it equated those who had been converted with traitors. It did not mean that they had become christians but that they had known white ways - namely, reading and writing, observed hygiene, temperance, ignored traditional practices and attended the whiteman's dispensaries for treatment. Such people were subsequently treated with contempt⁶⁷, by the general community.

Even more remarkable was the Early Abagusii response to the S.D.A. central teaching concerning the Lord's imminent second coming. The teaching reduced many of the early converts and villages to psychopaths. Impatience and anxiety characterised most of them⁶⁸. Cases of psychosis became very common in village schools that they had to be suppressed by corporal means or some other even more painful devices. The converts, claiming to have been possessed by the holy spirit, screamed and spoke in tongues to the embarrassment of church authorities. When most of such psychotics recovered, they withdrew from the church and joined traditional life in the community although they knew the Bible well. They became hopeless.

Not all S.D.A. psychotics recovered well. Some of them remained so permanently and at the time of research for this work, it was discovered that such people have problems in relating with other people in the community. One of them, Chuma Nyaboni, (now

nicknamed chuma Moika (Spirit) refused to respond to the researchers. He however had a wide knowledge of the Bible. The man had been staying indoors for the last several years, a behaviour typical of Old Testament prophets. He however drank traditional brew and never discriminated traditions. For example, he was a polygamist.

Such mental abnormalities are reported in many parts of Gusii and they came as a result of S.D.A. missionary teachings in the adventist village schools. They (converts) had impatiently waited for the Lord's return, and, his failure to come very soon, as the missionaries put it, was a total frustration.

In many more instances, some simply ignored S.D.A. teachings and instructions against traditional practices such as polygamy, sacrifices, drinking and so forth⁶⁹. Still many more other early S.D.A. converts fell out of the church just to be free from church restrictions and uphold their traditional beliefs and practices. In essence, there were two world-views in conflict. We discuss this in the next chapters. In the next few pages, we discuss the S.D.A. missionaries, cultural, theological and scientific assumptions and the aftermaths regarding the christianization of the Gusii.

c. THE S.D.A. MISSIONARY ASSUMPTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES.

In approaching Abagusii for conversion, the S.D.A. missionaries made erroneous theological, cultural and scientific assumptions. These assumptions were enshrined in their attitude to Abagusii culture and traditions and the methods they employed to convert them. Basically, their approach was characterized by ethnocentrism.

In theological terms, the missionaries confused christianity with western civilization. In the great commission, the Lord sent out seventy-two disciples to all towns and places to proclaim the kingdom of God. He instructed them as follows: "Whatever house you enter, first say, peace be to this house - remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide ... (LK 10:1-17). T.E.V.) St. Paul also preached that, A Gentile did not have to become a Jew before he became a christian (Gal. 2:11-17). T.E.V.) The S.D.A. missionaries to Gusii did not seem to have had this theological insights. They embarked themselves on imparting western civilization using western education as the basic Tool. They bestowed upon themselves two tasks, namely, to proclaim western civilization and the good news of Jesus.

The missionaries perceived western civilization as the right model and gateway to the christian faith. By converting and Baptizing them, the missionaries assumed that Abagusii converts had abandoned traditional beliefs and practices, and adopted new values of western civilization which were encouraged at school and on which

"true" christianity could hold. in a sense therefore, the missionaries endeavoured to uproot the African body and soul from his old customs and beliefs, put him in a class by himself with all his tribal traditions shattered and his institutions trampled⁷⁰. Any reversion to traditionalism was seen as a big sin and the church condemned it as unGodly. 'This crisis is climaxing every day.

st. Paul taught, everyone should remain in the state in which he was called (1 Cor. 7:20). Attempts by the missionaries to westernize or even to civilize Abagusii converts before giving them the Good News could not have a theological basis. It constituted a theological distortion.

What the S.D.A. missionaries brought to Gusii was a white christianity holding a white Jesus in view. The religious pictures and films, methods of worship, music, dress, church organization and all religious endeavours were modelled along western lines⁷¹. There was not seen any need to relate any of the aspects of "their christianity to Abagusii traditional rituals and life. Whoever was converted to christianity was at the same time civilized or westernized.

Even worse still, the S.D.A. missionaries were determined to believe that they brought God to Gusii. Before their coming, Abagusii had been worshipping idols and not God as conceived by

the missionaries. Consequently, the S.D.A. missionaries failed to see any need to study for the purpose of discovering whether actually Abagusii had any idea of God prior to their coming. Subsequently, they introduced a "new" God whom they identified for Abagusii with the Luo name Nyasae and took him to the church where he remained confined.

The cultural assumption was equally detrimental. There was nothing good in Gusii culture. The S.D.A. missionaries did not find it important to study and understand the values and ideas cherished by Abagusii. They assumed a "holier than thou" attitude and looked down upon all Gusii cultural practices. The education offered in the isolated adventist schools was seen as the basic tool of imparting western values and ideas. Free interaction between the village school and the general community was limited for there was that fear of contamination. Aspects of western individualism and capitalism were encouraged to replace Abagusii traditional communalism.

It is important to note that, the products of the adventist village schools found it difficult to be reintegrated back into the community. The new western values and ideas kept them in isolation in their families - although they shared the world-view of the general community.

Things replaced relationships in the community,⁷² material health

became the meaning and stick of progress. Wealth rather than quality of life through meaningful relationships became the criteria of success. Indeed those Gusii people who tasted the life in the village schools are materially very successful in the Gusii community⁷³.

Not only did the S.D.A. missionaries error theologically and culturally but also scientifically. On scientific grounds, I am convinced, they branded all Abagusii beliefs and practices as superstition. Subsequently, they sought to liberate Abagusii from those superstitions through western education. Geography was considered necessary to make Abagusii discover nature so that it could no longer be the source of fear, as assumed.

What the S.D.A. missionaries forgot is that no religion or culture for that matter can be tested scientifically. So to condemn a people's religious beliefs and practices as superstitious is to do such people gross injustice. The S.D.A. missionaries, through education, aimed at making Abagusii find a different explanation for phenomena they had always explained religiously within their cultural system. To their disappointment, the missionary education fell short of explaining traditional beliefs and practices such as witchcraft and the mysteries of the universe some Gusii then could not help adhering to traditional beliefs and practices while they accepted western education along with christianity.

It is also apparent that the S.D.A. missionaries failed to know that each religion is sustained by a specific world-view. It is this phenomenon and many others which accounts for the existence of many religious systems among different peoples the world over, in their geographical distribution. The diversity of world-views leads to a diversity of religious systems.

While the laws of science are universal, religious beliefs are not. Religion must take different forms in different world-views. For example, the western society did not adopt all aspects of Jewish Christianity. This was because the western world-view was different from that in which Christianity was founded characterized by spaces of persecution. Similarly, the western society could by no means expect Abagusii to accept Christianity together with the western world-view, - since they had their own.

The major missionary assumption was therefore one of cultural superiority in a form of western civilization. This, Abagusii had to absorb without question since it was desirable. However, at the psychological level, such a culture remained irrelevant to some Abagusii world-view, especially the old.

The S.D.A. missionary assumptions did not go without un-anticipated consequences. The image the S.D.A. missionary enterprise reflected among some Gusii was more socio-economic than religious. For most of the converts, and, especially those who had tasted life in the

village school, christianity simply meant adhering to the socio-economic revolution that was introduced by the missionaries.

In the Gusii community, there is a remarkable difference between the areas where adventist village schools were established and where they were not. It is interesting to note, however, that this difference is more economic and social than religious. The people in such areas are generally rich being equipped with better methods of farming and more development conscious. These people value material wealth and they manage to make it. An example of such areas include - Sironga in West Mugirango, Manga in Kitutu and many more areas in Gusii.

The economic revolution went hand in hand with the social revolution wherever the S.D.A. appeared. The missionary emphasis on health and hygiene, new methods of constructing and locating homes and temperance resulted in a conspicuous social revolution in some areas of Gusii. The adventists were educated people who valued cleanliness and family organization. Christianity was and is still considered synonymous with cleanliness - and was supported by the missionary interpretation of the christian God as "clean" (omochenu). If God was simply clean, then those who accepted him had to be clean.

The missionary determination to isolate people from their families, clans and the general community where they had long lasting and

meaningful relationships had the impact of weakening kinship ties between the converts and their kin. This led to the growth of the spirit of individualism orchestrated by a feeling of isolation and alienation. The converts had adopted values which drastically contrasted with those of the general community.

What differentiated the christian families from others in the Gusii community were not their religious convictions but their emulation of western civilization. They were described as Abasongo Abamwamu (black Europeans)⁷⁴. They alienated themselves from brewing, sacrifices to ancestors, consulting Diviners and magicians, dancing to traditional tunes and hymns and so forth. However, they often backslided to tradition when they could not bear with pressure.

In a forward to M.C. Kirwen's book, The Missionary and the Diviner, L. Magesa points out that "... among the people who have accepted Baptism in black Africa, the great majority have neither wanted nor succeeded in abandoning completely many aspects of their traditional religious outlook⁷⁵. While the early Abagusii missionary converts wished to abandon all the traditional practices which had been condemned by the missionaries, they could not succeed owing to the strength of such beliefs in their psychic life.

Even more remarkable was the social-psychological impact the missionary conversion had on Abagusii religious convictions.

Belonging to the S.D.A. church became an end in itself. Earlier on, the missionaries, both Catholic Mill Hill Fathers and S.D.A. had divided Abagusii into Abanyabororo (Nyabururu)⁷⁶. And Abanyanchwa (Nyanchwa) respectively - on one hand and traditionalists on the other. These divisions were more based on social conduct than religious. Abanyanchwa (S.D.A.s) were identified by among other things - temperance, non-participation in traditionalism and observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath. The Abanyabororo (Catholics) were identified by among other things - temperance, some degree of participation in traditional practices and observance of the Sunday sabbath. The traditionalists on the other hand were identified by their emersion in traditionalism and intemperance. The day of worship was given more emphasis so that the S.D.A. adherents got the impression that all Sunday worshipers were unchristian for they drank and brewed. In essence, the missionaries equipped their converts with psychological hostility towards other denominations which has continued to characterise the S.D.A. church up to the present time.

Worse still, is the impression the S.D.A. missionaries gave to their converts that the Catholics were unchristian because they worshipped the Roman Pope instead of God. The Pope had been portrayed as a dangerous beast in pictures pinned all around S.D.A. Centres and particularly in schools⁷⁷. The whole system of S.D.A. had been based by the missicnaries on perfect hatred for Catholics, out of which the converts of each generation have found it

difficult to adjust and learn to respect and appreciate other denominations.

The christian religion was conceived as a religion of the church to be attended only on Saturdays while the rest of the week remained empty. Day to day life was characterised by traditional beliefs and practices in private capacities. The christian faith no longer attracted the psychological dimension of existence but the physical.

In the next two chapters, we discuss how Abagusii have continued to respond to the western S.D.A. presence. This response is in view of the fact that the S.D.A. has been in their midst for long enough to shape their world-view.

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CHAPTER FIVESOME ASPECTS OF ABAGUSII RESPONSE TO S.D.A. CHRISTIANITY

In the previous chapter, the coming into contact between the S.D.A. missionaries and Abagusii was discussed together with the latter's early response. In the present chapter, the theme of response is carried on and shall continue to the next one. For purposes of this chapter, this theme of response is treated under the following three subheadings - namely, attitude to the church, attachment to traditional beliefs and lastly christian hope and salvation.

a. ATTITUDE TO THE S.D.A. CHURCH

Under this subheading is discussed the attitude of the general community to the S.D.A. presence among them and then the influence of the church itself upon the life styles in the Gusii community. Second is discussed the behaviour of the Abagusii S.D.A. adherents with respect to the church.

In the traditional Gusii community, there were no specified and regulated occasions for resting or worshipping, unless the specific ritual required people to refrain from all activity and particularly on nature. During such occasions, people passed time drinking, chatting together on matters related to the welfare of the community. Some went out hunting wild game while others went about grazing their livestock - in open grasslands. The S.D.A. missionaries came and introduced Saturday as a day when people

abstain from work to rest and worship.

The Saturday rest has influenced a large population of Gusii such that the S.D.A. Sabbath is synonymous with rest or abstention from work. This influence is felt not only by church adherents but also those who are not, and, infact have never been converted into the S.D.A. church before. It has influenced the traditional work programme in which all days were working days.

This S.D.A. influence has however been more harmful than good in the Abagusii social-psychological structures. The Saturday rest is characterized by many ills. It provides opportunity for heavy brewing and drinking for those who do not go to church. Many rural brewing villages in Gusii make a lot of money out of the sale of illicit traditional brews - namely changaa and buzaa. These drinks keep many people busy for the rest of the day which is actually meant for worship.

In a way, those who drink on Saturday are involved in a psychological protest against the S.D.A. church's insistence on temperance as an essential, christian quality. The Saturday rest and the subsequent drinking sprees provide opportunity for those who hate S.D.A. christianity and what it stands for to express their views and sentiments against the church¹. They know and believe that they are not liked by S.D.A. christians and subsequently behave in a rebellious spirit.

The Saturday rest also provides occasion when people in Gusii are free to make long journeys to visit relatives and friends. The youth have particularly become a problem not only to the parents in individual families but to the Gusii community as a whole. Incidents of sexual immorality², among the youth climax on Saturday - when the youth find themselves free from parental authority. The freedom guaranteed from work on Saturday gives them opportunities to fulfil dates with their sexual counterparts.

The church services make it possible for the youths of opposite sexes to interact freely and later get time to engage in pre-marital sexual affairs. If a study were to be carried out on the influence of the S.D.A. church on premarital sex and teenage pregnancies in Gusii, it may be apparent that many teenagers become pregnant on Saturdays.

Such a study for example was done in Kiambu District of Kenya by Mrs. Wangoi Njau. In a paper presented at the Kenya Obstetrical and gynaecological Society conference, Njau observed that premarital sexual activities and pregnancies among the country's adolescents were directly or indirectly linked with the christian church³. Church services provide opportunities for teenagers to meet their sexual counterparts and later found time for pre-marital sex when their parents have gone to church. Young girls also found time to engage in sexual activities by telling their parents that

they were going to church.

The other detrimental influence the S.D.A. has had upon the Gusii youth is the freedom they have had to mix and drink with the elders of the community without a feeling of fear or guilt. They not only drink the illicit traditional brew but they also smoke dangerous drugs such as marijuana or bangi. Drinking and smoking are some of the practices the S.D.A. church cannot tolerate by doctrine. What is more interesting is that, such youths including school children from the local neighbourhood who drink are highly welcomed and encouraged by the elders⁴.

On the part of the elders involved, this behaviour constitutes as psychological game in which they see themselves as fighting against the forces of S.D.A. christianity. On the other hand, they view themselves as a group opposed to western christianity and therefore anybody joining them does not obviously join the S.D.A. church. Such elders establish strong friendly relations with the youth with the underclared intention of ruining the foundations of the S.D.A. church.

As one goes further to know the backgrounds of thee adolescents who become alcoholics and drug addicts, it becomes clear that majority are from christian families⁵. They are also involved in a kind of psychological rebellion against the established christian parental authority. More often than not, such youths have spoiled

relations with their parents who do not have time for them.⁶ This behaviour of the youth may be partly explained by the fact of the irrelevance of the goals and aspirations their christian parents define for them to the general community. They rebel against the isolationist tendencies of their christian parents and so they join the general community not only against their christian parents but also against the S.D.A. church.

This youth and elder behaviour can only be explained by the S.D.A. church phenomenon in Gusii. It is responsible for the change of attitude regarding elder-youth relations. In the traditional Gusii community, the youth hardly mixed with the elders. The coming of the S.D.A. missionaries changed this trend. When the latter established village schools, they embarked on taking, isolating and confining the youths in such schools without allowing them to rejoin their families or even participate in cultural functions. The elders did not like this idea for it made the youth lazy and rude⁶. The youth who remained loyal to traditional authority found opportunities to mix freely with the elders, who had a feeling that they were rapidly losing control of the youth. To bring the youth closer, they encouraged them to stay and drink with them. This trend has ever persisted.

A most remarkable Abagusii attitude to the S.D.A. church is that it is associated with women - and children. A survey carried out showed that in most families where the christian faith was felt,

only women (wives) and children went to church while the husbands went out drinking, hunting or rested at home. In families where one spouse was a christian, that spouse was the wife and hardly the husband. Infact there was no single family in which the husband was an S.D.A. adherent or went to church and left the wife behind.

Traditional ceremonies and sacrifices also climax on Saturday. This is yet an S.D.A. influence. Saturday is when anybody else including traditional priests find themselves free from other involvements. Those who go to church are regarded as Abasomi who may not like the idea of partaking sacrifices.

This general community attitude to the S.D.A. church in Gusii is rated a psychological protest or rebellion against a church which is seen as being against all traditional conduct. The attitude of S.D.A. adherents is now our concern. Largely, they see the church as the end of christian life. S.D.A. is nothing but a religion of Saturday while the rest of the week is filled with daily traditional religious inclinations.

In most of the S.D.A. church services attended for purposes of observation, lateness is a common phenomenon among the adherents. While the church services start at nine, many people (majority) come as much as and a half hours late. Among other reasons to explain this late coming phenomenon is the S.D.A. church emphasis

on cleanliness. Many of the late comers said they were cleaning themselves better before attending the service.

The other reason is poor faith and commitment to the church⁷. It has been difficult for the adherents to keep abreast with what the church requires of them. Every Saturday morning finds them unprepared for they do not even think about it coming during the rest of the week. They are involved in ventures which keep them busy until late Friday night⁸.

Another reason is the S.D.A. notion of Saturday as a day of rest. On this day, there is no hurry for the idea is resting. While on other days the adherents wake up early in the morning to go out working in Shambas and other areas of life, they extend their sleep on Saturday until late hours before they wake up to go to church.

The other reason that may explain this Abagusii behaviour regarding S.D.A. church service attendance is their concept of time. The western concept of time on which the S.D.A. rode into Gusii hardly penetrated the latter's world-view. They do not adhere much to clock movement. For Abagusii, any time before noon is morning time (mambia). Very early in the morning is simply before sunrise. When the sun is overhead (mobaso) it is noon and when setting (infact quite a few minutes before sunset) it is evening. So they do not mind coming to church at noon so long as the sun is still

not yet overhead.

Another aspect that may constitute the attitude of the Gusii S.D.A. adherents to the church is that it is a boring place. The church service is totally dull without music, hand clapping, dancing or any form of body movement which could make the worship activity an exciting moment. The S.D.A. church considers such aspects satanic and sinful⁹. The worshipping service has an alienating influence on the adherents. Those who are tired find opportunities to doze about for there is nothing exciting. The sermons which take between thirty minutes and one hour deeply lack in the spiritual message. They are bent on condemning the day-today unchristian behaviours of the adherents¹⁰. They worship "idols" during the week and come to church on Saturday morning. Little is done by the preachers to fill the adherents spiritually within their world-view.

Abagusii S.D.A. pastors disown a world-view to which they are a part. Some are known to be keen on watching, and, condemning members of their flock, for allegedly consulting Diviners and, engaging in sacrifices during the week while they are not themselves free from the beliefs they condemn. When they or members of their family fall sick persistently, they travel to distant places as far as neighbouring countries claiming there are better hospitals and doctors while in reality they go to engage the services of Diviners and traditional medicinemen¹¹. Some members

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of their flocks happen to know this private trips.

More than anything else, the financial trends of the S.D.A. church has very much contributed to the attitude of the adherents to the church. The collection of money as offerings is deeply associated with S.D.A. church services. This is an established church routine such that the adherents rarely forget to carry a few coins along as they go to church every Saturday morning. Money is one of the requirements one may regret to leave behind. He may feel condemned psychologically not only by the church but by the fellow members who may go about gossiping¹².

The S.D.A. offering routine is quite Biblical but distorted. It has been made to look as if it is all the church and God required of adherents. Indeed as a test of faith, one is admitted for Baptism by acknowledging this doctrine - that the money offering goes to God. The author did an S.D.A. Baptizimal exam in which one of the questions had to do with offerings - to the church. The question asked - Esadaka neyango? (who is the owner of the offering?).

This question was puzzling for the answer seemed predetermined. It implied that the offering belonged to a person somewhere. The researcher answered that it belonged to the church which spent it on spreading the good news of God. Unfortunately, that was not the correct answer and it was marked wrong. The answer was "God"

and no more.

This kind of approach amounts to no less than brainwashing of the adherents who are predisposed to believe that they always give money to God. Money has been an important tool of measuring spiritual commitment among the S.D.A. adherents. People give offerings without spiritual commitment¹³.

Church services attended revealed much more to do with the S.D.A. offering routine. The more one gave to the church, the more blessings the church bestowed upon him. In many cases, such people were prayed for so that the money they gave could return. This by all means had a frustrating influence on those who gave little for they were not recognized. They were not prayed for. Whatever meaning there could be, this is a major contradiction of the original christian teaching. The widow who gave the very little had paradoxically given more for that was all she had. (LK 21:1-4). T.E.V.)

While the amount of money given as offering seemed to be the determinant of spiritual commitment, it turned out again to be the source of condemnation. Since it is an established routine, the adherents do not bother to bring more. A church service attended by as many as two hundred people may collect as little as fifty shillings or even less. They simply carry a few cents with them which are again released bit by bit as time for collecting comes¹⁴.

The author happened to be present in several church services. The notable one was occasioned by a Baptizimal ceremony. It was a collection of more than eight churches. It was attended by more than a thousand believers who had come to escort their sisters and brothers into the water. As normal, the offerings were collected and kept.

What was interesting is that the station Director who was present did not like what he saw. The money collected from so many people was too little to mention. He was "shocked" deeply and he expressed his dissatisfaction: "This is not the Riokindo I knew." How can all these faces collect forty shillings only? If one were using offerings "per se" to determine the levels of some Abagusii commitment to mission christianity, this then could be a clear sign of spiritual decline.

This shock expressed by "a pastor" represented the general feeling of S.D.A. authority and particularly the South Kenya Conference leaders. The current campaign has been geared towards making people donate more money as offerings and tithes. The campaign strategies have included attributing the failure of Jesus Christ to return earlier to people who give little money. "Christ wants shillings not a few ten cent coins. You are delaying his return¹⁵." Some of these utterances are sounded at every church service to the frustration of the adherents. An elderly mother who

is an S.D.A. adherent asked the author how they have delayed the lord's return by giving little money since they are not told. It was an interesting question but I did not have an answer.

While this Abagusii attitude to church offerings may be attributed to the machinations of early S.D.A. missionaries, it may as well be attributed to the traditional Abagusii sacrificial and offering systems. Once an animal had been offered for sacrifice to God or to ancestors, it was not necessary for people to commit themselves emotionally and spiritually since they had already expressed themselves through the sacrificial animal. All forms of commitment were expressed through the sacrificial animal. The participants remained satisfied that the sacrifice could effect the desired purpose.

WITCHCRAFT IN THE S.D.A. CHURCH.

About 99% of the respondents observed that some fellow church adherents are known witches. The S.D.A. church is Ekeonga' (a net) ¹⁶ which has got a collection of saints and sinners. This awareness of the presence of witches amidst christian believers leads to a suspicious situation among the adherents. This has also the side effect of making adherents engage in traditional beliefs and practices and come to church without a sense of guilt.

Witches or night runners constitute a reasonable population in the

S.D.A. church in Gusii. Witch-craft touches even the unsuspecting old members of the church. Some church elders are known witches. For example, it surprised the author a bit to learn from respondents that one of the earliest christian converts and an elder of a local S.D.A. church had been a witch before his death.

The man alleged to have been a witch was well biblically informed and in most communal functions in the neighbourhood, he was often invited to deliver sermons. However, when he died, things turned upside down. He had been a witch and had terrorised the community unbearably during his life-time such that his death was a great relief". In fact it was later gossiped that he had been arrowed during one of the night running sprees.

WHO GOES TO S.D.A. CHURCH?

Another concern that occupied a central position went around who goes to church on Saturday. In all the church services attended, the majority of the audience were children, followed by women and then men who were the minority. In the statistics that were carried out, children constituted about 60% (below 12 years of age) adolescents (between 12 and 20 years) constituted about 28% women 15% and, men 5%. These were rough estimates taken otherwise more investigation may find the same. Most of these men played leadership roles in the church.

This attitude that the church belongs to women and children was perhaps created by the S.D.A. missionaries when they dealt with the issue of polygamy in 1941¹⁷. One resolution they adopted was that a polygamist could not be admitted into full membership in the church but his wives could - together with children. This definitely had a negative impact on men's attitude to the church. Women always feel that they are free to be members of the S.D.A. church while men are restricted. This issue remains a problem on men for the missionary resolution has not been reviewed.

There are other reasons to explain this phenomenon. Many men dropped out of the church because either they had taken up second wives or had participated in traditional rituals against the norm of the church. This earned them excommunication or they felt guilty and simply decided to stay off¹⁸. Many more had dropped out shortly after the missionaries had left.

A close study of men around Riokindo area (one of the earliest S.D.A. centres in Gusii) showed that most of the old men of between 50 and 70 years or more had been members of the local S.D.A. church at one time in their life and had withdrawn to behave in a rebellious spirit. Most of these men drink heavily and curse their past christian life openly. While they withdrew, their wives continued to be christians hence increasing the population of S.D.A. women in the region.

A lot many other people backslide from the church for reasons mostly traditional. Young adults who marry outside the church or break church wedded marriages fall out of the church. Some fall out after taking up second wives if the first one failed to be fruitful and bring forth children.¹⁹

Another reason that was given for backsliding trends from the S.D.A. church is lack of sufficient training given to adherents during conversion and the failure to understand the Bible²⁰. Most of those who fall out are those with non-christian upbringing backgrounds. If one was not brought up in a christian family before conversion, chances of relapsing are very high. This theory however could not hold much for gross observation showed that most children born in christian families are most rebellious.

This theory may not also hold much if the case of early converts and those who are always being converted to increase the number of S.D.A. adherents in Gusii is considered. Most of them definitely had no such christian up-bringing. The church cannot rely on christian upbringing in order to make fruitful christians for such backgrounds are the minotity in Gusii.

The reason for Abagusii backsliding trends from the S.D.A. church is non other than the prison nature of the church in the light of Abagusii traditions²¹. Once people accept church membership, they no longer are free to participate in any ttraditional or cultural practices. They become alienated and infact prisoners of

conscience. While they see sense in traditional values and could by all means wish to observe them, they abstain because the church has established contradicting rules. In a sense therefore, to become a member of the S.D.A. church in Gusii is the same as yielding to prison.

Absenteeism from church services is another common feature among S.D.A. adherents. Not only does this feature characterize ordinary Saturday services but also the mass (Christian Eucharist) as well. Among other reasons given to explain this phenomenon include, tiredness on Saturday morning after the week's work which ends on Friday evening, diseases, funeral attendance and reception of visitors²². Most important however is that the church is not taken seriously and it does not occupy the peoples' daily programme of thought. It does not constitute a value to Abagusii. It does not add anything to the peoples' spiritual upkeep hence it is never something to long for spiritually.

Still more other people and women absent themselves because they do not have clean clothes²³. To go to church in dirty and the same clothes always may be a source of embarrassment for many adherents. They fear becoming subjects of gossip and when they discover having been gossiped, they simply decide to stay back home.

The attitude of S.D.A. adherents to cleanliness is a topic of concern to many potential members. On one day the author happened

to travel in a public vehicle with a group of four women who raised the issue in a rigorous spirit. Their talk went around the descriminative tendencies among S.D.A. women who enjoy gossiping others when they go to church in same clothes always. One of them said she had stopped going to church because she did not have extra clothes.

Some parents absent themselves from church services or backslide altogether after their sons and daughters let them down for example when they marry outside the church or become drunkards²⁴. These are however very few.

The S.D.A. adherents do not take the christian Eucharist any more seriously than they take the church service. Although it is announced a week earlier, still very few Baptized christians turn up for they find themselves having more other things to do in the homes²⁵. It is more of routine function than an occasion when christians renew their spiritual wellbeing in the Lord who is the focus of worship. They simply sit together to eat the elements of the Lord's last supper with rare emotional commitment. At the gatherings observed, the participants had a series of daily ordinary experiences to narrate to one another - outside the christian context.

The Eucharist is one of the most frustrating occasions for some adherents. Since it involves washing each other's feet, the issue of cleanliness arises. Those who come bare footed are evaded to their embarrassment²⁶. Because of the fear of being embarrassed,

potential partakers absent themselves if they did not have shoes to put on. Some of these people have backslided to join offshoot sects because of the element of discrimination based on materialism²⁷. It need be noted that, for many a Gusii S.D.A. converts attitude to the S.D.A. church phenomenon is characterized by its association with lateness to church services, backsliding tendencies, absenteeism, boredom, and so forth. These features constitute aspects of spiritual emptiness as regards some Gusii response to the christian faith.

In the next few pages, we shall discuss the levels of Abagusii christian attachment to traditional beliefs and practices

b. ABAGUSII S.D.A. CHRISTIAN ATTACHMENT TO TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Under this subheading, we shall discuss six practices related to Abagusii traditional beliefs in the light of S.D.A. christianity namely, mystical beliefs and death, initiation, marriage, the stick and emegiro tradition, Baptism of children and traditional God and the S.D.A. God.

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While Abagusii continue to be converted to christianity, hardly do they abandon their world-view and related practices as the evangelists would wish²⁸. All cultural practices are branded satanic, heathen and even idolatrous. The Abagusii response to this attitude constitutes another level of response to western christianity.

I:

Mystical beliefs and death

The witch and the magician constitute a threat to christian stability among Abagusii. While the church has always instructed its adherents to stop recognizing such groups of people for they are "messengers" of satan²⁹, it has been very difficult since their existence has a place in the people's world-view. Witches and sorcerers, magicians and diviners are two groups of mystical practitioners who play contradicting roles which has ensured their perpetual existence. When christians are victims of either witchcraft or sorcery they have no choice but to engage the services of either a Diviner or a magician. This threat has been worsened by the fact that witches have penetrated the christian church. They worship, live and eat with other christians without a sense of guilt.

This penetration of the church by witches has got negative consequences upon the spiritual well being of church membership. The church is no longer a place to run to escape the wrath of the

witch. The church, following the missionary trend has refused to acknowledge the threat witchcraft poses to its members. Far from doing so, it has continued to instruct the members not to recognize the threat since it is of no consequence in their lives. Any trend among the adherents to recognize or even to believe that witches are a reality is considered satanic by the church.

The irony of it all is however that some Abagusii, both S.D.A. adherents and non-adherents continue to recognise the threat. Disease and death are deeply explained to witchcraft and sorcery. Persistent sickness raises suspicion leading to the engagement of Diviners and magicians privately to avoid being discovered by the church³⁰. The S.D.A.'s position regarding this is that, to engage the services of such people is the same as putting oneself in the hands of satan yet God has sent trained doctors at the S.D.A., health centres³¹. At the height of crisis, some Abagusii S.D.A. adherents do not have time for such God given doctors for their treatment is irrelevant.

Disease and the fear of death have been a major cause of low commitment to the S.D.A. church for many Abagusii. As many as 92% of respondents to this study pointed to this fact. When they are victims of disease, coupled with the fear of death, they become suspicious of someone somewhere bewitching them. At this point, adherence to church teachings become alien. In many cases, they fall into the hands of Diviners and magicians not minding how the

church would handle them. It is simply a question of life and death.

When such "offenders" feel happy after they have recovered, they develop a sense of guilt particularly if they suspect that either the church or fellow, christians knew their manoeuvres. Since public confessions are rare in the S.D.A. church, such people keep their guilt conscience to themselves and eventually backslide - or they may continue suffering psychological frustrations and estrangement.

Nevertheless, most S.D.A. adherents have maintained this habit of consulting Diviners and magicians as part of their private life Onye Kiaborire rogoro Kerigerie maate (If it is not up there, find it down there)³². This would mean that if christianity does not provide a satisfactory answer, then one has got no choice but to resort to traditional beliefs and practices to find an answer to a problem. In this case, to a good number of Gusii adherents, christianity is not a permanent life. It is one in which they enter and jump out when occasion demands it.

The church's teaching that it is God who causes death by taking away life does not convince Abagusii. God can only take the life of people who violate community norms as he is the author. Therefore, when death comes at a "wrong" time and involves "wrong" suspicious is on witches and sorcerors - some of whom are fellow

christians.' Tiyana Gokwa etaberqetie getondo. (One has never died without taking another on his back).

with regard to these behaviours noted among some Gusii S.D.A's, it is inevitable to see the church as a suppressor of what Abagusii define as a reality. It is involved in a process of redefining realities and situations for its members not minding what they believe or think is a reality

Some important features in which the S.D.A. church portrays itself as an agent of western civilization were noted at S.D.A. conducted funeral ceremonies ³³ in Gusii. In the traditional Gusii society, and even in the modern one, where S.D.A. has not imposed its teaching, funeral ceremonies are characterized by among other things, speculation, gossips, wailing and mourning, vandalism, and all forms of expressing emotions. Such behaviours are banned outright at S.D.A. funerals.

The noted facts show how Abagusii have responded to this S.D.A. requirement. A total of three S.D.A. funeral ceremonies were attended. As people came in numbers, they gathered in the compounds, women and men gathered separately in small groups. They speculated and gossiped under cover. Others held talks touching on traditional values - the making of lineages, initiation, marriage and so forth.

In Gusii traditional conceptions, such talks are not empty of value. They reflect what people believe as part of their being, their whole and reality. At the S.D.A. funeral ceremonies, talks about the deceased or what caused his or her death are alien. The only explanation allowed is that he or she died from an illness and God decided to take his or her life. Mourning and wailing are banned. Very often, it is officially announced and banned to wail and mourn. Those coming from the entrance doing so were warned and found themselves irrelevant. The grounds of the ban included the fear that it would empower Satan's influence which would mar the ceremonies.

By observing the faces of the funeral attendants, and especially women, it was not difficult to tell the impact of such a ban. It was a fear instilling phenomenon. The attendants looked suppressed on their aggrieved faces. When they could control it no more, tears flew down their cheeks but they made sure they hide it to avoid being seen. They sobbed down-facing heavily with bitterness.

Such an atmosphere makes S.D.A. funerals in Gusii inhuman, a strange environment, unAfrican, oppressive and quite unhomely. It is a form of cruelty where emotional expression is forbidden. The S.D.A. funerals do not provide some Abagusii with opportunities to identify themselves with the bereaved members of the community. It is a psychologically alienating atmosphere and the attendants remain filled with tension. In many of the funerals, after the

dead had been laid to their eternal rest, the attendants disappear faster.

Traditional mystical beliefs and their explanation of death were reflected in speeches given at funeral places especially the one at kiogoro on 22/11/88.

Speaker 1 - "People have been approaching us claiming that our father was bewitched but I cannot believe."

Speaker 2 - "I cannot say that my brother was bewitched...."

Speaker 3 - "I can see that so and so is not dead for he has sons in his home..."

Speaker 4 - "So and so is not dead for he is in the hands of God resting and waiting for the Lord's second coming."

Speaker 5 - "I greet you all even if we are at the site of evil..."

Speaker 6 - "This is the time when we need our Lord most..."

The significance of the above S.D.A. funeral ceremonies attended can be summed up as follows: They provide opportunities for studying what actually Abagusii believe in relation to what the S.D.A. taught and expected of them. In the first place, the talks that were held in groups that happened to gather in the compounds, women and men, reflected the past orientations of the Abagusii worldview.

It is within this world-view that wailing and mourning at funerals are understood. These are vehicles or means of expressing the deeply felt sorrow at the evil of death. They are means of emotional and pshychological identification with the bereaved members of the community. They express the deeply felt loss of what is sacred and precious. Without emotional expression, people may not easily settle down to normal life and lasting peace.

From the speeches, these conclusions would be made. Death is an evil that cannot be accepted under any circumstances. The S.D.A. consolation that so and so is not dead but resting in the hands of God is just but sheer nonsense which hardly penetrates deep into the unconscious self of Abagusii. It is a lip service routine: How can evil be accepted such simply?

Death is caused by witches. This fact, S.D.A. christians would disbelieve because that is not what the church teaches. While they would like to give deaf ears to those claiming that witches cause death, the belief is part of their being otherwise witches are in the church too. When they disassociate themselves with the general belief, their aim, by implication, is not to show what they believe but to satisfy the needs of the church. The S.D.A. church is an impostor of its own world-view. Its aim has been to supplant Abagusii to its western oriented world-view - which does not recognize witches.

What consoles the bereaved and the community generally, at the death, is not the christian hope that one is in the hands of God waiting for the Lord's second coming, but, that one at the time of his death, had sons to survive him (Ref: speaker No. 3) and that such sons, if they were old enough at their father's death and had married.

As regards the causes of death, some Abagusii S.D.A. christians and non-christians are unanimous. Apart from the witchcraft and sorcery, it is also caused by malevolent spirits of the universe. A person who violates taboos cannot escape the wrath of malevolent spirits. A group of four known christian women³⁴ narrated freely what they found was the cause of the death of a fifty-six year old woman whose funeral they had attended.

The woman had violated a serious taboo (emuma). She had set her brother-in-law's house ablaze - and thereafter used the ashes (amaera) to smear her body and she also stirred some in a cup of water and drank it. That in itself was so cruel and enough to cause her death. She subsequently suffered a dangerous disease oroguto (an ailment in which one suffers high fever with a burning effect). She writhed with unbearable pain until she died.

In her death-bed, the community felt that she had to reconcile with her brother-in-law whose house she had set ablaze. Some drug was

prepared and put in her hand palm so that the brother-in-law licked it. Calmness and peace were believed to result or else another member of the immediate family would violate the same taboo - or suffer the disease.

Note that this story is told as it was narrated by the christian women to help us understand their world-view. This is one story the S.D.A. church would not wish them to believe. Are these women for the church's world-view or for the traditional world-view? This is the problem of the S.D.A. church in Gusii.

ii Initiation and the S.D.A. Church

Over time, the S.D.A. church has developed a negative attitude towards Abagusii custom of initiating the youth into adult members of the community. What it hates in particular is the practice of clitoridectomy, the songs and the feasts that accompany the practice³⁵. Along with these are the beliefs and rituals underlying not only the surgical operation but also some of the practices within the institution.

Never minding the significance of the songs cited, the fire that is kept burning throughout the seclusion period, the S.D.A. church condemns the practices on the basis of their worldliness and immorality³⁶. They are "unchristian inclinations" is the church's position. This has been and still is a source of dilemma among

many Abagusii S.D.A. adherents. The paradox is that, most of them have turned a deaf ear on the church's teaching. It has been hard to imagine how young girls cannot be initiated, how the youth who have become men and women through a painful experience cannot be praised after they have shown menly and womenly courage. At the height of this rite, most S.D.A. adherents put their faith aside³⁷.

The church's demand that the fire tradition end among S.D.A. christian is a haunting experience. The fire symbolizes continuity of life in the community and fertility. It points to married life. If it is extinguished during seclusion, chances of impotency and barrenness are almost 100%. Gusii women who prove that they are barren when married find it difficult to keep their marriage stable. It does not matter whether they are church wedded or not. She has go to know the cause of the misfortune.

This is in itself enough to draw such women out of the church to engage the services of a Diviner. Many a time, the Diviner relates the misfortune to the extinguished fire during seclusion. In that case, such women go back to their parents to repeat seclusion symbolically before rejoining husbands. Many recover and get children thereafter³⁸.

The S.D.A. church likens the fire tradition with idolatry. This continues to constitute a point of crisis between the S.D.A. church and its Abagusii adherents. Those who have abandoned it remain

psychologically haunted over the future of their children for the consequences are only determined after marriage.

The practice of clitoridectomy constitute another level of crisis. The church maintains that it is unchristian, unbiblical and unhygienic. The "latest" explanation given for the church's condemnation of the practice is that it reduces the women's sexual anxieties especially when they are aging³⁸. This reduction accordingly, has a negative impact on the stability of the family. At the time when the wife loses interest in sex, the husband remains sexually strong and does not get satisfaction. He therefore suffers either psychologically or decides to take up a second wife - and may break out of the church.

This explanation is scientific, while the significance of the practice of clitoridectomy among Abagusii lay in its religious value. On the other hand, the explanation contradicts the Gusii aim or meaning behind the practice. It was meant to reduce the sexual anxieties of the girls so that they remained in their parents' houses to wait for marriage. It was an anti-sexual practice that had become a norm of the community.

In view of this traditional explanation of the practice's significance, the S.D.A.'s condemnation finds itself illogical and unchristian in its consequences. On one hand, it may create a situation in which young girls are going to find it difficult to

cope up with their sexual desires not only before marriage, but also in marriage. Many of them may have outside wedlock children or illegitimate as they are called.

Many more young girls still would become prostitutes to get sexual satisfaction since they cannot be satisfied by a single man though he were a husband. In this respect, one cannot avoid saying that by condemning the traditional practice, the church would have done nothing more or less than weakening important morals of the Gusii community - instead of strengthening them.

Another argument may also counteract this ill founded S.D.A. motive for condemning what has been a practice associated with high moral and religious values. When the S.D.A. missionaries came to Gusii, they did not find unstable and disrupted families, whether polygamous or monogamous, which they sought to strengthen. Divorces were unheard of and illegitimate children were rare. All people belonged to families which catered for their needs. If anything, it was the S.D.A. missionaries who brought about family instability and disruption in Gusii. They established village schools into which family deviants escaped to avoid discipline.³⁹ In this regard, the church's basis of condemning cliterdectomy as explained above holds little.

Nevertheless, most of Abagusii have responded uniquely to this teaching. One deaconess condemned fellow christian women who

insisted on the practice despite the church's teaching⁴⁰. Such women encourage the practice in an interesting way - especially in families where husbands are christians. The young girls (initiates to be) are advised to sneak through windows and join others for the surgical operation. When such mothers are discovered by their husbands, they disclaim responsibility. However, they remain psychologically satisfied that their daughters have undergone the traditional rite and would be recognized among the womenfolk. This is in disregard of how much condemnation they may receive from fellow christians and the church.

The sneak-through-the window behaviour is a most interesting response. It happens mostly in christian families where the elder daughters or sisters had undergone the rite before the parents had responded to the church's influence. The young daughters discovering it, put a lot of pressure on their parents and especially mothers⁴¹. Such mothers finding the pressure unbearable decide to give in and they accordingly advise the young daughters to make sure that the fathers did not know or even admit they were allowed by them.

In a sense, many Gusii S.D.A. adherents have responded to church teaching by simply observing some of the following: Not singing the church forbidden hymns, not making fire for the initiates⁴² in the seclusion houses, not engaging the services of traditional surgeons, but medical nurses so that the operation is done under

circumstances considered hygienic by the S.D.A. church and by conducting the rite privately.

It has been remarkably difficult for most S.D.A. adherents in Gusii to stop the customary practice which is a norm of the community in which they live. They are living in a mixed community (of christians and non-christians) where their children have those from non-christian families as their playmates. Failure to undergo the rite may itself be a source of embarrassment and psychological frustration on the part of their children and this may lead to unstable personalities. The victims of christian influence may find it difficult to cope with their play-mates. It may even lead to suicide. This is a compelling influence.

Within this view (above) one important response need be noted. It can be described as do-it fast and clear-game⁴³. The fact that S.D.A. parents have found it rather difficult to impose the church teaching on their daughters, and, probably because they are not themselves convinced fully that the custom is not worthy preserving, has made many of them to let their daughters undergo the rite hurriedly so that they are free to serve the "church". One church elder remarked that he did not find the church teaching bothersome any more since he had finished with the initiation of his daughters long ago⁴⁴ and was now free to serve the "Lord". He indicated that his last born daughter underwent the rite five years ago.

The response considered most cruel is one in which Abagusii S.D.A. adherents have simply ignored S.D.A. church teaching to do with the initiation of girls. When the time for doing it comes, they simply call a surgeon home to operate the young girls and relevant feasts done as normal⁴⁵. What makes it slightly different from the traditional function is that no beer is brewed and drunk for the occasion.

One such initiation ceremony was attended by the author and interesting things noted. The function took place in the home of a young S.D.A. christian mother whose two young daughters underwent the rite. The function was attended by fellow S.D.A. christians and members of the general community. The candidates were escorted into the seclusion house amid traditional hymns praising them. Occasionally the singers could shift and recite a vague christian hymn. These were however short lived for they did not seem to taste well for the occasion. So they often quickly shifted to traditional hymns and dances where they mostly concentrated. They carried fresh tree branches in their hands which they waved in the air as they ululated non-stop.

After keeping the candidates in seclusion house, the group of women found themselves seats for a feast. Varieties of food were eaten which included ugali, meat, tea, and bread. There was no beer because it was a christian ceremony⁴⁶. The crisis continues

iii

Traditional Marriage and the S.D.A. Church

It is not the concern here to deal with how much modification S.D.A. christianity has caused in Abagusii traditional institution of marriage and neither is it concerned with how much the same institution has been modernized or westernized for that matter. Rather the concern is to unearth how much Abagusii have managed to retain the central traditional and religious values of the institution of marriage inspite of the S.D.A.'s teaching otherwise to the contrary.

Marriage among Abagusii in its traditional aspect was and is a goal towards which each member of the community grows. Its full meaning lay in its importance as a meeting point for the departed, the unborn and the living members of the community⁴⁷. It pointed to the past, the present and the future dimensions of Abagusii existence.

The requirement for every individual to marry is a psychological, social and religious obligation. Failure to marry either because one has certain religious convictions or any other reason is unforgivable. Individuals who fail to marry or take too long before they do it find life uncomfortable not only in the community but in the S.D.A. church as well where Abagusii are his or her fellow christians. Such people become objects of gossips among the

women - folk⁴⁸. Some finding that pressure unbearable decide to withdraw from the S.D.A. Church. One must therefore marry was almost a hundred percent response.

Marriage without children cannot survive. In the traditional Gusii community, children were the focus of marriage and without them, it was never complete. Abagusii S.D.A. adherents have found it difficult to stop this attitude to marriage. For purposes of illustration, two cases are mentioned here. A young man who wanted to wed in the S.D.A. church argued that he would first ensure that she was fertile before the wedding proceedings went ahead. Accordingly, he went with her sexually until she conceived, then they wedded. Abagusii do not believe in a marriage without children for that would be no marriage.

Similarly, church wedded marriages break down because of this traditional view of marriage - among Abagusii S.D.A. adherents. A man who wedded in the S.D.A. church later discovered that the woman he married was barren and could no longer give birth to children. He simply took up a second wife and the first wife was given the freedom to choose between going and staying⁴⁹. Such incidents are rampant in Gusii. Most or both S.D.A. converts and non - converts Abagusii, do not know how to live a marriage without children.

While taking up second wives is one way of solving the problem, it

is always a last resort. Before that, many of them would have made private endeavours contrary to S.D.A. church teachings. They would, for example, have consulted Diviners and magicians but in vain. They become desperate and the second wife is relief.

Even more valued are the male children in the marriage. These are believed to perpetuate the father's lineage in his ancestral land. If a marriage gave only female children, the couple become anxious such that the man may seek to get them by taking up a second wife. This is in disregard of whatever trouble he may have with the church. In this, more than in the church, is where his future hope lies i.e. to have male children to survive him after his physical death.

The significance attached to male children among Abagusii (S.D.A. adherents included) is illustrated by this short episode which is representative of many more of them. In one of the families of a polygamous home, were born five sisters all of whom had become christians because their mother was. They all wedded away leaving the mother alone because they did not have a brother. Although she did not have a son, their mother was given a share of her husband's plot (land). Awareness that at her death nobody would inherit her share of land since she had no son, became a source of mental discomfort. It was definitely going to be taken by one of the sons of her co-wife.

As much as the thought of losing that piece of land haunted the mother, it equally haunted her married S.D.A. christian daughters who saw their family forgotten. What they did is important for our study here. They contributed bridewealth, looked for an unmarried woman with outside wedlock children who were males, married her and placed her on their mother's land⁵⁰. This saved their family from being forgotten eternally. Then herein lies a glimpse of Abagusii hope.

Instead of strengthening it, the S.D.A. church has weakened and destabilized the institution of marriage in Gusii. Before a girl was married, her background was keenly scrutinized to ensure that her family was "clean" and that it had a good reputation. The girl's moral background was also established before she was considered for marriage. These considerations have been watered down by the church. Church membership is in itself enough to qualify one for marriage to another christian. Since it is not established that some S.D.A. church members are witches, it has been very possible for witches to marry into non-witching families. Such marriages break quickly after discovery is made.

Moreso, women who have been morally loose take cover in the church to marry and soon after the marriage abandon their faith. They start showing the behaviour they had before becoming S.D.A. members. This makes married life difficult leading to dissolution.

Marriage which was largely a social and religious institution in the traditional Gusii community, has been commercialised by S.D.A. church. While the church has made church wedding necessary for its members, the christian parents have made sure to raise the bridewealth (brideprice in the modern dimension) exorbitantly high⁵¹ taking advantage of the necessity imposed by the church. They know that those who wish to wed have no way but to comply.

More often than not, this behaviour (above) has made many S.D.A. adherents resort to elopement and thereafter rejoin the church. If this amounts to sin, then they sin deliberately. This is yet another aspect in which the S.D.A. church has weakened the institution of marriage in Gusii

Nevertheless, while the S.D.A. church is shifting the bridewealth payment trend from animals to hard cash (which is rarely debated openly as was the case in traditional community), Abagusii have made sure to retain an aspect of the traditional aspect of bridewealth payment. An animal must accompany the money.⁵² Attempts by the S.D.A. church to westernise the institution of marriage have been in vain.

To illustrate this point (above) an S.D.A. wedding ceremony attended by the author in Gusii may help here. At the bridewealth negotiating table, the bride's kinsmen insisted that they did not wish to negotiate it in the traditional way because it was purely

a christian affair. They maintained that it had to be done in the "modern way" in which case they meant, the christian way. This was not what the groom's kinsmen expected.

More interesting was the fact that the bride's kinsmen were demanding a lot of hard cash yet they did not want anybody to negotiate or bargain with them. For some time, the negotiations came to a snag until the bride's kinsmen accepted to come sown to reality. The negotiations ended peacefully. After agreeing on hard cash, the bride's kinsmen now demanded "animals" which had to accompany the money. The groom's kinsmen who anticipated this donated two cows.

Another worthy noting episode came when the groom and his group went to the bride's home to collect her to the church as is the routine. Before they could enter in the reception house, two elderly men confronted them at the door with surprising demands. They asked for a sufuria for the bride's mother, a blanket, and a coat. It was only after these things were produced that the party was finally allowed into the reception house.

In the traditional Gusii community, these items were presents aimed at winning the goodwill of the bride's parents which was believed to be essential for the prosperity of the marriage⁵³. Failure to win this goodwill would fetch malevolence in the marriage. The fact that this tradition has continued to be significant even among

S.D.A. adherents shows the value Abagusii attach to their cultural-religious traditions - that it is difficult to be detached.

Two days later, after the wedding, food visits were made from the bride's family⁵⁴. The meaning behind this practice is traditional. The first food visit was meant to check how the couple fared sexually. Normally they inquire from the bride privately. From their, faces, one could conclude that they found everything O.K. for the bride went about her new duties and responsibilities happily.

As tradition requires, the first food is not meant to be eaten by the groom and his friends. Indeed, that particular groom and his friends abstain from eating that food hence complying with traditional prescriptions - to which he was so deeply attached unconsciously. This is part of emegiro tradition which the S.D.A. church forbids its adherents to uphold⁵⁵.

Tribal attachments are also reflected in Gusii S.D.A. weddings. While the church does not discourage people from marrying outside the tribe, Abagusii S.D.A. adherents seem to know where and who to marry. It is in Gusii. The desire to perpetuate the purity of the Gusii community was part of the meaning behind marriage in the traditional community. For example, there have been few S.D.A. weddings in Gusii involving Luos and Kisii despite their being neighbours. While the young man and girls may wish to marry

intertribally, the parents, particularly Gusii parents object it vehemently.

When this study was being carried out, there was a case in which a prominent and long serving S.D.A. pastor and objected to the idea of his daughter wedding a Luo young man. The daughter insisted and eloped. The father (pastor) totally refused to recognize the marriage and even refused to accept the Luo bridewealth.

The arguments raised above should not be misinterpreted for example that the author is against tradition. Their aim is to show how Abagusii have managed to stick to their traditional practices regarding marriage contrary to S.D.A. church teaching.

iv

The Stick and Emeqiro traditions

The walking stick and the emeqiro (traditionally proscribed behaviour) attracted the attention of the author as a constant source of conflict between the S.D.A. church and its Abagusii adherents. The church considers them idolatrous.

The stick carrying tradition is common among Gusii women who like carrying sticks on journeys for example when visiting in-laws. For Gusii women, more than men, the stick is a symbol of status. It signifies that she is a mother and she has daughters or sons who are either married or capable of marrying hence she is worthy all forms of respect. The stick has by tradition become part of

their dressing style and they simply do not know how to do without it hence the church is putting them in a dilemma.

While the S.D.A. church has continued to condemn this tradition, the way Gusii women who are church adherents have responded is interesting. They have simply continued to use the stick particularly when visiting their married daughters⁵⁷.

The other tradition that has earned condemnation from the church is the Emegiro (traditionally forbidden behaviour) tradition - with regard to kinship relations.⁵⁸ This concept includes taboos but it is much wider in scope. Traditionally, Gusii parents did not enter freely in the houses of their married sons and daughters. There were norms regulating behaviour. Fathers do not enter the houses of their married sons or daughters. The mothers, however, would enter those of their sons but not those of their daughters. They are simply given seats outside. On the other hand, the eldest brother would not enter the house of his youngest married brother. This also applies to sisters.

The S.D.A. church has gone ahead to disrespect this deep rooted tradition. In origin, emegiro tradition is social. Its aim was to keep the children and parents safely distant so that they did not find and see one another's nakedness - which would lead to temptations. Such temptations, if they were allowed, would help weaken not only the moral standards of the family, but, the

community at large. A mother did not find it safe to see the nakedness of her son even when he is dead. Some of these emegiro traditions assumed religious dimensions.

The S.D.A. church has fought this tradition with an unwavering determination. It is simply because its significance has escaped the church's understanding, in as far as it regulates Gusii kinship relations.

During an S.D.A. Baptizimal ceremony which was keenly observed by the author, Omokundekane (the presiding S.D.A. priest or pastor) took a long time lecturing the Baptized converts on the need to abandon traditional inclinations. He then brought up the issue of emegiro and wondered whether any of the Babtized converts could still fear entering and eating in her or his married son's or daughter's house. Surprisingly and to the frustration of the particular pastor, one old man from the Baptized group, who had earlier not imagined that the church would teach against such a valuable tradition, rose up to answer the question. He said, "Now I will not enter and eat there." The pastor, feeling embarrassed, lost talk. The converts were made to think and feel that they were being liberated from traditional inclinations instantly. This seemed to be the meaning of conversion to christianity.

The observance of S.D.A. church teaching with regard to this tradition has proved to be difficult among Abagusii S.D.A.

adherents. This has been so not only because it is part of themselves but also because they level and interact with non-christian members of the community who make psychological demands upon them. For example, whether a christian, each individual naturally knows what the community expects of him or her as by its norms.

One long serving S.D.A. woman expressed her frustration regarding the church teaching concerning emegiro tradition. She simply found it difficult to observe the teaching since her counterparts, (where her daughters are married) are not christians⁶⁰. She felt she would surprise them if she did not carry her stick along.

v.

The Baptism of children

It is the wish of the S.D.A. church that its members name their children from the Bible. The baby girls are named in the church after sixty days and boys after thirty three days⁶¹. The girl stays for fourteen days and the boy eight days before they are seen by the general community. This is what the church teaches.

Paradoxically, this teaching makes little impact on Abagusii S.D.A. adherents, with regard to the naming of children the child is given a name at birth after its sex has been identified. The name given to a born child is selected from a series of those left by the latest living deads. This is the ekerecha name given to the child

to wait for the christian name to be given in the S.D.A. church after the prescribed days have expired.

The consequence of this is that children born to most S.D.A. adherents have two names each with a different origin. The traditional (ekerecha) or spirit name identifies the child with its lineage while the christian name identifies it with christianity. It is not surprising among Abagusii S.D.A. adherents to find that when one introduces her child with the christian name, one demands to know the child's ekerecha name. A child cannot miss the name of its people.

The impact of this kind of response among Abagusii S.D.A. adherents is clear. They have two names, one traditional, one christian. For example Joel Omaqwa, Mary Nyaboke, Ruth Nyambeki, Joseph Ongoro and so forth. It seems to be an accepted trend for the christian name to come first. Such names play psychological roles. It identifies the individual with the S.D.A. church on one hand and with the traditional religious community on the other.

vi. The traditional God in the light of S.D.A. Christianity

Traditionally, Abagusii did not believe in a God who was worshipped in a specific building. They did not believe in a God whose judgement would come at the end of time. They believed in a God who was everywhere and whose desire for the community was part of Abagusii consciousness. They believed in a God whose justice was instant and was seen to be done in the community. Individuals who transgressed the community norms received instant punishment.

The S.D.A. God is however confined to the church where he is taught to the people and worshipped. He is a God who does not keep interfering in the daily life of the community. He is no longer part of consciousness hence he does not regulate the private conduct of the people. Because of this, S.D.A. adherents who get consciously involved in evil conduct during the week do not bother even to confess their sins and ask God for forgiveness since nobody saw them sinning.

Cases of confessions of sin in the S.D.A. church involve only those who are aware that somebody, a fellow member, saw them sinning and that the church leadership is also aware of their evil conduct. In overall, such public confessions of sin are rare in the S.D.A. church⁶³. That partly explains why all sorts of evil doers including witches have found a place to thrive in the S.D.A. church.

The S.D.A. God does not punish people instantly. He is not God of instant justice. He is a God whose judgement would come at the end of time when each person's sins would be surfaced. He is a God who gives people time to repent⁶⁴ before His judgement day. Abagusii who did not know such a God before find themselves free to sin and repent since time for doing so is there.

An S.D.A. pastor who suffered a threatening throat disease remarked

interestingly when the author went to console him in his house. He expressed his worry that he was dying before he had confessed his sins to God to forgive him.

An S.D.A. chief, who had narrowly escaped the assailant's spear, had the following to tell a church congregation when he was given opportunity to address it. "I did not die because there is something the Lord wants me to do before I die. "I have not confessed my sins." This is an S.D.A. christianity impact on a people who did not know how to live freely in the community with a guilt conscience. Nevertheless, Abagusii have somehow retained some traditional beliefs to do with God. This is particularly so regarding God's punishment and justice. For purposes of illustration, the incidents below are relevant.

Some four S.D.A. women went to console a non-christian man who had narrowly escaped death by lightning. After a sabbath service, the women walked into the victim's compound. In their words of consolation, they told the man that it was God who was punishing him for his disobedience. He had refused to reciprocate and appreciate the blessings God had bestowed upon him.

The other incident involved a church pastor who told a story which reflected "his view" of God. The pastor narrated to the author a case in which God punished a man who had wedded in church and later

took up a second wife because the first marriage had failed to bring forth children⁶⁵. The man later was involved in a road accident which crippled him. The pastor did not want to mind other circumstances surrounding such an accident. It was simply "a direct punishment from God".

The christian God who is confined to the church does not concern some Abagusii in their daily life. He does not even intervene in the community during crises. When Abagusii S.D.A. adherents are in crisis, they go out and address themselves to the traditional God through sacrifices and later go to the church for the christian God to forgive them. Therefore, the christian God is God of peace and not God of crisis. Indeed, Onye kiaborire rogoro, kerigerie maate. (If it is not up there, find it down there).

The S.D.A. christian God is simply Omochenu (clean). He does not manifest his presence through natural phenomenon namely the sky, the moon, the sun and many more of his creations. Christianity has simply desecralized what Abagusii conceived as manifestations of Divine presence. In this case, S.D.A. christianity is driving a community that was initially religious to religionlessness.

This then brings us to the question of christian hope and salvation among Abagusii in the light of traditional inclinations. It is a question that rises out of this dilemma facing Abagusii S.D.A. adherents regarding the church's teaching versus tradition.

c. CHRISTIAN HOPE AND SALVATION

This concept is discussed in the light of sections (a) and (b) of this chapter (above). After condemning all that Abagusii believed and practised traditionally, the western S.D.A. missionaries had instructed them to shift their hope to the future when the Lord will come and save them from this world. The S.D.A. church has continued to cherish this hope along the missionary lines. It is a hope based on "other worldly" as against "this worldly." Abagusii S.D.A. adherents are told to look at the cross of Jesus at all times when suffering and when in peace⁶⁶.

Abagusii in their world-view did not conceive two worlds, one the present and another one to come in the future, when the present conditions of existence would be destroyed and renewed. They did not conceive of another life to come that would be drastically different from this one. There were not such thoughts as a world where there would be immortality, permanent peace and rest, permanent justice, where there would be no institutions such as initiation, marriage and so forth. This S.D.A. teaching would constitute what Abagusii would call utopianism in relation to what they knew about existence.

For Abagusii the cosmos was one. It was within this worldly that all hope and salvation was to be sought. Consequently all problems

that arose were solved there and then - for that was the right time and place. Diseases, natural disasters and death were coped with accordingly. Hope and salvation therefore lay in solving and coping with problems in human existence. It lay in marrying, having children and ensuring the perpetuation of life in the community.

Crisis situations help determine where Abagusii (both S.D.A. adherents and non-adherents) real hope and salvation lies. Diseases were identified as the major causes of weakened faith among S.D.A. adherents. When caught up in such crisis, some S.D.A. adherents find it difficult to continue nursing the christian hope and salvation - which is long coming. They grow suspicious and turn to traditional means of dealing with diseases and other problems. They engage the services of Diviners and magicians which amounts to going against church teaching. After solving the crisis traditionally, such people then find themselves free to continue with church life.

A pastor narrated to the author a case involving a couple who were members of his flock⁶⁷. Their lonely son was possessed or rather developed a mental problem so that the couple felt frustrated. They nursed the christian hope no longer. They engaged the services of a Diviner and were advised to offer sacrifices to the ancestor spirit accordingly. Their son recovered and they came back to church. Although the church condemned them, they were not

as much bothered as when their only son was going to die. They were yet to consider whether to continue being church members or withdraw altogether.

Most of Abagusii people fear being converted into the S.D.A. church membership. They want time to solve their problems traditionally before they join it⁶⁸. S.D.A. adherents are seen as those who do not have problems in their families otherwise they could not be church members. When they have problems, for example to do with diseases which do not recover, they are mocked by the neighbouring unchristian members of their community for their "foolishness." They are too foolish "not to consult Diviners and perhaps bring the ancestor into the house" (korenta esokoro nyomba) and so forth. They are conceived as prisoners of the church for they cannot turn to tradition once S.D.A. christian⁶⁹.

All hope is about life after death. This was both the concern of Abagusii in their traditional society and the S.D.A christian church in its message. Abagusii had made this hope a reality in a unique way. After death, a person is survived in personal immortality by children born to him in his ancestral land. To be without children to survive one after his or her physical death, was, and is considered most hopeless, evil and abnormal state⁷⁰. When Abagusii (S.D.A. included) marry (as discussed earlier), their aim is not to fulfil the Biblical tradition but to nurture this hope.

The final destiny of man, according to Abagusii traditional conceptions, is not the "other world" that is drastically different from the present, but rather the "spirit world." An individual dies and joins the spirit world from where he keeps on interacting with the living members of his community. The children either born to them, their daughters and sons or their relatives are named after them otherwise their spirit would not rest. This is the kind of life most Abagusii hope for after death otherwise to go without children named after one is a misfortune.

With these few remarks, we can interpret Abagusii response and conception of the S.D.A. message of hope and salvation. Since the christian hope is long coming, the most of Abagusii S.D.A. adherents are fond of using the apiritual and psychological materials, provided by traditional beliefs, to go through crises of life, such as diseases and natural disasters in order to live longer to see the dawning of the S.D.A. promise. Why else does a Gusii S.D.A. adherent go out of church to engage in forbidden tradition and later turn to the church? The main explanation is the psychological one - to survive.

Secondly, in a way, the christian hope, if there is at all, as promised by the "church" is suspended till one has satisfied the requirements of the traditional hope which partly include sacrifices to ancestors for good health and prosperity, name

children after them to ward off their anger and remain secure from the anger of mysterious powers by upholding the established community moral standards.

Thirdly, the christian hope and salvation remain a mystery in most Abagusii consciousness. It is unreal and illusory which escapes immediate concern. It does not occupy the programme of Abagusii daily concern. It is a distant hope which does not belong to the dimension of real existence yet the real and present conditions of existence constitute Abagusii noble concern. It has failed to be a reality for prayers are never answered.

Fourthly, Abagusii S.D.A. adherents are actually nursing two hopes opposed to one another. Two worlds opposed to one another. They cannot easily say no to S.D.A. promise and yet they cannot definitely say no to the kind of hope provided by traditional beliefs.

The S.D.A. church's persistent attempts to supplant Abagusii from their worldview and put them in the western oriented world-view has done nothing than putting them in a deep psychological struggle which is there eternally as long as such teaching demands continue.

In this chapter, we have seen that Abagusii response to western S.D.A. christianity has been varied. At the unconscious level, Abagusii response to western S.D.A. missionary christianity is

negative for it requires them to abandon their cultural heritage yet it has been totally difficult. Their response to christianity"per se" is very positive in as far as accepting it, getting baptized and belonging to church membership is concerned. Therefore in as far as accepting christianity as a religion is concerned, Abagusii have been very positive. What they voiced is that their cultural religious values be accepted by the S.D.A. church to which they are members.

This kind of response is essentially indecisive indecisive in as far as it is neither very negative nor very positive. At various levels, Abagusii S.D.A. adherents have adopted christianity along with its western values and ideas yet they cannot easily relinquish traditional values.

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CHAPTER SIX

IME Y'OMWANA - A BREAK AWAY MOVEMENT IN THE S.D.A. CHURCH IN GUSII SEEN WITHIN GUSII CULTURAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to continue with the theme of Abagusii response to western S.D.A. christianity, in another dimension. It is dealing with a splinter group that has rapidly shaken the foundations of the S.D.A. church in Gusii. For purposes of this study the movement is identified specifically with one name - Ime Y'omwana (In the Son). Most of the material for this chapter is based on interviews with the founder of the movement and his followers.

a. THE FOUNDATION OF IME Y'OMWANA MOVEMENT

Ime Y'Omwana, a protest movement against the S.D.A. church in Gusii started in the late 1970's. It started at Riokindo S.D.A. church where the founder, Mr. Naftal Ombati, had been a member. With time, the movement spread widely to cover almost the entire Gusii, where the S.D.A. had established itself and even beyond.

Whenever the missionaries of the movement were given opportunities to deliver sermons, they condemned the worldly aspects of the S.D.A. church and acquired more followers. It did not take long before Ime Y'Omwana movement acquired a huge following which shook

the foundations of the early 20th century S.D.A. missionary oriented church. This wind attracted not only the concern of the church leadership but also of the government.

Naftal Ombati, the founder of the movement had a humble family background. At the time of this study, he was aged 35 years. He did not have a long educational background. He had pushed his school education up to form six after which he taught at Riokindo mixed secondary school up to early 1980's. He headed the same school for over seven years before he resigned to engage himself in preaching the Gospel of Christ, leading to the foundation of the breakaway movement from the S.D.A. church.

Mr. Ombati had a deep religious background in the S.D.A. church where his parents belonged. Earlier on, after he had finished his "A" level studies, he had been employed by a private company in Nairobi. Life became difficult for him because he was forced to work on Saturday, against the teaching of the S.D.A. church¹. Ombati resigned and it was then that he was employed at Riokindo mixed school.

While he was the headmaster of that school, Ombati took advantage to devote his students to the ideals of christian life. He assembled them together on Wednesdays for sermons, which could take so many hours. Occasionally, he could talk himself to high level of excitement at which he could shed tears and sweat heavily². Nevertheless he enjoyed his preaching and he was a source of

happiness and inspiration to his students.

During his time as the headmaster of Riokindo Mixed School, the school made great strides in moral progress. He left his students as free as possible to decide for themselves between good and wrong in their life. He rarely employed corporal punishment as a means of disciplining the students for to him, it was unchristian³. Most important is the way he exploited this opportunity to preach widely in different and distant churches in Gusii. In his school house, he resided with some of his students whom he put all efforts to develop spiritually. These helped him to spread his Gospel far and wide. Every Saturday morning, each of them woke up to go and preach in different churches. What was most surprising is that their Gospel sounded new and outside the S.D.A. conventional norms and standards. It was exposing the S.D.A. adherents to a new life in Jesus Christ. It was the Gospel of the final sanctification of all christians at the cross.

Ombati's aim was not to found a new sect.⁴ His aim was to bring about internal reforms in the S.D.A. church. According to him, S.D.A. church is both "fallen" and "foreign." Because of this background, there was no need for another church since the church was there. It only needed to be reformed.

Interviewed at his sickbed, Ombati described his movement as one

of the true Gospel; proclaiming Jesus as the true saviour and that the act of salvation was finished at the cross⁵.

Personally, Ombati did not have a name for his movement. Any movement proclaiming the Gospel of truth need not have a name for Jesus' name is enough. "It is a movement that derives its strength from the holy spirit as based in the mission of Christ."

Ime Y'Omwana. Ombatism, the church of Christ, as the movement. The founder did not see any need why any movement proclaiming the "true Gospel of Jesus" should be registered or seek permission from a worldly authority to proclaim that Gospel. He likened his movement to the early church when there was persecution of those who proclaimed the Gospel in the Mediterranean and surrounding regions. Following the harassment of the movement by the government, Ombati thought that there is no freedom of worship in Kenya.

By and large, Ombatism is now an underground movement since it is being tracked down by the government. The movement was accused of immorality and obstructing development⁶. This gave the government grounds on which to suppress it. The process of suppressing Ombatism continues but the movement continues to spread widely.

Ombatism or Ime Y'Omwana draws membership mainly from the S.D.A. church. All of those who have joined it have S.D.A. background⁷.

It has been difficult for anybody who has not been a member of S.D.A. to join it for he or she would not have a reason to do it. Members are acquired in a protestant spirit.

There are other ways through which the movement finds membership. One is through marriage. Men who are members of the movement make girls with non-christian backgrounds wives who later join the movement. While the movement is declared illegal and therefore does not preach in public, its devotees make private missionary adventures into families and convert them to join the movement. Most of them are cunning evangelists.

The unique feature of the movement is that it does not have written records of membership or even the working programme. All work of preaching and recruiting members is done through the inspiration of the holy spirit⁸. Accordingly, they do not require such written records. Members are distributed in most areas of Gusii where S.D.A. is and they could number to thousands.

The following reasons accounts for the foundation of the movement. First is the foreignness of S.D.A. christianity as it is. It had persistently remained alien to the spiritual needs of its adherents. It has maintained the conventionalism established by the western S.D.A. missionaries. Because of this, its Abagusii adherents have continued to remain in the same sins they were before they became christians. It has become a den of sinners,

witches and thieves. Ombati⁹, the founder, told stories of S.D.A. members caught red handed night-running and nailed to death. It is the S.D.A. church to blame.

Second, the S.D.A. church has perpetually and deliberately hidden the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, it has continued to teach the law. In effect, the church has become a worshipper of the law instead of Jesus. This, according to Ombati, has caused "hopelessness" among the adherents. This situation of hopelessness is behind the dwelling in sins among the S.D.A. adherents. The true Gospel of Jesus and Jesus himself has remained too distant to S.D.A. believers. He has been mystified. Ombati claimed to have discovered this truth and he earned excommunication from the S.D.A. church.

The third reason is the S.D.A. church's restrictions on spiritual freedom. In its programme of worship, the S.D.A. church did not allow spiritual talents such as speaking and interpreting tongues - yet those are some of the spiritual gifts and freedoms Christ gave his disciples at pentecost. The S.D.A. church did not also allow its adherents to express themselves freely in praise of the Lord. They were not allowed to praise the Lord by any other means other than the conventional ones. The adherents, for example, could not shout with excitement, club their hands, ululate, cry or make any body movement to express gratitude to the Lord¹⁰. They could not have opportunity to caress one another as children of God

and demonstrate love for one another. In this sense therefore, the S.D.A. church stood for spiritual oppression. So the founders of the movement had reason to break out and enjoy spiritual freedom.

The fourth reason to explain Ime Y'omwana movement is the S.D.A. church's false-time-setting tendencies regarding parousid¹¹. The S.D.A. church in its foundation teaching is based on the second coming theory. The Lord's coming was set to be in 1844 but it was a big disappointment. Again, according to Ombati, he was set to come in 1925, repeating the same mistake. Again nothing happened. This led the founders to conclude that S.D.A. is based on false teaching.

Ombati set to disprove the S.D.A. church by attacking this false-time-setting tendencies. He set to eliminate the teaching because it is illusory. The Lord's second coming is "unknown." In consequence, the S.D.A. church has been repeating a process of filling its adherents with false hope.

On the basis of these reasons, Naftal Ombati described the S.D.A. church as one that has failed to give its adherents a true hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has failed to give its adherents a final hope - hence, creating hopelessness instead.

An issue that earned Ombati and his followers final condemnation and subsequent excommunication from the S.D.A. church was their

ardent determination to finish the S.D.A. church financially. They put the doctrine of offerings and tithes to question, particularly the way it is done, and the purpose for which the money is put. Those who preached the Gospel of Jesus earned no pay for their services. They laboured for the Lord. They never stayed in Mansions, they never drove expensive cars and so forth. They were simply poor people who lived with the poor. The church's financial practices had made it more commercially than spiritually minded.

In its hierarchical organization, the S.D.A. church, according to one of the followers of the movement, did not reflect the image of the Lord Jesus who it served¹². It has a president in America, who is responsible for the entire church in the world with its headquarters in Washington D.C., it has regional presidents, executive Directors, and Directors at various levels. These aspects are too worldly for a church of Christ.

This worldly church hierarchy has an alienating influence on the people it is supposed to serve. It is this element that contributed to trigger off Imme Y'omwan movement in the S.D.A. church. Christ had not appointed presidents and executive directors when he founded his church. He did not pay his disciples. He simply sent them out to preach the Gospel and rely on the little they got from the people to whom they preached.

Out in the cold, the followers of Ime Y'Omwana movement are

undertaking a new religious experience.

b.

THE THEOLOGY OF IME Y'OMWANA MOVEMENT

The movement's theology is pauline in character. However, it proved so revolutionary to what the S.D.A. church had always taught. What it had been teaching was given a new perspective.

More than any other, it was the theology of the cross that gave Imme Y'Omwana (In the Son) a firm hold. The cross represents a final act of salvation of mankind and whoever accepts it is saved¹³.

At the cross, the blood of Jesus sanctified all believers. Accordingly therefore, all believers in Jesus are holy and therefore incapable of sinning. Whoever indulges in sin cannot claim to be a believer in Jesus. The movement's followers do not believe in sinning any more. However, those who are members and believers in a worldly church are capable of sinning and living like any other ordinary persons that have not experienced Christ's act of sanctification.

The crucifixion of Jesus washed away the sins of christians and made them holy. This is the experience that the movement's members cherish. They were made new. The S.D.A. church did not put any emphasis on the doctrine of sanctification at the cross. This gave its adherents the opportunity to sin for they had the freedom of

doing so and repenting. The experience of sanctification is immediate upon one's conversion to christianity¹⁴.

Christians are justified by faith in Jesus and not the law and its works as the S.D.A. church persistently puts it to its adherents. It is only faith that may give christians eternal and final hope¹⁵. The S.D.A. church's emphasis on the law has made Jesus a distant person from its followers. It had mystified the truth of the christian Gospel. It was upon his contact with this truth that Ombati rose up to declare it to those from whom it had been hidden. By disclosing this hidden truth, the movement has continued to win more and more converts¹⁶. It was a "bitter truth" to learn.

The doctrine of the holy spirit is also central to the movement. It is the Lord's free gift to each individual follower of Jesus who has accepted and proclaims the Lord Jesus as his saviour. It guides the conduct of each christian in all decisions that he makes, including marriage¹⁷. It is not possible for one guided by the holy spirit to go about sinning.

Each christian has a spiritual gift. To one is given the spirit of preaching, to the other the gift of speaking and interpreting tongues, the gift of healing and performing miracles, and so forth¹⁸. It protects the christian from all evil including diseases such as those caused by witches. It guides them in prayers and speaks words of praise to the Lord through the believers¹⁹.

For the movement's followers, eschatology is not something to come but a present reality. Their eschatological perspective can be described as "this world-heaven." The Lord's kingdom was no longer something to be waited and long coming. It is a present reality and the true christians experience it in their day to day life²⁰. This is where it differs with the S.D.A. church which teaches about a kingdom to come in the future. For the movement's adherents, heaven is an experienced reality.

Among other things, the adherents of the movement do not feel oppression for they experience heaven. They have triumphed, over anything worldly - may it be government authority, abuses from other non-followers or any pain that may stand on their way. They simply feel "peace" and freedom. They do not bother themselves with worldly desires such as food, clothing and shelter. On the other hand little attention is given to material life. This is what onlookers may call utopianism²¹.

c. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF IME Y'OMWANA

Ime Y'Omwana movement has got the following characteristics as observed.

- (i) The members show clear dislike for the S.D.A. church, out of which they broke and regard its members with contempt. The S.D.A. church is described as "Babylon" ²² (meaning a fallen church

just like the Biblical Babylon where the Israelites had been taken to captivity after they had fallen short of the glory of their God).

The movement's members or followers also employ the term Edini (a Kiswahili word meaning religion) to refer to the S.D.A. church.) Accordingly; the S.D.A. adherents are referred to as Abanvadini²³ (Religious people). They find it difficult to describe the S.D.A. church as a church of Christ since it has fallen "short of his glory." It is simply a religious institution which has become the "end" of christian worship instead of christ himself.

No wonder, a fifty-two year old mother who had been a member of the S.D.A. church for thirty years, Priscillah Mbera, confessed that she had been a horrible sinner under the cover of the S.D.A. church. Baptism and church attendance was enough in as far as S.D.A. membership was concerned.

I had been a terrible witch, I wore charms and fetishes all over my clothes up to the church's door. Jesus Christ's glory had been far away from me; I had not met him before because he was kept in the church where I left him. I had not known whom I had been worshipping for I only belonged to the S.D.A. church. I sympathize with those still in the S.D.A. church for the cross of Jesus remains far and a mystery to them. I now walk not "behind" but in front of the cross of Jesus²⁴.

This long confession of one of the movement's adherents can weel

be the summary of its attitude to the S.D.A. church and its adherents. The members of the movement believe that the S.D.A. adherents are simply "lost" people.

(ii) Speaking and interpretation of tongues is another feature of Ime Y'Omwana. This they do freely without restrictions like the S.D.A. church does.

(iii) The members of the movement show deep love for one another since the S.D.A. church hunts for them up and down and reports to government authority, they meet in very private places. For example, they meet in private homes of members and sometimes in bushes²⁵. They travel long distances to meet one another and rejoice together as children of God. "We are brothers by Faith²⁶."

We do not plan where to meet, we do not have timetables, we meet anywhere where the holy spirit directs us. You cannot know where and when we meet unless you are one of us²⁷.

Old men and women, young men and girls have developed deep love and fellowship as children of Jesus. The height of spiritual excitement and love dawns when the members meet to sing, pray, and rejoice together. Parents and children become sisters and brothers in the Lord.

(iv) The movement's members hold extravagantly long prayers accompanied by long moments of fellowship and rejoicing together. While one of the members utters words of prayer, the other punctuate it with words of praise - Haleluya! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Amen! Haleluya! etc. Prayer itself therefore constitutes a moment of uncontrolled excitement.

(v) The other element that characterizes the movement's members is the high level of spiritual excitement. The name of Jesus is uttered extravagantly by the members in all walks of life as they interact with the general community. Spiritual presence is felt and regulates conduct. They do not show any interest in non-spiritual matters. On the other hand, they live in a spiritual world. They shout shamelessly, laugh loudly and show deep emotion in matters of faith.

(vi) There is also the tendency of the movement's members to ardently identify any person suppressing or condemning them with Satan. Satan, according to them works not only through individuals but the S.D.A. church and the government²⁸. When abused by any individual, the members sympathize and see Satan operating in such persons. So they extravagantly call upon the name of Jesus to triumph Satan - in that person. "Yeso Abakwe (Praise the Lord).

This element of identifying all oppressors with Satan has posed chaos in families that were previously well organised. In families

where the wives are members of the movement while the husbands have refused to join, there are considerable rifts. Such husbands are identified with Satan by their wives and children (if they have followed the mother). Such husbands are prayed for so that Jesus may triumph Satanic influences. The impact of such conduct on the husbands is not hidden. They feel fooled hence get psychological frustration. Because of this, many families have crumpled down beyond repair hence leading to serious states of family disprgamation.

(vii) Spiritual healing is another element of Ime Y'Omwana movement. The members show great despise for modern medicine. They simply rely on the power of the holy spirit. When they have any member of the movement sick, they simply come together and offer prayers and those who are sick heal instantly²⁹.

One very unique feature of the adherents of Ime Y'Omwana movement is that they do not feel pains resulting from sickness. They even claim that they never fall sick. Paradoxically, the founder of the movement was perpetually sick. He had suffered a skin disease for many years. When he responded to this study, he was in his sickbed but he never complained of any pain. He simply showed a "happy" and "healthy" face. He had been imprisoned for two years for activities related to his movement but he was never bitter for a human body (which suffered) is useless. It is simply "mud" which is prone to destruction.

Furthermore, the members of the movement do not fear death. For them to die while a member of the movement is to rest in the hands of Jesus. They do not mourn and wail the death of their member. While other relatives go about wailing, they simply laugh, rejoice and praise the Lord for their "member had joined Jesus." They even rarely attend funerals.

One of the members of the movement, a woman whose past medical record showed that she always had problems when delivering, risked her life one time when she refused to go to hospital to deliver there. She put all her faith in the Lord. The labour pains killed her³⁰. When she was about to die, her last words were as follows: "Tell my brothers and sisters in the Lord that I have died in his name." She did not bother to know the kind of life the children she had left behind would lead. When her fellow members received the news about what she said they "rejoiced" and praised the Lord."

(viii) Focus on "other worldly" than "this worldly". For this sect's members, heaven is a reality. Their concern is concentrated on other worldly and they therefore do not mind this worldly life. They are no longer seekers of self. It is this belief that is most disturbing to the general community. Among other things, the members consider all forms of material life this worldly. In this case, the movement is a protest against western materialism projected by the S.D.A. church.

For one, they do not mind school education which is western. When it was started, the movement saw many school children drop out of school to go preaching and lead simple lives. Some returned school fees given by their parents to pay at school³¹. They did not see the need for education which only pointed them to a material future. Since they did not have room for materialism, they simply dropped out of schools. It was this single reason that necessitated government intervention to crash the movement.

This dislike for materialism has also made life difficult in afflicted families. The members do not attach any value to money and for general material things. Subsequently, hygienic conditions have deteriorated. Compounds have disintegrated and sank in bushes. Farms have grown bushy for no adequate attention is given. The members do not mind what food to eat, houses to live in and clothes to put on.

(ix) Lack of organization is another characteristic of the movement. Organization, in the modern sense of the word is absent. The movement does not have premises in which to conduct their worship services. They meet in bushes and houses of the members where they stay overnight. For example, the founder of the movement had turned his house into a church premise where he delivered sermons to his followers. When being ambushed by the police, they are normally found in these houses and they hardly run away at the sight of the police³².

The movement does not have an administrative hierarchy. It operates on the egalitarian principle. Everybody is a leader and a preacher. It does not have written records of membership, registration and so forth. "Any group or organization proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus becomes worldly once it is organized hierarchically³³.

(x) Unlike the S.D.A. church out of which it broke, the movement encourages its members to play drums, clup hands, dance and ululate extravagantly during worship services. These features accompany Gospel hymns. Generally, the members freely use all means available to them to praise the Lord.

(ix) Bible reading and interpretation. The members of the movement seem to have a thorough understanding of the Bible and especially the New Testament. Bible reading is always a thrilling exercise. It provides another moment of spiritual excitement and extravagant praise to the Lord. The Bible is a source of constant spiritual nourishment.

The Y'Omwana movement has got to be seen within the S.D.A. missionary context of presenting christianity to Abagusii. They laid more emphasis on "this worldly" than "other worldly." For example, the missionaries laid emphasis on education, health and hygiene, farming and general material wellbeing. Parouria was a

distant reality. The movement has taken dimensions opposed to the missionary enterprise.

It is a protest against the foreignness of S.D.A. christianity. It has maintained the form or image of western missionaries among Abagusii and has failed to appeal to them spiritually. This trend has led some form of conventional religious behaviours and high levels of "spiritual emptiness" among its flock.

The S.D.A. church's worldly concerns and foreignness have made it look like a commercial investment. It is bent on making money from its adherents without minding their spiritual needs.

I had always given a lot of money to the church without knowing its purpose. The money was said to continue the work of God, cater for the disabled, the orphans, yet all around me are the disabled and orphans yet the church has never helped them; but the offerings were given every Saturday. It went to America to serve its purpose there. My spiritual commitment was measured by how much I gave each time and was praised by the church for giving more than others³⁴.

The movement in its nature constitutes a cultural protest. In the first place, the adherents live to their religious commitment. Just like the traditional religious commitment in the traditional society, the adherents of the movement do not have room for secularism. It is their religious commitment that determines and

influences their day to day conduct.

Another notable cultural feature is the use of the drum, dancing, clapping and ululating as means of expressing spiritual gratitude. The members have protested against S.D.A. church marriages and they therefore marry outside the church without wedding. Love between two is enough to bring them together as husband and wife.

d. THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGY OF IME Y'OMWANA

Here we shall discuss the social-psychological aspects of Ime Y'Omwana with regard to membership and general behaviour. A gross study of the individual members found that they had frustrating social-economic backgrounds. People who were poor and could not afford some things which other people could achieve easily, gave up the task of seeking to do the same. Young boys and girls who found school life difficult gave up. They were prone to be prey to a movement which advocated poverty as the ideal christian life. Poverty to them is therefore a value.

The S.D.A. church also offered an economic challenge to them. The church's commercialization of basic institutions such as marriage made many who wished to marry in the church desperate. They could not meet the church's requirements. Such people also became prey to a movement that advocated free marriages. Indeed, many young men who joined the movement from the S.D.A. church got themselves

wives soon after. They escaped the challenge of the church.

Some of the followers of the movement have poor medical records, having suffered bad health persistently. The founder, for example suffered a persistent skin disease which definitely must have haunted him psychologically. This sick group decided to accommodate pains inflicted by the diseases by belonging to a movement that was bent on disassociating self-consciousness from the physical body. A movement that advocates spiritual healing with little regard for modern medicine. As a result, the members of the movement have a strong capacity of coping with pain inflicted either by disease or any other means including human.

As mentioned already, the school children who dropped out to join the movement were those exposed to parental pressure from home and found school life frustrating. For one, they could not understand well like others and could not accommodate corporal punishment from teachers. They found freedom in a movement that did not place value in school education.

However, as a psychological response against western christianity, the movement has to be seen within the Abagusii and African world-view generally. Abagusii attached much importance to the past and present realities of existence as they affected the future. They did not have a future that is drastically different, or one in which there would be no more suffering like in the past and

present, where there would be no more toiling and labouring to achieve the daily needs of life, where there would be no one restricting the other, where there would be only rejoicing was a bit too illusory to Abagusii minds. Ime Y'Omwana is by all means an attempt to make this christian promise an existential reality. It is no longer a coming reality but present one

This can be described as a psychologically realized eschatology. The cross of Jesus is no longer a historical christian reality but a present one. "They walk in front of the cross instead of behind it³⁵. No more suffering, no pains felt, no more labouring but joyful life in the Lord who resides amidst the adherents. The members of the movement are psychologically living in the christian promised heaven. They no longer feel poor any more.

These are some of the psychological features the movement's adherents show. Lastly, there is need to see Ime Y'Omwana in the light of other schismatic movements in East Africa.

e. IME Y'OMWANA IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER SCHISMATIC
MOVEMENTS IN E. AFRICA

Schismatic movements have been part of the history of the christian church in Africa. For the purpose of this study, we shall take one of such movements in East Africa and compare it with Ime Y'Omwana and note any specific features common to both. We shall take Watu

wa Munqu among the Kikuyu told by J. Kenyatta in his book Facing Mt. Kenya³⁶. Watu wa Munqu (People of God) came up as a result of a controversy between the Gikuyu and the Scotland Mission, after the latter had seriously attacked the custom of cliteridectomy.

Kenyatta attributes some of the following characteristics to Watu wa Munqu. First, they are fundamentally concerned with the religious aspects of life. they claim to be holy men and capable of communicating with God directly. As a demonstration of their sacred mission, they have given up their property and homes, maintaining that to have property is to sin. Having been chosen to serve God, they have no need of accumulating wealth.

Secondly, Watu wa Munqu have headquarters in various places among the Kikuyu where they have built temporary shrines. Here they meet to cook, eat and sleep in common.

Thirdly, the group conduct prayers with arms raised to the sky. During prayer, they tremble violently as a sign of the holy spirit entering them. While possessed with the holy spirit, they are transformed from ordinary beings and are in common with Mwene Nyaga.

Fourth, in their social interaction with the rest of the community, they have a very special way of hand-shaking. They claim to have physical strength above that of the average man. They demonstrate

their bodily supernatural power in hand-shaking. When travelling, they do not carry food for they believe that the Lord will provide them with the things necessary for their sustenance. They sleep generally under trees, on the hills and mountain sides. They hate money and foreign articles.

The miracles performed by Jesus and His Apostles are some of the inspiring elements, especially the raising of the dead and healing of the sick. Being the chosen people, they believe that they possess this power, and they go about trying to heal the sick. Sometimes they succeed in doing so and this gives them more prestige among the indigeneous population.

Watu wa Munqu also include in their new religion most of the ritualistic points which the missionaries had condemned. By widening the basis of their religious ceremonies, the Watu wa Munqu were able to get a large hearing especially from those who were suffering spiritual hunger in the missionary church.

Watu wa Munqu do not indulge in politics nor do they belong to any political organization. They devote their time to religious activities. The western missionaries branded the followers of the movement as sinners and therefore collaborated with the colonial administration to suppress the movement. The movement went underground.

Watu wa Munqu has very many features in common with Ime Y'Omwana regardless of the time each of them came into being. For example, Watu wa Munqu came into being during colonialism while Ime Y'Omwana came in the late twentieth century. Both of them are fundamentally concerned with the religious aspect of life - claiming to be on a sacred mission. They do not attach any value to material life hence they see no need of accumulating wealth.

Both of them constitute harmonious groups in the community. they meet in certain private places known only to the members to eat and worship together and sleep in common. The holy spirit is given a prominent role to play in their day to day conduct. It enters them when they worship and is part and parcel of their life.

Both exhibit certain special characteristics in their social interaction with the general community. They live by demonstrating their religious commitments.

They believe they are on a Godly mission. When out to carry their mission, they carry nothing along with them for God would provide food and security. They do not work on a pay since they do not value money. Some members of Ime Y'Omwana who were working resigned on fleining it.

They believe in spiritual healing. They have contempt for western medicine. The miracles performed by Jesus and his disciples

constitute a source of inspiration and they believe they can do the same. Accordingly they do not believe in taking diseases to hospitals for Christ is capable of healing them if they have faith in him. They believe that they have the spiritual power to heal the sick.

Both take advantage of spiritual hunger in mission churches to thrive. They capitalise on this single weakness - namely the failure of the missionary church to appeal to the spiritual needs of Africans. In the groups, they are free to dance, ululate, play drums and so forth.

The paradoxical fact about both groups is that they are considered a nuisance both by the mother church (the missionary oriented church) and the Government - which made attempts to suppress them. The Church of Scotland Mission collaborated with the colonial administration to suppress Watu wa Mungu movement. Many of its adherents were arrested and imprisoned without defending themselves. The S.D.A. church and the government have collaborated at high levels to suppress Ime Y'Omwana. Its leader and many more of its followers were arrested and imprisoned without defending themselves. Both movements were driven underground by these repressions.

Ime Y'Omwana is also comparable with the African Brotherhood Church in Ukambani³⁷, Legio Maria³⁸ among the Luo, and Dini ya Musambwa

among the Luyia. Ime Y'Omwana however lacks in one phenomenon which all these other movements emphasize. Its followers do not consciously respect or integrate into their religious system the values of African traditional religion although such may find justification in the Bible. However, they widely express themselves within the African worldview.

General arguments have been advanced to explain these forms of African response to western missionary christianity. First is the western missionary suppression of the African spirit³⁹. Instead of giving Africans Christ to repent, the missionaries gave them western civilization and then christianity. This missionary approach so largely remained at the intellectual and ethical levels of the African's consciousness without the deeper emotional levels through myth, and ritual, rhythm and music.

It is this failure which generates among Africans the need for a more indigenous religious expression in order that worship and faith may be integrating experiences⁴⁰. Africans were converted to "christianity but not to Christ." Subsequently, therefore, Africans need freedom so that worship may be real.

Secondly, in preaching the Gospel, the mission churches have failed to provide Africans with a christian world-view to replace the one they lost; with the result that in times of crisis, the Africans are very liable to fall back upon heathen attitude and custom for

they do not know what to do during such crisis as christians⁴¹. Independent church movements in Africa are therefore attempts by Africans to integrate christianity to their world-view such that it may answer questions arising out of crisis.

For J.S. Mbiti, independent church movements have sprung up because of the failure of the mission church to penetrate sufficiently deep into African religiosity⁴². They are attempts by Africans to indigenize christianity and to interpret it in ways that perhaps spontaneously render christianity both practical and meaningful to them. Other reasons include the divided christianity introduced to Africans by the western missionaries, the strict control the missionaries exercised over their African converts, the sense of estrangement precipitated by modern christianity and modern changes and the contradicting world-views and particularly the western and African concepts of time⁴³.

Therefore, Ime Y'Omwana is an attempt by Abagusii to transcend the missionary established norms and find Jesu on their own. In terms of response, it is the climax of Abagusii negative response to all to do with the S.D.A. missionary brand of christianity. It is a very positive response to christianity as a religion per se, "unveiling" it of its "charms" of western civilization.

FOOT-NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. NAFTAL OMBATI OBIERO: Interview: 20/11/89
2. ALBERT ONYANCHA: Interview: 21/12/88
3. RICHARD OSORO: Interview: 16/1/89
4. NAFTAL OMBATI:
5. Ibid.
6. AUGUSTINE OYUNGE: Interview: 10/1/89
7. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
8. ABEDNEGO MOGIRE: Interview: 21288
9. NAFTAL OMBATI:
10. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
11. NAFTAL OMBATI:
12. RICHARD OSORO:
13. NAFTAL OMBATI:
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. ABEDNEGO MOGIRE:
17. RICHARD OSORO:
18. NAFTAL OMBATI:
19. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
20. KINGOINA NYASAE:
21. JANE BWARI:
22. RICHARD OSORO:
23. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.
26. ABEDNEGO MOGIRE:
27. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
28. SOLOMON ONYANGO: Interview: 24/12/88
29. JASON ONGONDO: Interview: 11/12/88
30. BATSCHIBA MORAA:
31. DAILY NATION: 14687
32. AUGUSTINE OYUNGE:
33. RICHARD OSORA:
34. PRISCILLAH MBERA:
35. Ibid.
36. J. KENYATTA. Op.cit. PP. 273-279
37. J. MBURA, "Penetration of Christianity into Akamba Traditional Family." (University of Nairobi, M.A. Thesis, 1974). J.S. MBITI. New Testament Eschatology in an African Background. Op.cit.
38. A. HASTINGS, A History of African Christianity. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979).
39. V.E.W. HAYWARD (ed.) African Independent Church Movements. (London, Edinburgh house press, 1963) p.8, Research pamphlets No. 11.
40. Ibid p.9.
41. Ibid.
42. J.S. MBITI. African Religious and Philosophy.
43. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is based on chapters two, three, four five and six.

Chapter two and three discussed the social-psychological factors determining Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity. Among others, Abagusii traditional world-view, related beliefs, practices and conceptions were discussed namely initiation, marriage, death, mystical beliefs, conceptions of man, the universe and God as they are founded in the history of the community. These factors are deeply rooted in the social-psychological life of the Gusii community such that people simply cannot do without them. They are part and parcel of their essential being. When you are talking about the Gusii community, you are at the same time talking about these deep rooted traditional influences.

Chapter four traced the historical and theological background of the S.D.A. church and how it came into Gusii. The first contacts between the S.D.A. missionaries and Abagusii were unfriendly since the missionaries treated all Gusii traditional beliefs and values with contempt. The destruction of S.D.A. and Catholic Mission stations at Nyanchwa and Nyabururu respectively climaxed these unfriendly contacts.

The later change of attitude by Abagusii was not because they found the missionary religion to be good as such but the western education provided. Secondly, Abagusii realized that they could accommodate their traditional religious beliefs along with the missionary education and religion. So Abagusii acceptance of these "new" beliefs and values did not necessarily mean that they forfeited or abandoned traditional religious heritage.

The S.D.A. missionaries' cultural, theological and scientific assumptions resulted in unintended consequences among Abagusii. Abagusii confused western civilization with christianity. Christianity in Abagusii understanding, meant adhering to the social and economic revolution that had been introduced by the missionaries. However, the same people who had been converted remained deeply attached to traditional beliefs.

Chapter five and six discussed Abagusii response to S.D.A. brand of christianity. In view of the Abagusii attitude to the S.D.A. church among them, their continued attachment to traditional beliefs and practices inspite of the S.D.A. teaching to the contrary, and, their apparent failure to pursue the promised christian hope and salvation, the conclusion that their response has been partly negative and double-standard is inevitable. They have been exposed to two systems of thought opposed to each other, both of which cannot be decisively rejected.

However, at the unconscious level, Abagusii have rejected missionary S.D.A. christianity which requires them to abandon cultural heritage. S.D.A. christianity as a religion, not interwoven with western culture is accepted. This acceptance is represented by Ime Y'Omwana (In the Son) movement among Abagusii. The movement has got nothing to do with the missionary S.D.A. christianity but it finds expression in Gusii cultural context.

Back to the hypothesis of the study, two things surface. First is the role Abagusii cultural heritage continues to play in the life of the Gusii people. Second, is the influence this factor has on Abagusii response to S.D.A. christianity.

Abagusii are deeply attached to the traditional world-view and related practices as developed over time. Beliefs, values and ideas related to the traditional world-view constitute an essential part of Abagusii being for they shape their day to day thinking and conduct.

The various levels of Abagusii response to missionary S.D.A. christianity constitute rejection, nominality or superficiality, and, in the least, acceptance.

Rejection is noted in the early contact between the S.D.A. missionaries and the Gusii community. Cultural protests were

voiced through the cult of Mumboism and of course the violent demolition of mission out-post erections at Nyabururu. This form of response has over-time, up to the 1980's taken different forms, for example, non-compliance with S.D.A. church expectations and requirements. It is a kind of psychological rebellion against S.D.A. influences, of the part of the general Gusii community.

Nominality or superficiality is constituted by an act of acceptance and belonging to the S.D.A. church membership by way of Baptism, taking up christian names, church attendance, giving of tithes to the church, observing some aspects of western civilization and so forth, while, at the same time allowing for traditional influences, inclinations and commitments in individual life contrary to S.D.A. church teachings and expectations. The traditional influences become a psychologically compelling force in the individual S.D.A. christian's life.

The aspect of total acceptance of christianity belong to Imm Y'Omwana (in the Son) movement. There is no trace of either conscious or unconscious attachment to traditional Gusii inclinations. The members have consciously and actively rejected the missionary S.D.A. Christianity and Gusii traditional beliefs and practices and accepted christianity totally. It shapes all their perceptions, thinking and conduct.

To the missionary (S.D.A.). group, which introduced christianity

among Abagusii this is an unfavourable response. A new approach need be devised with a view to promoting understanding between S.D.A. christianity and Abagusii traditional religious inclinations, ideas, values and beliefs. The goal of any good approach should be to make christianity a real hope for Abagusii.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for those involved in the exercise of evangelizing and converting Abagusii to christianity to work out a scheme of promoting understanding between Abagusii traditions and religious values with the true Gospel of salvation. This can be achieved at various levels.

1.

AT THE BIBLICAL LEVEL:

The Bible is the basic christian document on which any meaningful christianization must be based - and not western civilization as the early S.D.A. missionaries to Gusii implied.

The Bible does not disagree but enriches and fulfils Abagusii traditional religious beliefs and practices. Both the old and new Testament give testimony to this. In the old Testament, we find a God who had been conceived of during the history of oppression, exploitation and migration. He is the Creator, sustainer and revealed himself through natural phenomenon. He is sacred and all he created is. This does not in any way contradict the Abagusii traditional conceptions: The Biblical and the Gusii traditional

could well enrich each other.

The Bible values human relations in the community as much as in the traditional Gusii community. In the old Testament, at one level, the common ancestry of Israelites was a force behind the united community of Israel. At the other level, Israel, as a whole, was treated as the "son" of God. The new Testament does not deviate from this old Testament tradition of respect for human relations. For example, the ancestry of Jesus is given significance, in the New Testament and he did not defy it.

Jesus' coming enhanced human relations in the community. He preached the brotherhood of all humanity regardless of race or traditions. He encouraged communal eating by feeding crowds of people and supping with his disciples. The climax of his mission of enhancing human relations was at the cross when he offered himself as a sacrifice to reconcile the human community with God the Father.

Whether Jesus Christ had respect for Jewish traditions is an important question to us here. Reference can be made to his statement regarding payment of taxes to the emperor (Lk. 20:19-25 T.E.V. King James' Version). Material things, including peoples' traditions did not concern him as long as their hearts and attitudes were changed. What Jesus condemned among the Jews was not the peoples' traditions but the attitude, the honour, respect,

and attention such traditions were given instead of God.

With these few remarks, which view biblical ideas and Gusii traditions in harmony, it is possible to say that there was, and, is no need for those seeking to convert Abagusii to christianity to require them to accept western civilization as a pre-requisite of conversion to christian. Just as the Jewish traditions prepared the Jews for christianity, Abagusii traditions provided enough background for conversion to christianity.

2.

AT THE FUNCTIONAL LEVEL

The functions of any religion in the community include the following:

First, it plays the function of intergration. It provides the members of the community with a common frame of reference, world-view and aspirations.

Second, it maintains the pattern of the community. It provides the norms, values and ideas which govern the conduct, relations and expectations of the members of the community. This ensures harmony and continuity of the community.

Third, Religion provides man with a link between the known and unknown dimensions of his existence, for example, between man and the supernatural or between the natural and the supernatural. This

makes it possible for man to cope with situations beyond his ability to control and explain.

Abagusii traditional religion played socio-psychological roles. It governed the morals and values of the community which ensured continued communal solidarity. Religion came in to restore order, peace and harmony in the community when it was involved in crises such as diseases, epidemics, wars, and natural disaster. In the treatment of diseases, Diviners and Magicians offered psychological services to patients. It was a combination of sacrifices, offerings and all forms of prayers in the community.

There can be no understanding and intergration between S.D.A. christianity and Abagusii traditional religion unless the former is capable (it is indeed capable) of offering similar psychological services. To achieve this goal, it must be presented from within the Abagusii world-view and not from without. In this case, contemptuous impostion cannot work well.

For Abagusii, the measurement of religion is that it is capable of providing real answers to questions arising from within their existence. There is therefore a possibility of christianity remaining a "part-time" faith as long as it is not accountable.

The Christian Gospel must be interpreted so as to be intelligible to Abagusii in their existential realities. christianity had been

thrown to Abagusii like a stone to challenge their existence without taking into account their questions and needs. This was the foolishness of early S.D.A. missionaries.

3.

AT THE LEVEL OF LANGUAGE

There is no way understanding can be promoted between S.D.A. Christianity and Abagusii traditional Religion unless a language understandable to both is devised. Language is important in order that the barriers between Abagusii traditional religion and christianity will be broken. They constitute two philosophies or systems of thought closed to each other.

Language in this case, should be seen at two levels. First there is symbolic language. Both the Old and New Testaments have much to do with symbolism as an essential element of Religious language.

Symbolism constituted an important part in the ritual life of the traditional Gusii community. symbols were used in sacrifices, offerings, reconciliation ceremonies, in marriage, in initiation, in the treatment of diseases and in the general life of the individual.

The S.D.A. Church could do much better to adopt Agusii traditional symbol or symbols to achieve intergration than to use the ones it

adopted from other cultures. Take for example initiation. For Abagusii, initiation has a much deeper impact on the life of the individual in the community than Christian baptism has. It constitutes a sacrifice for the goals of the community. Seen from the christian perspective within Abagusii world-view, it could be a basic symbolic expression of belonging to christianity, and others such as baptism, naming, participating in the Eucharist could be subsidiary. Instead of making this a goal, S.D.A. defy traditional initiation.

It is reasonable, therefore, to see Gusii traditional initiation within the christian perspective. Its symbolism could be deeper and permanent in the life of the individual christian.

Other symbolic expressions should be encouraged as well in the Church so as to liberate Abagusii spirituality. This, more than anything else will apply to church hymns. It is not fair for adherents to cite hymns with sad faces, without any body movements or clapping of hands.

The adoption of traditional symbolism by the S.D.A. will ensure two things. First, it will enable its adherents to express themselves freely in the African spirit without a sense of being brainwashed and alienated. For Abagusii in the traditional community, worship was a moment of excitement for it filled the minds of participants with hope. Secondly, it would make christian

worship an exciting moment worthy longing for. It would arouse a sense of commitment, belongingness, and regulated spiritual renewal.

While there is much christianity shares with traditional Gusii religion in terms of symbolism, there is little they share in terms of verbalism. This does not however mean that verbal language is not possible. Symbolic and verbal languages must be complementary in promoting understanding between S.D.A. christianity and Abagusii traditional religion.

While christianity has got a long history of verbalism, Abagusii traditional religion does not have it. At this point, the only break-through is that the Christian church sponsors people particularly its workers to carry out research and train in methods of interpreting Gusii traditional religious expressions with a view to expressing it verbally. This will ensure two things for the Church.

First, there would be a penetration of Abagusii traditional world-view to establish points of meaning between the two religions. Second, it will ensure Church pastors the freedom to interact with traditionalists without guilt feelings.

The ultimate object of these recommendations is to achieve a complete conversion of Abagusii into S.D.A. christianity. They

constitute a new and realistic approach.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE:**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR S.D.A. PASTORS AND MINISTERS****Personal Questions**

1. What are your names in full?
2. What is your age?
3. For how long have you been a member, minister or pastor of the S.D.A. church?

Questions regarding the Flock

5. How large is your area of ministration in terms of
 - (a) Membership?
 - (b) Churches?
6. Do you have any records pertaining to:
 - (a) Loss of church membership?
 - (b) Gain of church membership?
7. At any time when an individual member of your church backslides and it comes to your attention;
 - (a) What causes are preponderent?
 - (b) What measures do you take within your power?
8. What nature of problems do the members of your flock face daily in their communities if such ever come to your attention?

9. How does church service attendance fluctuate within the churches under your ministration?
 - (a) Do all baptized members attend?
 - (b) How do you normally explain absenteeism?
 - (c) How do they normally explain absenteeism?

10. How punctual are the members of your flock regarding church service attendance?
 - (a) How late do they turn up?
 - (b) How do they explain lateness?

11. How do the members of your flock understand Christian doctrines such as:
 - (a) The Eucharist
 - (b) Baptism
 - (c) Church offerings and tithes?

12. At any time when the members of your flock confess, do you ever know what sins they confess? Give any example.

13. Do the members of your flock find difficulties in reconciling their christian faith with traditional demands such as sacrifices, Divination, hiring sorcery and polygamy?
How have you treated such cases if any?

APPENDIX TWO

Section A: Interview questions for general respondents.

Interview questions to be administered to the respondents

Interpersonally, (orally).

Frankness to be Requested.

1. What is your
 - (a) Age _____ Sex _____
 - (b) Name in full _____
 - (c) Marital status _____
 - (d) For how long have you been a SDA christian?

2.
 - (a) What does it mean to be a christian? How different is it from being unchristian?
 - (b) The christian life is too demanding and a bit too difficult to follow. What do you think?

3. What difficulties do you find on your way as a christian and particularly to observe all that the SDA church requires of you?

4. What do you think about staying:
 - (a) Unmarried?
 - (b) Childless?
 - (c) A barren life?

5. (a) To be a true christian, one must go to the church always and obey its rules and regulations without question: What are your views?
- (b) During your life as a christian, what difficulties have you encountered which have either strengthened or weakened:
- (i) Your faith
- (ii) Your church adherence?
7. (a) During times when you have sermons delivered by a whiteman particularly at camp meetings, what do you think is the reason for this? People tend to turn up in large number.
- (b) How does Jesus Christ affect your life and how important do you find him?
8. (a) "True christian life does not allow us to practice our traditions" such practices as initiation, traditional hymns and dances, become sinful in the face of Christ. What is your view?
- (b) The true christian life must be lived by accepting the ways of those who introduced christianity to us. The same people, (missionaries) disregarded our traditions. What is your view?
9. (a) Who is God and what is the relationship between you and

him? Does he ever punish sinners? How does he do it locally?

(b) God communicates to us through:

(i) Prophets

(ii) Diviners

(iii) Spirits

What do you think?

10. (a) Outside the church, what may help one to know that you are a christian? Do things such as:

(i) Name

(ii) Not participating in traditionalism.

(iii) Modernism help to tell anything about your christian belonging?

(b) Suppose you are aware of a traditional medicine-man who treats complicated diseases such as possessiveness, epilepsy successfully, would you encourage your fellow christian friend who is suffering from any of such diseases to consult him?

11. (a) Must your children undergo initiation in the in the traditional sense.

(b) What do you think about the SDA church's teaching that females should not be clitoridectomised? How have you and your fellow christians responded to this?

12. (a) What causes diseases and death? Do witches and sorcerers contribute in any way? How does the church treat witches and sorcerers?
- (b) Do you ever fear witches and sorcerers as against modern teaching that such people don't exist or that they don't cause harm?
13. Old people who die have got to be buried in an atmosphere of respect so that they don't punish the living members from the spirit world? What is your view?
14. (a) What causes natural disasters such as devastating drought, hailstones and lightning? How can they be overcome?
- (b) How do you relate curses, sins and taboos to natural disasters?
15. (a) In times of difficulties, some church members resort to traditional sacrifices. Are you aware of any such members?
- (b) What does the church teach you about respecting your traditions e.g. wailing and mourning at the dead offering sacrifices etc? What is your personal opinion?

APPENDIX THREEINFORMATION REGARDING INFORMANTS AND DATES OF INTERVIEWS

1. ANYONA, ANYONA, Age 78, interv. 14th Dec. 1988, gave information on the history and development of certain Gusii traditional beliefs and practices. Not a member of the S.D.A. Church.
2. MUSA NTINDI, Age 71, interv. 19th Sept. 1988, not a member of the S.D.A. Church, a traditional sage, gave vital information on traditional methods of arresting hailstones.
3. ELIJAH MOCHAMA, Age 79, interv. 2nd Sept. 1988, once a pastor of the S.D.A. Church and later withdrew to be an expert in magic and traditional herbal medicine. Gave vital information on Gusii traditional arrest of thunder-strike and the origin of the practice among Abagusii.
4. MACHOGU NYAGOKWA, Age 80, interv. on 20th August 1988, a sage on Gusii history of migration.
5. OMOKA SILVER, Age 50, interv. 11th Oct. 1988, a traditional herbal practioner. A sage in matters to do with magic and witchcraft.
6. MIYIENDA SAISI, Age 81, interv. on 17th July 1987.

7. NELSON ONYANCHA, Age 58, interv. 11th Nov. 1988, a sage on matters to do with sacrifices to Engoro's visitation (visions).
8. MWEBI MOCHAMA, age 46, interv. 9th Oct. 1988.
9. IGONYI OKERO, Age 73, interv. 13th Nov. 1988. Expert informant on Gusii traditional marriage ceremony.
10. PRISCILLAH MBERA, Age 56, interv. 11th Dec. 1988, once a member of the S.D.A. Church and later withdrew to join Ime Y'Omwana (In the Son).
11. REBECCA NYANDUKO, Age 63, interv. 14th June 1989. A member of the S.D.A. Church, expert informant on Gusii traditional rites of birth, where she plays mid-wife.
12. BATSHEBA MORAA, Age 52, interv: 11th Oct. 1988, a member of the S.D.A. Church. Once a victim of Engoro visitations and she later became a traditional priest. This role she later delegated to her husband to rejoin the S.D.A. Church.
13. ABEL NYAKUNDI, Age 82, interv. 2nd Feb. 1989. A retired S.D.A. Pastor, a sage in Gusii traditional history, the history of the S.D.A. Church in Gusii and now a specialist in traditional herbal medicine.

14. JAMES NYANCHOKA, Age 78, Interv. 11th Dec. 1988, a long serving member of the S.D.A. Church.
15. MOSIOMA OMBUI, Age 58, interv. 2nd Feb. 1989. Along serving Pastor of the S.D.A. Church and currently a secretary to South Kenya S.D.A. Conference with Headquarters at Nyanchwa.
16. DAVID OCHWANGI, Age 68, interv. 14th Dec. 1988. Once a member of the S.D.A. Church, became a victim of Gusii S.D.A. "spiritual insanity" of the late 1950's and early 1960's. On recovering, he withdrew from the S.D.A. Church
17. NYAMBEGA BICHANGA, Age 49, interv. 2nd Jan. 1989. Not a member of the S.D.A. Church, gave views representative of the general community attitude to the S.D.A. Church in Gusii.
18. ALBERT ONYANCHA, Age 24, interv. 21st Dec. 1988, a member on Ime Y'Omwana.
19. BOGONKO NDINYA, Age 61, interv. 7th July 1989.
20. JOSIAH RAMBEKA, Age 45, interv. 19th Nov. 1988. An elder of S.D.A. Church.
21. ZABLON OICHOE, Age 33, interv. 12th Dec. 1988.

A kindergarten teacher of S.D.A. Church.

22. JOSHUA BABU, Age 44, interv. 2nd Oct. 1988. A long serving member of the S.D.A. Church at Riokindo.
23. ROBINSON ONYANCHA, Age 27, interv. 19th Dec. 1988.
24. JANE BWARI, Age 27, interv. on 26th Dec. 1988.
25. JOHN OGARI, Age 60, interv. 1st Jan. 1989. Had been a member of the S.D.A. Church at Riokindo, withdrew after he took up a second wife.
26. KINGOINA NYASAE, Age 41, interv. 14th Nov. 1988, A Pastor in Church of Riokindo S.D.A. District.
27. DAVID MAIRURA, Age 65, interv. 14th Nov. 1988.
28. ANDERSON OICHOE, Age 57, interv. 15th Nov. 1988, a Church elder at Bendera S.D.A. Church.
29. MARY NYANGATE, Age 32, interv. 10th Dec. 1988. A member of the S.D.A. Church.
30. RACHEL NYABWARI, Age 40, Interv. 15th Oct. 1988.

31. ZABLON DISHON, Age 42, interv. 19th Dec. 1988.
32. NUHU ONKUNDI, Age 56, interv. 20th Nov. 1988, gave the statement 'Onye kiaborire rogoro kerigerie maate. (If it is not up there, it is down there). He is a Church elder at Senta S.D.A. Church.
33. ALICE NYABOKE, Age 32, interv. 20th Dec. 1988.
34. MIRIAMU BIKERI, Age 57, interv. 14th Dec. 1988.
A deaconess at Bendera S.D.A. Church. She has been a victim of the pressure to comply with the surrounding traditional community.
35. JERUSHA NYAKERI, Age 65, interv. 16th Nov. 1988.
36. JERIAH MORAGWA, Age 56, interv. 19th Nov. 1988.
D.S.A. Deaconess at Matunwa S.D.A. Church.
Argued that S.D.A. mothers have insisted on complying with the traditional Gusii initiation of daughters in disregard of church teaching.
37. PASTOR MAYIENGA, Age 53, interv. 31st Dec. 1988, a long serving pastor of the S.D.A. church who maintained that the S.D.A. Church has got no room for traditional inclinations. At the time of the interview, he was the Director of Kenya

S.D.A. Station.

38. BARNABA NYAMAMBA, Age 60, interv. 26th Nov. 1988, a long serving member of the S.D.A. Church at Riokindo S.D.A. Church. Critical of the S.D.A. Church teaching against compliance with tradition.
39. ZAKARIAH ABEL, Age 49, interv. 26th Nov. 1988.
40. NAFTAL OMBATI OBIERO, Age 42, interv. 20th Nov. 1988, the founder of Ime Y'Omwana movement. He was interviewed at his home, Kerunya, on his sickbed. For many years he has suffered a persistent skin disease which deteriorated when he served a two-year jail term in relation to the activities of his movement. He was determined to preach the Gospel despite much "Satan" sponsored suffering.
42. RICHARCH OSORO, Age 35, interv. 16th Jan. 1989, once a committed member of the S.D.A. Church and later withdrew to join Ime Y'Omwana.
43. ABEDNEGO MOGIRE, Age 29, interv. 2nd Dec. 1988, a preacher of Ime Y'Omwana.

GLOSARY OF AFRICAN (GUSII) WORDS USED IN THE THESIS:

Abagusii (Gusii)	-	A tribal name for a community in Western Kenya.
A Manyika	-	Blood.
Amabe	-	Dead/Misfortune.
Abasomi	-	S.D.A. Christians.
Abanyabororo	-	Followers of the Catholic faith
Abanyanchwa	-	Seventh-Day Adventists.
Borabu	-	Formerly unsettled area a land where people moved in and settled.
☉Buzaa	-	Undistilled traditional brew prepared by mixing maize flour with wimbi flour. The latter works as aflavouring agent.
Chiburi	-	Kraais or cattle enclosures.
Cache	-	Opposite of Borabu this is an area that was formerly settled and formed the centre of population disparsion.
Changaa	-	Opposite of Buzaa - abore. It is a traditionally distilled brews.
Chinguru	-	Power or energy. God has the highest.
Enyomba	-	Family or wife.
Engento	-	A thing - a lifeless matter.
Egesarate	-	The other name for kraal.
Egetondo	-	A corpse. A lifeless human body.
Esokoro	-	Ancestor.

Egesiomba	-	A bad Omen.
Egesaku	-	A lineage.
Ekerecha	-	Spirit.
Ekeonga	-	A fishing net.
Emegiro	-	The forbidden/taboo.
Ekiare	-	Age set.
"Esokoro Nero"	-	The ancestor is everything.
Ense	-	World/Universe.
Ekemunto	-	A crowded or congested area. It is an over populated area.
Esasi	-	A drug used in magical remedial rituals aimed at retrieving security and protection against an enemy.
Egesagane	-	A lass an initiated girl.
Engoro	-	God
Enkoba	-	Thunder.
Erioba	-	Sky God.
"Engoro Nero"	-	God is.
"Ense ya Beire Bobe"	-	Something has gone wrong with the world. This saying is very common when misfortunes have increased in the community.
Gosacha	-	Searching and gathering for family consumption.
Gochi Nyangi	-	To undergo initiation (i.e circumcision or cliteridectory).

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Gokireka	-	A magical religious ritual aimed at weakening or minimizing the impact of the energy. On the performer.
Gosonsorana	-	A reconciliation ceremony.
Gokunga	-	The opposite of Gosocha. It means taking care of and cooking for family consumption what has searched and gathered by man.
Ime ya Omwana	-	In the literal meaning, it means "in the child" in the christian context, it means believing in christ the son of God.
Kabianga	-	Rejected place.
Korenta Omorembe	-	Bring peace of to make peace.
Kababa	-	In fluent magical drug (Lorie poison). Death is age old. It is as old as man.
Mumboism	-	A cult around which Gusii people united to resist colonialism.
Nyasae	-	A name for God borrowed from the Luo.
Mento Menene Ndiogo	-	An elderly person is wise.
Ogokenga	-	To magically manipulate one's belongings to cause him injury or death.
Oborogio	-	Witchcraft.
Obonyanabi	-	The magical practice
Omoragori	-	A practicing Diviner.
Omoriori	-	A magician who smells and unearths evil magical items intended to cause harm to

		another person.
Ochi Kare	-	A blessing uttered by an elder wishing him long life.
Omobere	-	Body
Omeika	-	Breath/Spirit.
Ogokwa	-	Death.
Okonengeta	-	Underate.
Omonto	-	A person of unknown identity
Omwana	-	A child
Omoisia	-	A lad.
Omosae	-	A young man or woman
Omoiseke	-	A girl.
Omomura	-	A boy.
Omosacha	-	A man.
Omokungu	-	A woman.
Omogaka	-	An old man.
Omosabakwa	-	Ancure of atries common in Gusii rituals
Omochenu	-	The clean one. It also means holy - when used to refer to God.
Omwaŋe	-	Initiand/initiate
Omokundekane	-	A Priest/specialist

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