



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**CULTURE CHANGE AND CONTINUITY: THE CASE OF ABAIDAKHO
INITIATION RITES OF PASSAGE, 1918 - 2010**

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C50/82701/2015

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF A MASTERS DEGREE IN HISTORY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**


2023

DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or institution.

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SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL:

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university's supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my guardian, the late Reverend Sister Antoninah Musula Lianguluti, who inspired me to advance my education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special recognition is owed to my supervisor, Dr. Misigo H. Amatsimbi, for his guidance insights, encouragement and for being at my disposal when I needed his assistance.

I would like to thank Hon. Bernard Shinali, Member of the National Assembly representing Ikolomani, for making this a success by setting some of his time aside and providing me with the necessary resources. I appreciate all participants who participated in the study. In particular, I am grateful to Kizito Shivairo, Peter Ashilenje, Mzee David Muyembe Andaye, Mzee Joseph Mwanjilwa Manyonyi, and Mr. Joseph Makaka Shitilu for making it possible for me to access the required information and respondents.

I thank all my lecturers at the University of Nairobi for their helping me to grow intellectually: Prof. Godfrey Muriuki, Dr. George Gona, and Prof. Vincent Simiyu, have painstakingly and patiently modeled my career as a historian. I am indebted to Mr. Masika and Dr. Osaaji Mumia of the University of Nairobi who gave me important advice on academic writing. My appreciation also goes to Mr. Edwin Sore for facilitating my understanding of the Abaidakho nation.

Lastly, I thank my family, my wife Charity Abonyo Morang'a, and my two daughters, Zuri and Zuena, for their patience and support during my years of study.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the history of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage from 1918 to 2010. The year 1918 is a historical year that marked the end of World War I, which had far-reaching repercussions in Africa. After the war, the victors consolidated their authority on colonial territories which had a big influence on African way of life. Also, returning ex-soldiers introduced enormous social changes that not only affected traditional way of life, but also caused tension with traditional culture by introducing new forces of European way of life into African communities. The African Porters who took part in the war for instance returned and they encouraged adoption of new practices and attitudes. In the year 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution. Utilizing the human agency perspective, the project focused on the change and continuity of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. The study focused on the indigenous initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho people, the changes experienced with time and aspects of initiation rites that have remained persistent. The study delved into issues such as, which initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho people have changed? Do we have some aspects that have remained consistent in the practice of the rites? What impact has the changes in the initiation rites of passage had on the Abaidakho people? In addressing these questions, the study utilized the continuity theory, which holds that, the elder adults will always make contemporary decision or act based on their previous experiences and in connection with their current environment. This implies that the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have been hybridized in an effort to link the past and the future in order to keep a consistence practice. The study established that the Abaidakho people and their cultural practice of initiation rites of passage encountered contact with colonial administrators, missionaries, and European settlers who rushed to Kakamega after the discovery of gold in 1933. In the post-independence period, Catholic missionaries at Mukumu and the Friends from Kaimosi continued to influence the Abaidakho people. Other groups that continued to interact with the Abaidakho were government workers, traders who moved in the area and had effect and influence on the cultural practice of initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources: primary data helped to seal the missing gaps and provided a comprehensive understanding of the hybridized initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho. The outbreaks of diseases like HIV/AIDS impacted the cultural practices of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. This was a leading force in the change of attitude towards the practice among the Abaidakho.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S.T.Is: Sexually Transmitted infections

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

Barani/ Murani:	Young adults who have undergone/graduated from initiation
Basindi (Musindi)	Initiates
Buula:	The ritual of removal of two lower teeth
Irumbi:	House used by (initiates) or isolation room or place
Lihalo:	Special knife used for circumcision/ritual cutting of the foreskin
Litala:	Homestead
Luhya:	A baraza, a public place used for special Abaidakho occasions like circumcision, marriage etc.
Masitsa:	Weekly Abaidakho traditional dances made to bring young-adults together.
Miima:	Traditional norms and customs
Muchitsi:	Clan
Mukuvuye:	A woman ready for marriage
Murembe:	Erythrina Abyssinica tree (with medicinal and ritual value)
Musenzeli:	Aningeria Altissima tree (with medicinal and ritual value)
Mushevi:	Traditional circumciser/ operator
Musitsa:	Traditional talented native doctor.
Musoleli:	Young uncircumcised Abaidakho boy-child
Musutsu:	Croton Macrostachyus tree (with medicinal and ritual value)
Mwidakho:	Refers to a person of Abaidakho descent
Shisavitso/shialukho:	Passing out ceremony of the initiates into young adults.
Shiserero:	Wedding or marriage ceremony
Shishevo:	Circumcision ceremony
Shisiao:	Ceremony of the graduates after passing out to identify to the community

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Abaluhya are a sub-group of the larger Bantu speakers inhabiting the western part of Kenya. The term Abaluhya was coined in 1940s for political purposes when some members of the group formed a common political group known as Abaluhya Welfare Association.¹ The archival records demonstrate that the term Abaluhya was already in use by 1935 having been suggested by the local African Mutual Assistance Association (AMAA) around 1930 and adopted by the North Kavirondo Central Association (NKCA) in 1935. Generally, the name Luhya was used to describe the communities that lived in North Kavirondo. In 1940, Abaluhya Welfare Association was formed which popularized the name and later the Luhya language committee was established to formulate an orthography.² They are also referred to as the Mulembe nation, derived literally from a Luhya word, Mulembe” meaning peace.³ Abaluhya oral traditions indicate that they originated from an area called Misri.⁴ However, the exact region where this place of origin is situated is not known. Historical evidence shows that the Abaluhya intermarried with several ethnic groups in the course of their migration into Kenya. The Abaluhya settled in the former Western Province where they interacted with the Highland Nilotes mainly the Sabaot, Nandi and Pokot in the north, the Plain Nilotes Iteso of Busia as well as the River Lake Nilotes of Nyanza. They also interaction with the Maasai leading to the establishment of some clans, such as the Abashimuli clan of the Abaidakho.⁵ Similarly, some groups of the Abaluhya interacted with the Luo, leading to an exchange of words, as in the case of calling God, Nyasaye instead of Were Khakaba: this, perhaps, explains why there are 18 sub-ethnic groups among the Abaluhya.

The Abaidakho are part of the eighteen Abaluhya sub-ethnic groups that are found in the southern part of Buluhya land. They neighbour Abatirichi to the south-east,

¹ J. Osogo, *A History of the Baluyia*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1966.

² E. S. Kabaji, *The Construction of Gender through the Narrative Process of the African folktale: A Case Study of the Maragoli Folktale* (Doctoral dissertation), 2005, p.30

³³Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya: A cultural profile* Trafford Publishing, April-2013. Pp.1

⁴Gideon, S. Were, *A history of the Abaluhya of Western Kenya*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1967 Pp. 150- 155

⁵⁵Francis, M. S. Mwayuli, *The history of the Isukha and Abaidakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya* printed by CUEA publications, 2003. Pp. 4 – 5.

Abalogoli to the South, Abashisa to the south-west, and Abesukha to the North. The Abaidakho had, by 1850, emerged as distinct sub-ethnic group.

Linguistically, they are closely related to the Bisukha group that it is difficult to distinguish between their languages unless one has good knowledge of the two. Like many African communities, the Bidakho are sub divided into various clans.⁶ Francis Mwayuli opines that there are fifteen clans of the Abaidakho namely; the Abashimuli, Bashiangala, Bashikunga, Bamasaba, Bakobero, Bamanyisi, Bashikulu, Bammbale, Bashitsiula, Bamuhali, Babuka, Bachisila, Bakondi, Bakhwese and Bamalaba.⁷

Each of the Abaidakho clans has its own peculiar tradition of their ancestors and migrations. This is because Abaidakho are a congregation of various people who have come from all directions and at different times. Therefore, they are a group of people with sophisticated initiation rites.⁸ As an example, according to the oral history of the Bashimuli, they are the ancestors of Kasamu and are believed to have come from the direction of Uasin Gishu and married Ashiimuli, with whom he had four sons, forming the four sub-clans of the Abashimuli: Anasio, Mulongo Butukhu, and Andaye. That means they adopted initiation rites that became so important to the Abaidakho way of life until present.⁹ From the above brief account of Bidakho history, it is clear that their interaction with other communities shaped not only their culture but also their initiation rites of passage. They adopted some practices which have either changed or maintained as is demonstrated by this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Abaidakho are one of the seventeen sub-ethnic groups that make up the Abaluhya. All the clans of the Abaidakho were always united in all their wars with their neighbours; every clan of the Abaidakho had its own elder, called Likuru, but all the clans of the Abaidakho were under a single main ruler who handled matters relating to

⁶ M. S. Shidiavai, *A Phonological Analysis of Lwidakho Loanwords from Kiswahili and English* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nairobi), 2015, p.32

⁷ Francis, M. S. Mwayuli, *The history of the Isukha and Abaidakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya* printed by CUEA publications, 2003. Pp. 5 -6

⁸ Oral Interview, Simwa Jeremiah, Sept. 11, 2022.

⁹ Francis, M. S. Mwayuli, *The history of the Isukha and Abaidakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya* printed by CUEA publications, 2003. Pp. 5 -6

war and government, called Mukhongo or Mwami.¹⁰ The Abaidakho are a dynamic society which has changed with time because of external influence. The society was not isolated from their neighbours. Yet through the processes of social identity formation, they have remained bound in a group as one people.

Although these people have been influenced by their neighbours, there are some aspects of their life that have remained. These are practices that are a symbol of identity among the Abaidakho. In this study focus was on the initiation rites of passage. The initial cultural practice of initiation rites of passage, known to the Abaidakho is *Shishevo* ceremony.

Although, the Abaidakho valued their initiation rites of passage, the practices were subject to colonial and missionary attack as it was all over Africa. Both mission work and colonial rule in Africa began during the period of the slave trade which also played a role in disrupting African societies. In many cases both missionary and government officials, two new forces on the African scene, worked toward the destruction of the African culture.¹¹ These forces had no respect for African culture. They promoted an ideology which looked upon the African as a savage or as a simple child who was racially inferior, there can be no question that early missionaries and government officials accepted the doctrine of the White Man's Burden and shared the ethnocentrism of the period. They judged what they saw in Africa in terms of its similarities to, and differences from Western culture, and they found little in African culture worthy of admiration or respect. They saw African cultural initiation rites as barbarism that must be stopped.¹²

In Abaidakho land missionary work began in early 1900s and introduced practices that threatened the traditional culture of the people. For instance, the Church of God missionaries spread to Idakho land from Kima in Bunyore in 1919.¹³ Those who

¹⁰Francis, M.S Mwayuli, *The history of Isukha And Idakho*

¹¹ William, Bascom, "African Culture and the Missionary / *Les Missions Et La Culture Africaine*," in *Civilizations*, 1953, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1953), pp. 491-504, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41377571>, accessed on 03/09/2023

¹² Ibid

¹³ Leen, Kavulavu, *Church of God and The Educated Elite: The Case of Idakho Community Kenya, 1919-1953*, in *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.2, No.2, pp.21-34, April 2014 Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.ea-journals.org)

accepted the new religion were converted into Christianity. Some of the early Idakho converts were, Thomas Itemere, Harun Shimenga, Ruben Kizikwa, Naman Ingonga, Nelson Luseno, Zakaria Shiholo Saul Aluvala and Sephan Maleshe. Apart from the Church of God, the Friends African Mission (FAM) and the Roman Catholic Church had also established their presence in Idakho land. Later the Pentecostal Assemblies of God also established their presence in the area. The pioneer converts Christians were to have a far reaching impact on the development of Christianity in Idakho. In order to attract people these pioneers' converts used evangelism and literacy. The evangelism encouraged converts to abandon old life rooted in traditions and follow Christ. Following the examples set by the pioneer Christian converts, several Idakho people began to send some of their own sons and several of their other children from their clans to schools.

Pioneer evangelists offered various enticements to prospective students and converts. Salt, sweets, beads, cloth and foodstuff were distributed to attract potential adherents particularly those from poorer families. Girls who feared being married off, ran for refuge in Christian Missions.¹⁴ Anybody suspected to be a traditionalist had little chance of becoming an important community member in the colonial government. Many Idakho people were converted to Christianity and abandoned traditional initiation rites of passage.¹⁵ Idakho, early converts and pioneer teacher evangelists began to convert more followers although they faced resistance because some locals preferred their children to continue contributing labour to the family compounds rather than waste time in the classroom and churches. The families depended on boys and girls providing household chores. Parents and grandparents alike were also eager to preserve their cultural heritage for the future generations which they felt that the new religion was threatening to destroy.¹⁶

Realizing that resistance was so strong, and those converted branded "sell-outs" and threatened by elder's curses. The early converts became orphans, strangers or people escaping from punishment, and forced marriage and widows. To abandon traditional belief for the uncertain, ill understood and unappreciated beliefs of Christianity was a

¹⁴ Leen, Kavulavu, *Church of God and the educated elites: Case of Idakho community 1919-1953*

¹⁵ KNA, DCNN/1/8, North Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1927

¹⁶ Ibid

step few in the Idakho community were willing to take. To secure the converts, Christian Villages were established in the late 1920s as a deliberate attempt by the missionaries to encourage their growing flock to leave within the confines of the mission station, and to live together as a Christian family.¹⁷ This threatened the Idakho traditional way of life including initiation rites of passage because the converted were not allowed to undergo them. With all these forces against the Idakho traditional ways of life, what changes were realized? What cultural initiation rites of passage remain consistent?

This project uses the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage to explain if there was change and if some practices have remained persistent even with the forces that are associated with colonialism and missionary work.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Current work on the Abaidakho community is largely integrated in the general history of the Abaluhya people. Thus, there exists very little specific information about the Abaidakho. The origin of the Abaidakho is told within the larger history of the Abaluhya.¹⁸ But the Abaluhya cannot be emblematic of the Abaidakho. Again, the Abaluhya are a diverse people with different cultural practices. Using the initiation rites of passage for instance, one would notice differences. For instance, Abaidakho initiation rites of passage may not be entirely similar to other Abaluhya people. There are some aspects which are different. However, this is not the subject of this study. This study seeks to identify if there are some aspects in the initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho which have changed and if there are some that have transcended colonial and post-colonial times, imbibing so many developments and changes that are yet to be studied systematically. This is why this study sets out to examine the changes in the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage today.

In addition, existing literature on the initiation rites of passage fails to comprehensively address human agency in the historical development of the community or how the

¹⁷ Leen, Kavulavu, *Church of God and The Educated Elite: The Case of Idakho Community Kenya, 1919-1953*, in *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.2, No.2, pp.21-34, April 2014
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.ea-journals.org)

¹⁸ Bulimo, A. Shadrack, preface, Pp. xv-xxv

changes in health, education, and technology influence or shape the history of the initiation rites of passage practices of the community. The representation of the initiation rites of passage as chances for members of the community to gain acceptance, family identity, property and as facilitators of community togetherness, veils the component of how such initiation rites shape the history of society. This study was, thus, a modest effort to analyse the causes of the cultural change in the practice of initiation rites of passage and the retention of these practices in hybrid form among the Abaidakho of independent Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the indigenous initiation rites of passage among the Idakho
2. To assess the changes and continuity in the initiation rites of passage among the Idakho
3. To analyse the impact of change and continuity on the initiation rites of passage among the Idakho

1.4 Research Questions

1. How the Idakho initiation rites of passage was practiced and what were the rituals and norms accompanying these initiation rites?
2. What has changed, and what has been retained in the practice of the initiation rites of passage among the Idakho.
3. What are the consequences of the changes and consistence of the initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho, 1918 to 2010?

1.5 Justification of the Study

A study of the history of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage is aimed at contributing to current histories on African culture change and their continued practices by Kenyan communities. In essence, this would make a valuable scholarly contribution to the field of social history and the historical erosion of African practices of the initiation rites of passage. The study would also open avenues for the general public to familiarize themselves with the developments on the African initiation rites of passage, which are, by and large, a subject of speculation among African people. Moreover, the findings of this study would be useful in the fields of ethnography and sociology by enhancing an understanding of the culture of initiation rites of passage specifically

passing from childhood to adulthood and concerning their economic, political, and social lives. This is why the study looked into the initiation rites of passage as a socially compulsory requirement for a full adult among the Abaidakho.

Additionally, studies have not systematically focused on how initiation rites of passage have been, and continue to be, transformed by both internal and external influences associated with evangelical mission and operations, colonialism, urbanization, formal education, independent Kenya, and the outbreak and spread of diseases like Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Human Immune Deficiency Acquired Virus (HIV/AIDS).

The custodians of this knowledge are elderly people whose lifespan is limited: this has implications on the urgent need to record their knowledge and experiences as first-hand information before it disappears. It would, therefore, be understood that some of these custodians are knowledgeable illiterate elders who did not attain much or any formal education, to say the least, but have retained the knowledge over time through experience. The Abaidakho nation was chosen because it illustrates the idea of cultural change in its historical heritage of traditions. It has a complex interaction with culture change, and that calls for new insights and a continuous re-fashioning of conceptual schemes to develop a new lifestyle for the community. Through oral traditions, songs, tales, and even proverbs, one establishes a community that welcomes new practices but still tries to maintain its cultural set-up, especially the practices of initiation rites of passage.

Furthermore, the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have also transcended the colonial period and continue to exist in the post-independence era despite the intensive intrusions of gold miners, missionaries, colonial administrators, and modern health and education. A study of Abaidakho initiation rites of passage from 1918 to 2010 was informed by the community's intensive interactions with the gold miners and missionaries who, by 1918, had settled in Abaidakho land. In addition, 1918 marked the end of World War I, giving room for European powers to look for more resources in Africa, including gold. 2010 is the year Kenya adopted a new constitution. Therefore, 1918–2010 is the ninety-two-year formative period of Kenya's history, where most of the developments were undertaken. Additionally, 92 years covered two important

historical epochs in the country: colonial and post-independence, providing an opportunity to identify continuities and changes in the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

This study was restricted to the history of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage from 1918 to 2010. This period was selected because it's marked by shifts in the practices and the development and growth of their culture. By focusing on the initiation rites of passage during this epoch, the indigenous practices and evolution from colonial to post-independence times were investigated. This is a historical account of events that the compulsory initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho have been exposed to during colonialism and into the post-colonial era in Kenya. There were a number of challenges with accessing experienced and knowledgeable respondents from the colonial-era, given that some of them relocated from Abaidakho land and most of them are old and rely on fading memory.

In addition, they were less educated. To compensate for this difficulty, the study relied on archival information, as well as on oral traditions in the form of songs, and proverbs that were simplified into reminder questions. Some of the educated informants had publications and their own writings. Other secondary sources of information, such as government publications, books, journals, and theses, complemented the primary data collected.

Moreover, language barriers and distortion of information during translation from the original Lwidakho language into English was a challenge to the study. This meant that long sentences and explanations had to be used to bring out the actual meaning of the information. Some interviewees were apprehensive that their contributions would not be rewarded. The study coincided with the political campaigns, which raised expectations of monetary handouts. This made the research expensive and, in some cases, required patience and extreme politeness to gain the expected information. There were some elements of exaggeration, with some respondents harshly accusing the young adults of culture change. Secondary sources were useful in filling in gaps and clarifying contradictions. In addition, a good number of interviewees had to be consulted to establish clarity and meet the objectives. Besides, there was a problem with

accessing some of the important materials from the Abaidakho local native council archives since the reports had been destroyed, compelling the researcher to utilize informants from the national archives in Nairobi.

1.7 Literature Review

This section deals with the current existing literature on the Abaidakho people that were reviewed for their relevance to this study. Due to the scarcity of literature on Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, this research heavily relied on fieldwork conducted through oral interviews.

1.7.1 Indigenous Rites of Passage Practices

Existing literature on the Abaluhya people provides information on the Abaidakho sub-group and their culture, but with little understanding of their initiation rites of passage, the changes over time, and the retained practices. A historical discussion on culture change and the continuity of Abaidakho initiation rites of passage should be shaped by wide ranging evolving conditions through an analysis of traits that have been discarded and those that have been readopted because of emerging socio-economic, political, and technological developments.

In Gideon S. Were's succinct information is presented that elaborates on the Abaidakho people, their origin, and settlement. He claims that with the advent of modern times, the old order has been disrupted and social values either drastically modified or, in certain respects, altogether changed. His work presents the broader image of the Abaluhya but does not elaborate on the cultural change and continuity of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. He further, appreciates that, each of the present sub-groups of the Abaluhya are larger administrative units that owe their present size to the reorganization carried out by the British administration.¹⁹ This argument inspires the desires of this paper to understand the influence of colonial actions on the cultural set up of the Abaidakho and their initiation rites of passage. However, Were's work gives the foundation for writing or understanding the ancient practices of the Abaidakho people.

¹⁹ Gideon, S. Were, *A History of the Abaluhya of Western Kenya*, Nairobi: East African Pub. House, 1967

Another important work with a similar view is John Osogo's work, he provides knowledge on the culture and traditions of the Abaidakho, giving the study a full justification of why it's important to seal the gap between cultural change and continuity, particularly on initiation rites of passage.²⁰ What is short in Osogo's work is when he aggregates the Abaluhya as one entity without disaggregating their varied cultures and traditions in the pre-colonial period. His arguments, however, are the basis for understanding the culture of the Abaidakho. This study also reviewed Osogo's description of the rites and rituals regarding marriage and the roles of the young couple. His book does not reveal details on the rituals and norms relating to the initiation rites of passage. Osogo describes the traditions of the Abaluhya in pre-colonial time.

Both Nakabayashi's and Leen Kavulavu's work create an understanding of the Abaidakho people of the Abaluhya and their cultural practice of the initiation rites of passage.²¹ Though these works hardly offer an in-depth analysis, they, nevertheless provide some preliminary information about the initiation rites of passage in the pre-colonial era. Shadrack Amukoye Bulimia's work presents the historical order of the initiation rites of passage of the Abaluhya people and appreciates the variations in the cultural practices among the sub-groups of the Abaluhya. Bulimo further elaborates on the influences and the changes that have affected these initiation rites of passage.²² This provides important insight towards understanding the indigenous initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho.

Mwayuli gives a vivid insight into the Abaidakho practices of the initiation rites of passage in the olden time, highlighting the importance of circumcision and the value of virginity to the Mwidakho. His work gives a compelling reason for this study to answer the following questions: how were the practices conducted then and now? What has changed and what has been retained? Mwayuli and Leen Kavulavu have also presented comprehensive information on the sub-clans of the Abaidakho, their origins, and developments over time, which is vital for this research.²³ The two writers have

²⁰ John, Osogo, *Life in Kenya in the Olden Days: The Baluhya*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965

²¹ Nabuhiro, Nakabayash, *The History Of The Isukha And Idakho Clans: Among The Abaluhya Of Western Kenya*, <http://hdi.handle.net>, accessed on 12/04/2023.

²² Bulimia, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya: A Culture profile*.

²³ Leen, Kavulavu, *The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during the Pre-colonial Period*.

mentioned the initiation rites of passage in this community, even though cursorily, however, their work provides a foundation for this study.

1.7.2 Literature on Change and Continuity

G.S. Were, in his “Essay on African Religion in Western Kenya” explains how the Abaluhya easily and flexibly adopted religious practices into their own practices and beliefs. This generates a deep desire to explore the outcome of integrating the old practices and the new practices of the initiation rites of passage as well as the resultant changes. Were’s views on the changes in religious practices of the larger Abaluhya raise the possibility of such changes encroaching on the initiation rites of passage. Additionally, he says Christianity tried to convert the Abaluhya into their churches but the community still maintained some rituals. He presents a picture of change in religion and continuity in cultural practices of the adopted religion.²⁴ He however, accepts that there was a substantial element of overlap between Christianity and the traditional cosmology of the Abaluhya.

In the case of Rasoah Mutuha, one of the African converts in Abaluhya land, who abandoned traditional culture for Christianity but retained the traditional gender roles of the women. This is explained in Elisabeth McMahon’s “A Spiritual Pilgrim: the life of Rasoah Mutuha, an East African Quaker” which seems to agree with G. S. Were. The influence of the missionaries did not stop the Africans from practicing their cultural initiation rites of passage. The work of the Friends’ Church became identified with female emancipation; it promoted the education of women such as Rasoah in a patriarchal society, hoping to change the mentality of the Abaluhya. But the traditional care-giving role of the woman was retained. Education only produced a generation of early female converts who believed in gender equality in worship, education, and respect between spouses but maintained their roles as women.²⁵

This work provides a support base for questions and answers about similar changes and continuity as experienced in the practice of initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho of the Abaluhya.

²⁴ G.S. Were, *Essay on African Religion in Western Kenya*.

²⁵ Elisabeth, McMahon, *A Spiritual Pilgrim*.

Leen Kavulavu presents an in-depth analysis through his work, “Church of God and the Educated Elite: The Case of the Abaidakho community” which further informs this study by explaining the roles of the few mission-educated Africans in Abaidakho Land and the critical perception of the Church of God mission towards African traditional initiation rites of passage. He provides an elaborate understanding of some factors that led to religious change, which in the spirit of this study, affected the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. He further gives the role of the educated elite in the social transformation among the Abaidakho; the Christian villages for the African converts; and the influences adopted from the villages. The villages were an attempt by the missionaries to replace African traditional life by adopting the church structure as the basis of unity and cooperation. Since the Christian villages were a centres of change, the educated elite and those who went to the villages became agents of change. Leen Kavulavu’s work offers a compelling reason for the urgency of this paper to answer the questions of change and continuity in the Abaidakho practice of the initiation rites of passage.²⁶ Although not explicit, it is discernible that religious indoctrination had potential to inflict changes on the initiation rites of passage in Abaidakho land.

Judith, and M. Abwunza's “The Drama of Uvukwi: A Note from the Field,” the Logoli are described as an unchanging traditional society in the classical anthropological sense because they aren’t isolated, living and allowing visitors, but through all the processes of interactions they try to keep social identity, remaining bounded in a group known as the Logoli. The Logoli border the Abaidakho and are one of the Abaluhya sub-clans. Despite the influence of mission-educated Africans, the Logoli retained some of their dowry practices. It is important to note that this part of the literature brings out the possible intrusions and forces behind the change in the Abaidakho practice of initiation rites of passage. Edward Shills’ “Beyond Modernity,” points out the mechanisms of persistence that are not utterly distinct from the issues of change.²⁷ There is persistence in change and around change of Abaidakho practice of initiation rites of passage.

Therefore, the mechanisms of change call forth the operations of persistence and its elements without these, the innovation would fade and the previous condition would be

²⁶ Leen, Kavulavu, *The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during the Pre-colonial Period*.

²⁷ Judith, and M. Abwunza's “*The Drama of Uvukwi: A Note from the Field*,”

restored. Lastly, according to Eugene C. Burt, in his work “Mural Painting in Western Kenya,” the arrival of the European missionaries and colonial officials, at the turn of the century, initiated extensive changes in the Baluhya pattern of life. Missionaries for example, demanded that the potential converts abandoned many traditional practices that were considered unsuitable.²⁸ This argument enriches this study to realize the changes and the persistence in the traditional practice of initiation rites of passage.

1.7.3 Impact of Change and Continuity

Existing work on other Luhya sub-clans greatly informed this study as they form the undifferentiated tradition. According to Vincent G. Simiyu, the Babukusu, a sub-group of the Luhya, is an uninterrupted, disconnected and distinct cultural entity. Simiyu further clarifies the extent of cultural, political, economic, and social interaction that needed more filling as they remained as gaps. His work informs this study to know the results of new intruders on the indigenous culture and custom set up of the Ababukusu.²⁹ This study, therefore, explores this identified opportunity to fill the continued and discontinued practices of initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho of the Abaluhya of western Kenya.

Kenda Mutongi explains an adopted practice to replace an indigenous practice just to retain it in. This article literature on the Maragoli change of attitude towards the girl child’s education for the sake of improving the child’s dowry resonates with my study. Kenda Mutongi highlights that widowed mothers needed masculine power, so they took their daughters to attain western education as a determinant of their suitors.³⁰ At marriage, despite the change in practice, they still invoked traditional gender roles. To ensure that, after marrying their daughters, the mothers kept their marriages successful for the wealthy suitors and adhered to their roles while the men paid dowry worth rewarding the mothers for educating their daughters to be good mothers. The hybridized practices in Maragoli marriage practices mirror the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, which have merged foreign and traditional practices.

²⁸ Judith, and M. Abwunza's “*The Drama of Uvukwi: A Note from the Field*,

²⁹ Vincent G. Simiyu, *The Emergence of a Sub-Nation: A History of Babukusu to 1990*.

³⁰ Kenda Mutongi, *Worries of the Heart: Widowed Mothers, Daughters, and Masculinities in Maragoli of Western Kenya, 1940-1960*.

Similarly, the value and importance of Busaa, local brew, important liquor among the Abaidakho. And which accompanied ceremonies like, the initiation rites of passage were demonized. This is captured by David F. M. Donde's article, "Chang'aa distillation and drinking in Idakho location, which clarifies the new ways of practicing a long-time culture.

Busaa was taken in accordance with taboos or rules: only adults or the graduates, bayayi drank it as a sign of graduation from childhood to adulthood under the supervision of the elders.³¹ This tradition has since changed. Due to government ban, Busaa brewing has become a secretive art and there is limited control of the young and women over the drinking of Busaa.

In the work of Edwin L. M. Gwako, reviews the various factors that have affected marriage, including influence from education, colonialism, nationalism, independence, and constitutionalism in Kenya, especially human rights. The results of Gwako's study show that although widow-inheritance still persists among the Maragoli, signs of change are appearing as more economically secure and resource-owing widows become increasingly assertive of their rights to make independent decisions about what to do with their lives, meaning, women have become agents of change. Important to this study is the influence of education, nationalism, and constitutionalism have on cultural practices. The persistence of a dominant patriarchal society in contemporary Kenya is a clear illustration of the conflict between culture change and continuity.³² Women are increasingly questioning and resisting the rationale for patriarchal structures and social-cultural practices that deny them access to the decision-making process. This change of perception results in both negative and positive developments, which are addressed in this study along with the positives and negatives they bring.

Samuel S. Thomas writes that while the Friends Quaker missionaries were successful in creating a spearhead for the transformation of the Luhyia culture, the effects were far from what they had intended. Africans took what the mission had to offer and reinterpreted it in their own experience and culture, putting a distinctly African stamp

³¹ David, F. M. Donde, *Chang'aa distillation and drinking in Idakho location, Ikolomani division, Kakamega: Impact of the closure of Busaa clubs, 1984.*

³² Edwin, L. M. Gwako, *Widow Inheritance among the Maragoli of Western Kenya.*

on the mission's legacy.³³ This is a view that this study adopts in analysing the Abaidakho hybridized initiation rites of passage. While the efforts to transform the lives of colonized women and girls were integral to Christian missionaries throughout the world, they caused many changes in the lives of Luhyia women and girls, particularly the Abaidakho, and their culture.

This study, however, adds to the existing scholarly work on the social history of the community's initiation rites of passage. The reviewed literature motivated this research to investigate how Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have evolved and whether changing society has impacted the growth, development and survival of these rites. It is evident from the reviewed literature that an institutional historical investigation on the initiation rites of passage has not received in-depth and systematic academic reflection. Furthermore, there is still room in research to address human agency in the historical progression of the initiation rites of passage at the intersection of social, economic, and political developments in societies.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by continuity theory, which holds that in making adaptive decisions, older adults attempt to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures. They prefer to accomplish this objective by using strategies tied to the past experiences of themselves and their environment. This means that change is only connected to the person's perceived past, producing continuity in psychology, behaviour, and circumstances and resulting in an adaptive change. Older adults maintain the same activities, behaviours, and relationships as they did in their earlier years of life;³⁴ this theory has its origins in the observation that a large population of older adults had consistency in their activities. It was formerly proposed in 1971 by Robert Atchley in his article "Retirement and Leisure Participation: Continuity or Crisis?" He strengthened his theory in 1999, asserting that continuity and adaptation in aging create positive experiences. The theory deals with the internal and external structures of continuity to describe or explain how people adapt to their new situation

³³ Samuel, S. Thomas, *Transforming the Gospel of Domesticity: Luhyia Girls and the Friends African Mission, 1917–1926*.

³⁴ American society on aging *Continuity theory: How elders find wisdom in spite of it all* Archived from the original/on 2008-01-11. Retrieved 2022-03-10.

and set their goals, such as personalities, ideals, and beliefs, and maintain contact without disconnection.³⁵

The continuity theory is based on the assumption that the basic structure that remains over time and guarantees consistency of the thinking patterns, behaviours, activity profiles, and social relationships in middle-aged and older adults is experience. This is used as a primary adaptive strategy in order to face change. Not considering the widespread changes in health, functional capacity, and circumstances, people tend to maintain similar behaviour patterns and the related continuity of the past and the presence.³⁶ Therefore, the theory provides a stable ground to understand and bring to light the importance of the Abaidakho culture change and continued practices that are held valuable and dear to the community. Continuing the newness of the disconnected function for all mankind, we must bear in mind that just as the new function, with all its openness and fluidity, has its own elements of change, just like culture and traditions have their own plasticity and malleability to change.³⁷ With this change, continued and discontinued practices seem to recur in what this study considers a hybrid culture.

Additionally, the theory asserts that people hold on to their past experiences as the basis for their response to change. This would imply that the community was exposed to what seemed like intensive interaction with new civilizations; it retained much of its traditional values and practices, which they felt were relevant to their changing circumstances. In the immediate post-independence period up to the promulgation of the new constitution, the middle-aged and the elderly still maintained that which they deem important based on their experiences. This theory, despite its shortcomings, allows insights into the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, ranging from what changed, what was interrupted and what has been retained.³⁸ Continuity Theory is relevant because it helps in explaining the changes in society by analysing the adaptive choices that societies make. It enables understand why the middle-aged and older adults

³⁵Richard, Schulz; Linda S. Noelker, Kenneth Rockwood; Richard. L. Sprott, eds. (2006). *Continuity theory*. Encyclopedia of aging, vol. 1 (4th Ed). Springer publishing company Pp. 265 – 269.

³⁶http://www.csupomona.edu/~jvgrizzell/best_practices/bctheory.html, Hicks, Vicki, *Change theories*.

³⁷ R.J. ZwiWerblowsky. *Beyond tradition and modernity: changing Religious in a changing world*. University of London, the Athlon press (1976) Pp. 16-17.

³⁸Robert, C. Atchley (1989). *A continuity theory of normal aging*” *the gerontologist* 29(2):183-190.doi:10. 1093 /geront/29.2.183.

attempt to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures; and they prefer to accomplish this objective by using strategies tied to their past experiences of themselves and their social world. Change is linked to the person's perceived past, producing continuity in inner psychological characteristics as well as in social behaviour and in social circumstances. Continuity is thus a grand adaptive strategy that is promoted by both individual preference and social approval.

1.9 Research Hypothesis

1. The retention of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage is driven by the needs of the community.
2. Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have remained relevant in an ever-changing social, economic, and political environment.
3. Throughout their existence, the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage mirrored the indigenous practices inherited from one generation to another.

1.10 Methodology

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources. These sources were useful in bringing out various aspects of the research and in the realization of the set objectives. Secondary data was collected for three years from various sources, including libraries, archives, virtual sources, while primary data came from oral interviews with respondents. The evidence arising from the above sources was analysed, interpreted, and evaluated for its relevance to the study.

1.10.1 Primary and Secondary Sources

This study is qualitative in nature and employed primary sources. Primary data was collected not only used to bring out unique concepts in the study but also to enrich the information gathered from secondary sources; it also sealed the missing gaps, and provided a comprehensive understanding of the issue under research. The study derived its information from various written sources, which included memoirs, the clan's collection of its histories, memoranda, and the clan's oral tradition stories, songs, and proverbs regarding their cultural initiation rites of passage. These sources provided information on the Abaidakho clan, particularly on its initiation rites of passage. The study was carried out in Ikolomani, Kakamega County in Kenya, among the Abaidakho, from April to October 2022. The key informants for the study consisted of elders from

the Abaidakho community. These officials were very useful in providing valuable information on the Abaidakho culture during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. The total sample size was forty-four respondents. During field work, the researcher used purposive sampling technique and snowball technique. He identified an elderly informant who knew the subject area, who in turn directed the researcher to most of the surviving Abaidakho elders. To deal with the weakness of the snowball approach, purposive sampling was used.

In the purposive technique, people with information on the practice of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, particularly during colonial and post-colonial eras, were interviewed. Oral interviews were used to support secondary and other sources of primary information. Interviews provided biographical information about the community and cultural practices and traditions regarding initiation rites of passage. Specifically, they were useful in gathering information on all the stated objectives of this study. Semi-structured interviews were used to maximize discussion. The researcher used question guide to elicit information from the interviewees by posing questions. This was because most of them were old and could not read or write in English. Besides note-taking, the interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and later translated into English, giving a verbatim account of the conversation with the informants. The questions were easily re-framed to encourage free discussions other than just eliciting questions and answers. Oral interviews provided an opportunity for cross-checking the informants to avoid possible misinterpretations and ensure the understanding of the collected data and, hence, its validity. The method allowed the researcher to understand and capture the informant's oral interview.

The study deployed a qualitative approach to analyse the data. Oral data collected from the questionnaires was compared and contrasted. Once the oral data was organized, the researcher cross-checked the information with documentary sources. Through description, comparison, and interpretation as methods of analytical discussion, respective conclusions from the data were reached. Important secondary information on this research was collected from books, journals and unpublished theses. These materials were sourced from the University of Nairobi's Main Library, the History and Archaeology Department Library of the University of Nairobi, the Open Libraries in Kakamega, Kaimosi Bible College, and the Bushiangala Church of God Archive. These

secondary sources of information were used to complement the data derived from primary sources; they also shed light on this research, and made it more authentic.

This study is divided into five chapters. This chapter is an introduction to the research. It is followed by chapter two, which is an examination of the indigenous Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. In Chapter three, the study analyses the cultural change and continuity of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, while chapter four deals with the impact of the cultural change and continuity of the practices, before chapter five concludes with the overall findings and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

INDIGENOUS ABAIDAKHO INITIATION RITE OF PASSAGE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the whole project of cultural change and continuity, the case of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. It consists of a brief history of the Abaidakho people starting from the period of migration, including origin of their initiation rites of passage. First, historical background of Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, pre-circumcision rites, initiation rites and their ceremonies, seclusion and graduation from seclusion. The chapter also highlights women initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho people. Thus the chapter consists of an overview of the Abaidakho peoples' initiation rites of passage. This chapter examines the centrality of the indigenous practices of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, and the historical background to these initiation rites. It proposes that the practices were an important and compulsory stage for any Mwidakho. The main aim of this chapter is to describe, situate and explore the main initiation rites of passage of the Abaidakho people in order to lay the foundation for expansion and analyse what underlying ideals and assumptions the initiation rites of passage reflect. How were the initiation rites carried out, how did they use to be, and what were some of the rituals and norms that accompanied the initiation rites of passage?

2.1 The Abaidakho People

Abaidakho are part of the Luhyia sub-ethnic group that resides in the present day Kakamega County in the western part of Kenya. They inhabit the southern Luhyia territory together with the Isukha, Maragoli, Bunyore and Tiriki.³⁹ The Idakho clans speak related languages, have similar pattern of living and common cultural practices, but it must be mentioned that each Idakho clan has its own tradition of ancestors and migrations. This then suggests that the Idakho have been a congregation of various people who came from all directions and at different times in the region. This idea is reinforced by the fact that each clan is ideally more independent although together these clans consider themselves as people of Idakho.⁴⁰ During migration and settlement, the

³⁹ Bode, (1978).

⁴⁰ Leen, Kavulavu, *The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during Pre-Colonial Period*, in *Sociology and Anthropology* 5(8), 2017, pp. 655-663, <http://www.hrpub.org>, accessed on 21/10/2023

Idakho people came in various waves and at different times. They settled in their present day location along the clan lines. At the time of settlement, they interacted with the groups of Nandi and Maasai. Gideon Were argued that the entry of Idakho people in the region forced the Nandi and Maasai to migrate to other places. Those who chose to remain were assimilated into Bantu groups and became the ancestors of the Abashimuli, Abamuli, Abashisha, Abashirotsa, Abashikunga, Abakondi and Abashikulu clans among the Idakho.⁴¹

The Idakho are made up of different clans who came to identify themselves as Idakho people. They neighbour the Isukha whom they made alliances with to fight off the Nandi and the Maasai who raided their livestock.⁴² The Abaidakho are organized along clans, although there is conflicting accounts of the number of clans. Social historians have revealed that the Abaidakho are composed of roughly forty-four clans. However, Mwayuli has identified fifteen clans. Gideon Were writes that Mwidakho, the ancestor of the Abaidakho, had six sons: Musali, Kasam, Shikulu, Ngolori, Shiangala, and Masava, who became the direct founders of the major clans of the Abaidakho.⁴³ Leen Kavulavu presents fifty-four sub-clans of the Abaidakho.⁴⁴ There is an urgent need for more research on Abaidakho clans, given the emerging conflicting accounts. The following are the easily identifiable clans of Abaidakho: Abashimuli, Abamusali, Abashilika, Abashikulu, Abashiangala, Abashisalachi, Abakondi, Abamatsitsi, Abashitsiula, Abammbale, Abakhaya, Abasakala, Abashitanyi, Abamanyisi, Abamalaba, Abasilwa, Abamakambe, Ababyanishi, Abashitsa, Abashiasuli, Abanasio, Abaterema, Ababwanishili, Abamuhali, Abanyika, Abasilwa, Abanyama, Abayila, Abamuhuya, Abashiluka, Abashirotsa, Abashikunga, Abamasaba, Abayemi, Abahuli, Abakhubi, Abashitanyi, Abakhananga and Abanyika.⁴⁵ All the named clans were in their own rights governed politically and economically.

⁴¹ Gideon, Were, *Essays on African Religion in Western Kenya*, 1974.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Gideon, Were, *Essays on African Religion in Western Kenya*, 1974.

⁴⁴ Leen, Kavulavu, *The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during Pre-Colonial Period*, in *Sociology and Anthropology* 5(8), 2017, pp. 655-663, <http://www.hrpub.org>, accessed on 21/10/2023

⁴⁵ Ibid

2.2 Political and Economic Organization of the Abaidakho People

In the pre-colonial period, the clan was a basic unit of administration. It lived in the clan kraal (litala) where all effective political, social and economic activities were coordinated.⁴⁶ A clan kraal was headed by a clan head referred to as leader or Omwami. He was advanced in age or came from the oldest age set surviving. Age set was defined by circumcision rites of passage.⁴⁷ The authority bestowed by old age was strengthened by the fact that they were connected with ancestors. It was associated with all rites and sacrifices done in the clan or the larger Abaidakho people. The Omwami who was the clan head ensured unity and was in charge of solving disputes within members of the clan. He was assisted by other elders. The elders mediated to avert war among clan members.⁴⁸ The elders officiated during sacrifices and rites of passage.

Apart from clan heads, warriors or warrior institution was highly respected among the Abaidakho people. The warrior was measured in terms of the number of enemies killed and the herd of cattle raided, but importantly was the size of land captured. Attached to raids, was economic respect. A man attained respect in the clan among the Idakho during pre-colonial era through economic status. One who possessed a large herd of cattle, whose granaries were always filled, and who had several wives and who could offer beer and food to guests was considered a leader. Another very important institution among the Abaidakho was that of medicine men.⁴⁹ A medicine man wielded great influence over the people in his clan. Their leadership was passed down from father or mother to sons or daughters. Medicine men were friends of the people not only among the Abaidakho, but in the entire African society.⁵⁰ According to Mbiti, medicine men had access to the forces of nature which gave them forms of knowledge unknown by ordinary people.⁵¹ They removed harm from the clan and were a symbol of hope, health, protection and security from evil forces. Some of this special medicine men in Idakho land were the circumcisers, rainmakers, among others.

⁴⁶ Oral interview, Akala, Charles, Aug. 10-2022.

⁴⁷ Oral interview, Amulavu, Joseph, Sept. 12-2022.

⁴⁸ Oral interview, Ashilenje, Peter, Aug. 9-2022.

⁴⁹ Oral interview, Ashimosi, Chrispinus, Sept. 10-2022.

⁵⁰ Mbiti 1969.

⁵¹ Oral interview, Asutsa, Hellen, Sept. 11-2022.

Away from political wellbeing of the Abaidakho people, the discussed institutions ensured economic prosperity of the community. In the pre-colonial period, the Abaidakho practiced a mixed economy consisting of livestock keeping and crop production. They also engaged in trade, hunting, gathering and handicraft. The staple crop that was widely cultivated by Abaidakho people was finger millet, sweet potatoes (mabwoni), beans (makanda), bananas (maremwa), monkey beans (tsimbande) and Cassava (mwoko).⁵² The economic products were highly used in various rites of passage organized by the social institutions of the Abaidakho.

2.3 Social Organization

The Abaidakho placed a lot of value on the family unit. The family comprised of a husband, wives, sons, sons' wives, sons' children and unmarried daughters. Within the family unit, there was defined division of duties whereby both men and women played a significant role.⁵³ The division of labour was reinforced by a set of taboos that governed the family unit and the same would be practiced at the clan level. Taboo guided the Abaidakho society in a similar way as in the modern day constitutions. Abaidakho had rituals that reinforced the taboos.⁵⁴ The rituals were taught to the young people who had gone through the initiation rites of passage. One of the most cherished rituals was that of male circumcision (Shishevo). This was the single most important event in Idakho and a male had to go through the rituals to be accepted as a member of the community.⁵⁵ Preparation to pass through the initiation rites was associated with indoctrination on the significance of the ritual. An Idakho boy, therefore, grew up knowing that at some stage he would go through the ritual. It was a significant ritual that marked a transition from childhood to adulthood. An Idakho girl also grew knowing the rituals involved in their transition into womanhood or mature woman for marriage. After initiation, there were other rituals as will be discussed in the following sections.

⁵² Leen Kavulavu, "The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during Pre-Colonial Period," in *Sociology and Anthropology* 5(8), 2017, pp. 655-663, <http://www.hrpub.org>, accessed on 21/10/2023

⁵³ Oral interview, Avulamusi, Debla, Sept. 11-2022.

⁵⁴ Oral interview, Bukhala, Charles, Nov. 1-2022.

⁵⁵ Oral interview, Indombi, Lawrence, Oct. 7-2022.

2.4 Indigenous Abaidakho Initiation Rites of Passage

Initiation rites of passage have been at the core and foundation of educational, socio-economic, and political dynamics of most communities. The entire life-cycle of an individual, from birth through childhood, to old age and death, was marked by a series of initiation rites of passage highly expressed throughout the individual's life. These initiation rites of passage included, male circumcision, female sub-incision, (khusarwa) and the extraction of the two lower teeth, Buula, were meant to strengthen cooperation among young male warriors, Murani and females, Bakuvuye. It should be noted that, Idakho circumcision did not necessarily mean that the young adults were ready to marry, rather marked an entry into warrior class and behaving like an adult. Meaning it was merely a stage of preparing the boys and girls for future marriage.

2.4.1 Male Initiation Rites of Passage

A Mwidakho boy remained a child until he was initiated into a young adult. After initiation, the candidates would be taught the values, cultures, and responsibilities that come after initiation. Taboos were also taught them such as not being allowed at the fire place (the kitchen). Musoleli was put through some activities by his father or grandfather to prove his readiness. He was to uproot special grass (shivembe) for thatching houses with his bare hands and without a machete. This demonstrated that he was ready to construct a house for the family and protect his home. He would be given a cock to slaughter and split into pieces for the family without a knife: this activity gave him skills to feed the family and take care of the in-laws.⁵⁶ All these preparations were meant to enable Musoleli to develop respect for his siblings and other relatives.⁵⁷

Abaidakho circumcision was an elaborate rite and was culturally important in the life of a male individual. The practice was divided into five levels: the pre-circumcision rites as highlighted above, the actual surgery/cutting of the foreskin, the sequestration of the initiates in the Irumbi, and their graduation from the Irumbi (Shisavitso, Shialukho and Shisiao).⁵⁸ The pre-initiation stage commenced probably after one or two fortnights before the exact day of the circumcision. During this period, there was

⁵⁶Oral interview, Ihaji, Bwinstone, Aug. 8-2022.

⁵⁷Oral interview, Ihaji, Selina, Aug. 8-2022.

⁵⁸Oral interview, Kanaiza, Muchesia, Sept. 10-22.

singing and dancing as a pronouncement to encourage the Basoleli to come out courageously and face the knife of the circumciser. For instance, in the song bellow;

Soloist

Musatsa nuwatukha shusubaa watinya
 Eheeee hehe heeee baboli
 Ewoo yeye bukwi-nubushebanga
 Eheeee hehe heeee baboli

Response

Wooooye baboli ulimusatsa baba wooo
 Wooooye baboli ulimusatsa baba wooo
 Wooooye baboli mmakhubakhubwi wooo
 Wooooye baboli bukwi-nubushebanga woo

Translation

Soloist

To prove you are a man you have to stand strong
 Eheee hehe heee they say
 Ewoo yeye very early before sun shine
 Ehe hehe heee they say

Response

They say you are not a man enough
 They say you are not a man enough
 They say it will be early morning in the cold
 They say it will be very early before sun rise

From the analysis of above song, the Basoleli would also use the opportunity to accept the process or rituals that awaited them. They will proclaim how courageous they are to face the knife. Elders would gather Muluhyia and make a decision on the dates and the specific places (Luhya) where all the initiates will meet for the procedure. During the pre-circumcision, the boys would bid farewell to their mothers for they are now ready to undergo the process as they look forward to become men. In some instances, the boy's mothers would cry as a sign of appreciating their bold decision. On evening, two days before their circumcision, they would sing and proceed to sleep in an elders' house. That evening, songs emphasizing on courage would be sung to the candidates of circumcision. Some would carry threats to those would express signs of cowardice. This is a song that send a powerful message that any act of cowardice would not be tolerated and that candidates must be courageous. The song encouraged the young boys to be brave and strong and to avoid crying or showing cowardice behaviour during the circumcision.

2.5 The Initiation Ceremony

To officially declare the commencement of circumcision on the material day, the circumciser (Mushevi) sounded the special drum. The drums of Mushevi of the Abaidakho people have an almost verbal pattern of announcement, so herald-like is

their opening tone and rhythmic structure which sends a coded message.⁵⁹ Mushevi had a special drum called Mutindi/Mutiti, which was used to announce his activities before commencing the procedures, or announcing that the ceremony was beginning. Mutindi/Mutiti was specially crafted from an important spiritual tree among the Abaidakho, called Murembe.

It was believed to possess a healing power and could heal even curses. The Mushevi could also use the Mutindi/Mutiti to lay a curse on someone who had ill intentions towards him or the initiates. Mushevi also used special herbal medicine to treat Basindi called Ingoi, a very bitter herb that is believed to heal all diseases.

On the actual day, at Mmakhubakhubwi (at dawn, possibly at around four or five in the morning), the initiates were guided through the conditions and customs regarding circumcision. This included, reminding them not to touch the clothing of the operator, for such would be judged as an act of cowardice. They were to remain brave while undergoing circumcision operation. The candidates would be taken to a common place for the circumcision process to be carried out. It was usually under either a Musutsu (Croton Macrostachyus) or a Musenzeli (Aningeria Altissima) tree of the Croton family. These trees were symbolic. They always produce many seeds. And therefore considered as a symbol of life among the Abaidakho. It also symbolizes fertility for the initiates. Additionally, the strong roots of the trees symbolically bound the young generation who shared the same knife at the same spot and who dropped their blood on the same roots, to remain united as a generation. Since the initiates are connected by the spot of circumcision or the roots, they were to always work as a team and spread their influence just like the roots of the trees. Lastly, the trees produce shade for the people to rest, sit, and discuss matters of importance. Their shade, therefore, cast a symbolic shadow on the initiates of encouraging them to always resolve their issues peacefully under one shade.⁶⁰ Circumcision ceremony among the Abaidakho was a public ceremony done under a public tree where elders' sittings were done witnessed by everyone.

⁵⁹ Rose, Brandel, *The Music of African Circumcision Rituals*, in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Spring, 1954, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), pp. 52-62 Published by: University of California Press on behalf of the American Musicological Society Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/829611>

⁶⁰ Francis, M. S. Mwayuli, *The history of the Isukha and Abaidakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya* printed by CUEA publications, 2003. P. 16

As the circumciser (Mushevi) carries out the operation, special men guardians hold the initiate to restrict him from touching the operator because it was a taboo for a candidate to do so and such action attracted a fine in terms of a cow from the family of the candidate. As the circumcision process went on, the group of onlookers followed the proceedings from a distance.⁶¹ After the operation on each one of the initiates, the outcome would be announced, and the crowd would break into joyful celebration, but only when the initiate stood strong and withstood the pain. To avoid shame, every young man was encouraged to stand still, supported by special men, without expressing fear. The whole process would take at most a minute unless the operator realizes that the initiate had complications with the foreskin of his penis.

If foreskin stuck on the penis-head, according to Abaidakho beliefs, it was an indication of a curse or infertility. Mushevi would use a different knife, and after the process, he was required to dispose it far away where it should never be found, like in a pond. The family of the compromised boy would be compelled to pay the operator a cow or goat. It was also believed that the initiate with complications would bleed excessively if the operator is not compensated. The complication could also be caused by a curse from the maternal grandparents if the mothers' bride price had not been paid.⁶²

As the circumcision operation is carried out by the circumciser (Mushevi), the uncircumcised people were not allowed to get close. It was a reserve of true men. This is because, the circumcised were guardians of the secrets of the Abaidakho. The uncircumcised were teased that if they approached the place (Mushishevelo) Musambwa (highly feared spirit of doom) would curse them unless they paid fine. Once the fine is paid the Mushevi could appease the ancestors to remove a curse. At the circumcision, compromised Musindi was not told until after the Shishevo ceremony. This was a fairly detailed description of the circumcision. After circumcision, the sons (Basindi) became known to and accepted by the local people.

The circumcision was apparently regarded as one of the most important steps of their incorporation into the official ranks of the Abaidakho people. It gave the youngsters an

⁶¹Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhyia of Kenya*. Pp. 273- 278.

⁶²Oral interviews, Likhoto, Humphrey, Nov. 1-2022.

age-grade (Bakochi) those circumcised under the same musutsu/musenzeli. The age groups provided the basis for social solidarity. The members of various age groups supported one another in everyday activities, including courtship and marriage activities. After the operation the initiates stay in a special hut during a period of seclusion. During this time, they are looked after by young men who were circumcised some years earlier. Among the Abaidakho, they stay in the hut of a respected old man for seclusion.⁶³

2.5.1 Sequestration in Irumbi (Seclusion Hut)

Sequestration was a seclusion hut where initiates convalesced and received instruction and teachings on Abaidakho traditions and norms. The council of elders would choose Tsirumbi, isolation, or seclusion places for Basindi. One Irumbi would accommodate up to twenty (20) occupants. Irumbi was identified according to the owner of the seclusion place, for example, Irumbi ya Ngaira.

In some cases, a grass-thatched house would be made near a river to allow easy access to water, away from the public. Two young adults, a male and a female, would be chosen to take care of the initiates during the seclusion: they were called Mutili (singular) and Batili (plural).⁶⁴ The male Mutili was to ensure the security of the Basindi, and to ensure they were taught the norms and traditions of the Abaidakho people. They were also taught how to present themselves as young adults. Importantly, he was to help with the nursing and cleaning of their wounds. He lived with them and was the custodian of the sequestration house.⁶⁵ The female Mutili, on the other hand, was to ensure a steady supply of food to the Irumbi. There were several stringent measures and rituals that came with this seclusion: one of the most important regulations forbade the parents Mushevi and Batili from engaging in any sexual intercourse during this period. Circumcisers avoided having sex with women for the entire period of the practice. It was a taboo to engage in sex then go ahead to circumcise.

⁶³ Jan Jacob de Wolf, *Circumcision and Initiation in Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda: Historical Reconstructions and Ethnographic Evidence*, in *Anthropos*, 1983, Bd. 78, H. 3. /4. (1983), pp. 369-410, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40460639>, accessed on 22/10/2023.

⁶⁴ Oral interview, Lugonzo, Henry, Oct. 7-2022.

⁶⁵ Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya*. Pp. 273- 278

It is common belief among the Luhya that one preparing for any form of competition or contest should abstain from sex.⁶⁶ Contact with the vagina is believed to weaken a man and therefore he cannot go to war. Initiation among the Abaidakho is actually a battle, hence the need to abstain from sex. Another regulation demanded that mothers of the initiates refrain from wearing underpants. The mother not wearing underpants symbolized releasing or setting the son free. It also symbolized letting the young initiates free for procreation.

Mushevi would live in an isolated hut until the graduation ceremony called Shisiao or Shisavitso, was over.⁶⁷ The initiates spent most of their time learning craft, hunting, and gathering skills, and in the evening, they resorted to singing and dancing while mocking the uncircumcised and asking them to be prepared for the knife. This intimidating song was sung to scare the uncircumcised:

Soloist	Response
Vamwarikala muhende mioyo	Chambomboyeee
Mundu musatsa itumi yatinya	Chambombo jambo
Vamwarikala mbanu kwalula	Chambombo jambo

<u>Translation</u>	Response
Soloist	
Those yet to be cut should be worried	Be ready
A man should know life in isolation is hard	Be ready
Those uncircumcised should know the knife is painful.	Be ready

This songs were not meant to scare the uncircumcised but to make them feel and desire to undergo the process.⁶⁸ They would also use this time to mock witches and the indolent while heaping praise on the good values espoused by the community. They also engaged in wrestling activities towards the end of their time in the Irumbi. The initiates were also taught the importance of being warriors, the pride that comes with successful raids, and the importance of capturing more land for the community. After

⁶⁶ Kasili George Wanjala, *Performance and Performance Spaces in Bukusu Work and Celebratory Songs*, In IJRDO-Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research, Volume-1 | Issue-2 | February,2016

⁶⁷Oral interviews, Makwaka, Josphat, Oct. 13-2022.

⁶⁸Oral interviews, Mahiva, Michael, Sept. 14-2022.

receiving the teachings in seclusion, the candidates then graduate from Irumbi/seclusion.

2.5.2 Graduation from Irumbi

During graduation ceremony from Irumbi, referred to as Shisavitso or shialukho, the operator would bless Barani, also called young adults (Bayayi), and let them join the community. This ceremony was organized at the home of a respected elder who was successful economically. All the Irumbi within the region or area would meet there - properly dressed Mushevi would be met with a big thanksgiving party to celebrate his good job and praise the ancestors for blessing his work. He was the main celebrant during the occasion. It was the pride of the operator to pass out his initiates without reports of deaths or complains. The parents presented meals and traditional brew (busaa) to Mushevi as an appreciation to the work done. Busaa was very important at this point, which is why Shisavitso was announced two weeks before the day and was organized after the harvesting period. The Mushevi would taste and share the food with the graduates symbolizing communalism. During this ceremony, it was a time for the operator to advice his graduates. Elders would also take the stage to welcome the new adults by reminding them of their new roles in the society. The ceremony was referred to as a pass out because the young adults joined the military wing of the community and hence forth formed an age grade calling each other Bakochi.

The Musitsa dance would be performed if all the initiates successfully passed out. Mushevi prepared his Basindi as warriors; he led them in dances and songs.⁶⁹ During this day, there was eating, dancing, singing, and drinking, while gifts were presented to the initiates and their operator. The graduates would only take Busaa under the supervision of the elders; women were not allowed to drink, save those with reputable backgrounds and with the approval of the elders.⁷⁰ The ceremony was important because it gave the Barani a sense of belonging to a group called Bakochi, allowed them to connect with their ancestors, and allowed them to give thanks to God. The age groups (Bakochi) presented to him with a new set of friends and provided the basis for social solidarity. That is why it was important that this party be done in groups and on an

⁶⁹Oral interview, Makala, Josephat, Sept. 10-2022.

⁷⁰Oral interview, Manyonyi, Mwanjilwa, Sept. 24-2022.

individual level and attended by fellow Bakochi. The members of various age sets supported one another in everyday activities, including courtship and marriage activities; therefore, the post-circumcision ceremonies, games, and sports were organized on a grade system. The young adults joined and formed the young warriors of the community; they bathed together, walked together, and kept their secrets or confided in each other; if one went wrong, the parents or spouses would involve his set of Bakochi to talk to him or correct him.⁷¹

2.5.3 Post-circumcision (Shisiao)

After the graduation ceremony, there were post-circumcision rituals and norms, including Shisiao celebration (this an important family welcoming ceremony to the new adult in the family). A family or clan would organize a home-coming festival to welcome the individual Murani back home. Gifts were presented to the young adult and he would make merry with some of the Bakochi (age-set members or adults who shared the same knife) who would organize their ceremonies at different times. During this period, he will be introduced to the entire family as an adult. His old clothes and bedding would be destroyed and new ones presented to him. A house well prepared by the father would be given to him. The young graduate would then be invited by his farther to share a meal where he would be advised on the limits while interacting with women. The young adult was then allowed to visit his mother's birth place (maternal uncles'/aunts' home) to be introduced to the entire extended family to avoid marrying relatives. Here, he would be given blessings and gifts as a way of appreciating his new status.

This period saw the young adults make rounds of visits to relatives to announce their change of status and received gifts in what was called khusolola.⁷² At this stage, the young man started to attend Masitsa dances where he would potentially meet his wife to be.

2.6 Females' Rites of Passage

Away from male circumcision, Abaidakho girls also underwent some processes of customs and norms as initiation rites of passage into adulthood. A Mwidakho girl grew

⁷¹Oral interview, Masaka Benard, Nov. 1, 2022.

⁷²Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya - A cultural profile* Pp. 275-282

up knowing that at one point in her life she was to leave her parents' home and become a wife. Therefore, girls jealously protected the concept of being wives by reserving their virginity, which, as mentioned before, would be a measure of dowry to her parents. When a girl reached of age, she would be observed by the elderly women of the family. There were various changes that a woman of good reputation was to study as a change in her maturity. This means that a woman biologically underwent body changes that marked her as ready for training to become a home care giver.

The first thing that was observed on the girl was the growth and expansion of breasts on her chest. The moment they became large enough to enable breastfeeding, an elderly woman was signaled to start checking on her. Secondly, she drew attention once she started attending to her periods (*khuminaka maru*), which literally means 'breaking banana leaves. The girl would inform her mother, an aunt, or grandmother about her new experience. Once these two developments were discovered in a girl, they concluded that she had come of age and immediately plans would start to train her to be a mother. First, it was the mother's responsibility to slowly separate her from her peers and avoid her playing with boys, for this would tempt the girl into early sexual interaction.

2.6.1 Rituals During Seclusion

At this stage, the girl was sent to live with an old woman of remarkable reputation in the family. The woman was either a grandmother or a widow. Several girls with similar developments were put under the care of the grandmother in confinement for the entire period of approximately three to four months.⁷³ In the old woman's home, the girls were taught wifhood duties and how to take care of themselves during their menses, how to carry themselves before men and their place in society as married, responsible women. In the *Abaidakho* society, women were home keepers and were expected to know their full responsibilities and place before marriage. The young woman was taught to be clean and to behave properly before people to avoid messing when she gets married. For example, she was told not to shake hands directly with the father-in-law.

⁷³ Oral interview, Khalwale, Bony, Nov. 2-2022.

The girl was taught to show respect to the elders and to men and to always protect and strive to keep her virginity. At puberty, the girl was discouraged from playing with boys and girls yet to reach puberty, since she was graduating into a woman. Therefore, the young woman was encouraged to behave like an adult and was encouraged to mingle with the adults. The elderly women continued giving the young woman (Mukuvuye) instructions regarding home chores.⁷⁴

In the seclusion, it was the work of the elderly woman, to keenly study the young woman, who by now was called (Mukuvuye). She was now exposed to various rituals and customs: she would be given a pot (Isiongo), a special pot for fetching water, and asked to fetch water, lift it alone and place it on her head. She was to do this ritual several times until she was comfortable at doing it. Water meant life and her ability to effortlessly fetch water with a balanced pot on her head meant that she was capable of giving life to the family. She was given a special hoe called Imbako yu Mukumbeti to weed a farm. As she was weeding, the elderly woman or mother closely watched her, as she went about the cultivation. A good woman according to the Abaidakho belief was one who digs without checking behind to see how far she has covered, for that was a sign of laziness, a sign that she was not ready to stay in a marriage. The young woman who successfully completed this ritual was ready to raise a stable family and concentrate on her marriage.⁷⁵

A woman who concentrated on her home was highly valued and news of her would lure many suitors, and this in turn raised the value of her bride price. An important ritual was that which Mukuvuye was given a bucket of millet (Bule) to grind. She was presented with special traditional grinding stones called Luchina and Isio. This work was considered tiresome and boring, which only dedicated women would do. In this case, it was a ritual to test the desire and attitude of the young woman. If she could comfortably do the grinding process, smiling and singing, then it simply meant she would take care of her family and the in-laws with happiness. The last ritual involved the young woman preparing what was considered enough food for the family.

⁷⁴ M.S. Mwayuuli, *The History of the isukha and Abaidakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya* pp.47

⁷⁵ Oral interview, Mugala, Antony, Nov. 1-2022.

Importantly, following the adoption of Ugali by the Abaidakho, the young woman was to prepare Ugali that would attract neighbors just by the powerful smell.

After all this processes, rituals and norms, the young woman would leave the isolation in the elderly woman's house and go back to her family. She would shave off all her hair to show that she has completed the initiation and was now a woman ready for marriage.

2.6.2 Buula (Extraction of Two Lower Teeth)

A young woman (Mukuvuye) was only allowed to start attending young adults' (Mivayo) games and Masitsa (parties) after extracting her two lower teeth as an identity. Masitsa was marked by songs and dances of Isukuti. The Abaidakho performed Masitsa at the Luhyia of present day Khayega market because intermarriage with the Isukha sub-group was encouraged. Both the young women (Bakuvuye) and the young men (Bayayi) were to undergo the last stage of an initiation ritual called Buula.⁷⁶ Buula was the practice of extracting two of the lower teeth, which symbolized beauty and announced that one had completed initiation rites of passage. Since marriage and family were very important for the continuity of the society, a successful family gave a woman her voice among her peers. A young woman, therefore, did not think about giving birth out of wedlock. Those who could not meet their partners during Masitsa, were helped by the community, and the decisions of the elders regarding the partner were final.

Those who got pregnant out of wedlock or before being engaged to a man became Shituati (a woman who become pregnant without going through the initiation rites or before being courted to a man). She was burnished or rendered an outcast and hence forth referred to as Shituati (an empty vessel) who had brought shame to the community, clan and motherhood. She remained with no option but to be married to anyone. She would be married off to an old man whose wife had died or to a family with a man who could not date (khuvolitsa). She would be married without necessarily asking for dowry. Among the Abaidakho, payment of bride wealth was made to members of the bride's family since the girl had to leave her own clan to join another.

⁷⁶Oral interview, Muhatia, Rose, Sept. 11-2022.

The bride wealth would be hefty if the young woman was still a virgin.⁷⁷ A young woman and a young man had no choice but to marry after their elders made decisions about their marriage partners. If one went against the decision, it would invite a curse. After the initiation rites of passage, the young adults were allowed to do everything partaking to adulthood.

The young men were not allowed to play with boys or girls because they were now considered adults and potential fathers. They would enjoy all the privileges accorded to Abaidakho adults. Young men were to join the community warriors and conquer more land for their settlement. They were given an oath to be adults: if they went against the community's values, duties, and responsibilities, they would be cursed. The practices were compulsory for any Mwidakho to become a full member of the community and to benefit from the rights of inheritance, marriage, family, and leadership.⁷⁸

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the whole set of practices involved in the indigenous rites of passage among the Abaidakho people. The practices were compulsory for any Mwidakho to become a full member of the community and to benefit from the rights of inheritance, marriage, family, and leadership. Musoleli (uncircumcised), for example, could not attain the full social status of a warrior or elder. He could not command respect in the community, his opinion was never sought or given attention, and he could not sit at the table of Abaidakho men. At his death, he would be circumcised before burial. All the practices regarding initiation rites of passage are embedded in the individual's and their individualized developments, incongruities, and nuances of the cultures, times, ambitions, and historical and social contexts in which the initiation rites are reserved.

Therefore, the history of these initiation rites of passage echoes the political, economic, and societal subtleties of the community. Historically, the initiation rites of passage mirrored societal dynamics that were demonstrated by the practices, operations, and

⁷⁷Leen, Kavulavu, *The history and culture of the Idakho people of western Kenya during pre-colonial period*, Sociology and anthropology, <http://www.hrpub.org>

⁷⁸Francis, M. S. Mwayuli, *The history of the Isukha and Idakho clans among the Abaluhya of western Kenya*, printed by CUEA publications, 2003. Pp. 67.

way of life of the Abaidakho people. The study of the Abaidakho indigenous initiation rites of passage illustrates that culture is an outcome of both internal and peripheral forces that social groups adopt to enhance community bonds. The study also emphasizes the centrality of social, political, and economic dynamics in society in influencing the originality of cultural practices. Thus, peripheral forces within the broader society play a significant role in the historical trajectories of a community's cultural practices.

CHAPTER THREE
CULTURE CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN ABAIDAKHO INITIATION
RITEs OF PASSAGE

3.0 Introduction

The practice of the initiation rites of passage as a compulsory stage among the Abaidakho is primarily an act of identity and belonging to society. Within these stages, cultural and other practices are formed and fashioned for sustainability of the community identity. These cultural practices, be they initiation rites of passage or other rituals, help to create and sustain the identity of the community and a sense of belonging for an individual member. Therefore, through socialized or interacting practices inculcated within these cultural practices, distinctive practices can be created through exclusive or inclusive practices. Which in turn become norms and cultural identifiers or markers as evidenced in community practices. Among the Abaidakho, it is no longer possible to identify traditional cultural practices like initiation rites of passage as something untouched by both western influences and scientific changes. The Abaidakho people know this very well, therefore, they accept the newness of the cultural practice in their initiation rites of passage.

This chapter examines the exclusive and inclusive practices in the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. It observes that the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage retained some aspects of their indigenous identity through the colonial era from 1918, while discarding some in the contemporary times within an evolving social, economic, and political terrain into the post-colonial to 2010. The discussion begins with a general background on the cultural changes and continuity of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, then proceeds to identify what has changed and what has been retained. It also explains the factors, external and internal, that have facilitated or informed the changes and those that have supported the retention of certain aspects of the old practices.

3.1 Background to Culture Changes and Continuity of Abaidakho Initiation Rite of Passage

The Abaidakho group of the Abaluhya community is a dynamic society. They immigrated to their current settled area from different directions, and have been impacted by infiltration and continuous change. Amidst all the changes, they have retained their unique identity as a cohesive group of Abaidakho. Their history, culture,

and economy remains a measure of their continued ought of their cultural imperatives in force and empirically determined transformations that have taken place.⁷⁹ Within the stages of change and continuity, cultural and other practices are formed and fashioned.

This research observed the cultural practice of initiation rites of passage, known as Shishevo ceremonies, and the rituals of initiation rites of passage regarding a Mwidakho woman or mother. The initiation rites of passage are part of the social and cultural structures that help to create and sustain the identity of the Abaidakho.⁸⁰ Through socialized practices within this society, distinctive social orders can be created through exclusive or inclusive practices, which in turn become norms and social markers, as evidenced in the Abaidakho community.

Kenyan communities are caught between culture change and continuity due to changing socio-economic and political factors. And although age is still a factor in the hierarchy of seniority among some Kenyan communities, it is by no means the primary determination of which individuals get leadership responsibilities. Communities are assimilating new cultures, religions, sciences, politics, technologies, and modern market economies. During the colonial era, governance efforts were largely concentrated to the introduction of settlers to enhance administration and the extraction of resources. The British introduced religion, education, western health care, and industrial training that moved families to urban centers. This colonial institution altered traditional governance, economics, indigenous cultural practices and indigenous structures.⁸¹ Although these forces of western acculturation introduced positive benefits to some people and helped them adapt to the new system of government, most communities struggled to appreciate and preserve their traditional cultural institutions.⁸²

⁷⁹ Seumus, Miller, *Social Institutions*, The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/social-institutions/> January 4, 2007, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/>

⁸⁰ Oral interview, Muhembi, Haron, Sept. 12-2022.

⁸¹ Edward, Shills, *Beyond modernity* downloaded from Google.

⁸² <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/>, the free encyclopaedia=.

Post-colonial Kenya has promoted nationhood, better health care, and common education, yielding greater population rights and creating new situations unknown in traditional lifestyles. New generations are poised between the traditional solidarity that supplied land, customs, ethics, rites of passage, a burial place, customary law, religious participation, and ethnic identity and the continued life of economic dynamism, educational trends, modern health-care trends, and political debates.⁸³ The occurrence of this simultaneous change in so many spheres of life creates the phenomenon of a hybrid culture in a society.

Much depends on the society with which one is dealing and on the significance it attaches to its past. In other words, it depends on the way the past is preserved. With the advent of modern times, the old order has been disrupted and social values have either been drastically modified or, in certain respects, altogether changed.⁸⁴ However, traditional cultures are the cementing force that enables a society to function as an organic whole.

The modern society has evolved to the extent that the majorities of the members of the community are generally away at school or at work and very few parents or guardians are fully conversant with their original customs and traditional demands.

The context of colonial and post-colonial social relations exacerbated existing tensions in the traditional practices of the initiation rites of passage among different Kenyan communities. Education is developing an orientation to change; the changes and retained values in the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage offer a valuable case study in historical perspective from which to consider the changing ideologies and practices of the cultural values. It can be deduced that the initiation rites of passage played multiple roles in molding a united and morally upright Abaidakho community. The study of the changes and continuity of the practices of Abaidakho initiation rites of passage is an attempt to highlight the intricacies and contradictions that pervaded the practice while focusing on its continuities and discontinuities.

⁸³Zaremba, (2016), *Influence of globalization on religion issues*, retrieved from www.nodits.com

⁸⁴<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, the free encyclopaedia.

3.2 What has Changed?

The arrival of the Europeans in Kenya proceeded to formal conquest and pacification. The missionaries took the lead in introducing western education, health care (medicine), and technology as indispensable tools for effective evangelism. The colonial administration concentrated on law, order, exploitation of resources, and taxation; the church, on the other hand, went beyond the realm of spiritualism, establishing schools, health clinics, and industrial training units.⁸⁵ These units or institutions radically altered traditional governance, social status, especially cultural practices, and religious structures.

Subsequently, the British colonial government appropriated education as a means of consolidating colonial rule.⁸⁶ In the post-colonial era, the growth of urbanization, Kenyanization, and Constitutionalism have impacted Abaidakho practices of initiation rites of passage and its rituals.

The cultural changes and continuity in the Abaidakho cultural set up, is the modernization of the Abaidakho community. This creates a hybridized practice of adopting a more superior practice because the western world was viewed as being in an advanced stage, which must be preceded step by step by other stages of historical developments. Abaidakho initiation rites of passage was not exceptional in the abandoning and re-adapting of new practices, therefore, the educated and converted Abaidakho, become the agents of the new order since the colonial era into the post-colonial era.

3.2.1 Male Initiation Rite of Passage

As discussed in chapter two, male circumcision was the main Idakho initiation rite of passage practiced as a compulsory stage to all Abaidakho men. All boys grew up knowing and desiring to undergo the process. However, the Abaidakho male initiation rite of passage or circumcision has experienced adverse changes and intrusions but refashioned itself to maintain relevance among the Idakho people.

⁸⁵Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya- A cultural profile*. Pp xxi

⁸⁶<https://en.m.wikipedia>, the free encyclopaedia.

3.2.1.1 The Preparation for Circumcision

By the middle of the 20th century, the whole process as explained in chapter two on the preparation of an Idakho boy for circumcision changed. The process or procedure was now informed by formal education which had not only produced new educated African elite but also its own contradictions with African cultural practices. This motivated Abaidakho to incorporate learning in their practice of the circumcision. Among the Abaidakho, education for example, produced educated hybrids who were alienated from both their own people and their cultural practices. The Bashiangala clans, for example, send their children to school so as to graduate as church leaders. Missionaries at Bushiangala created the Christian villages in which they confined the African converts away from the traditional practices. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, trained catechists who adopted a more syncretic approach to spreading the gospel by, condemning African practices like polygamy, dances, songs and drinking of Busaa.

They demeaned some rituals accompanying the initiation rites of passage as uncouth and primitive, especially the scary attire and appearances of the operators during circumcision. Instead on the encouraging ceremony of dancing and announcing the impending circumcision, people adopted rather a different view of taking the boys to school until the very day and time.

Boys, for example, preferred to be cut early primarily to earn peer respect and impress girls at school, waiting until the age of puberty was mocked and laughed at by peers. Some would ignore the whole process because it had no value according to the decision of the parents. Urbanization and intermarriages, have also forced individual families to adopted urban lifestyles that shy away from the pain of a knife, open circumcision, or traditional ways of initiation, making them prefer or opt for modern ways of taking their boys to hospital for circumcision. This thinking has impacted negatively of the preparations for circumcision and even times periods of circumcision ceremony in Idakho land.

3.2.1.2 Circumcision Process

The church was against the way the operators handled the circumcision processes and the use of one knife on several initiates. Both the church and education brought with them some pride and a negative attitude towards cultural circumcision rites of passage.

The church and educators collaborated with the Europeans to entrench colonialism and western values into African cultural institutions. After independence, the new elite, now expanding in number, continued to provide contention, neo-colonial leadership, and direction for development in the post-colonial era. The elite who were converts continued to preach modernism and the need for either taking boys to hospital for circumcision or encouraging the operators to use new medical methods of surgical scalpels and wound dressing to replace Lihalo (traditional circumcision knife).⁸⁷ The establishment of the Church of God missionaries, the Holy Ghost Fathers move to Eregi, Shitoli and Musoli, and the Friends Quakers settlement at Musingu and Shiveye areas also came with the construction of schools. But most importantly, modern health centers, which created a huge generation of Abaidakho mission-educated elites who desired the new ways of circumcision. These new developments witnessed the bifurcation of the community into opposed groups with regard to traditional practices. The new versions comprised those inclined to supporting the operators who had inherited the art and those embracing the hospital way.

Another important aspect that informed change on the Idakho traditional practice of circumcision was the wake of HIV/AIDS pandemic. In April 2008, Kenya's Ministry of Health enlisted male circumcision as a tool in the fight against HIV/AIDS after a World Health Organization (WHO) sponsored study in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa showed circumcision offered up to sixty percent protection. This compelled the Abaidakho to change their perception towards sharing of the Lihalo or circumcision knife. In its initial practices, Lihalo was a tool for uniting the initiates, which is why they were known as Bakochi, or men who shared the same knife.⁸⁸ The realization that sharing of the same knife that is not sterilized could be an agent for spreading HIV/AIDS, forced a change to the practice of sharing knives. The Abaidakho led by elites quickly adopted the hospital surgical methods, which was supported by the government as one of the safest ways of preventing the spread of HIV.⁸⁹ To avoid the erosion of the Abaidakho circumcision rites of passage, they adopted a scalpel per every child as an alternative to the use of Lihalo. This was because Abaidakho did not want

⁸⁷Article by Jack Nduri and Obote Akoko, published in the standard newspaper of April 22, 2008

⁸⁸Oral interview, Muyembe, David, Sept. 10-2022.

⁸⁹<http://www.malecircumcision.org.programs/documents/TMC/finalweb.pdf>.

to break their kinship ties and connection to their community customs which was promoted by the Shishevo ceremony.

The new developments forced the circumcision Operators, who were widely believed to have inherited the practice from their forefathers, to learn modernized circumcision practices. The use of one surgical scalpel for every initiate, to wear protective medical examination gloves and to dress the wound after cutting. They replaced the use of Ingoi (traditional herb that treated a wound and stopped bleeding) with modern medicines in the treatment of the wound. All this was in the interest of the safety of the initiates and the operators, from the infection of HIV/AIDS. As more people adopted to deal with HIV/AIDS pandemic and modern health precautions in circumcision, the initiation practice absorbed more acceptable practice.

3.2.1.3 Seclusion of the Initiates

As education and Christianity took over, there were two groups, One group did not challenge the cultural initiation rites of passage, but campaigned against the attendant rituals and norms including; the practice of keeping initiates in one common Irumbi, the use Lihalo, the scary dressing of the operators and the drinking of the local brew (Busaa). The other group completely demonized the entire initiation rites of passage as well as some of the rituals that accompany the practices.⁹⁰ In the place of the traditional Abaidakho cultural practices, the latter group readily adopted the changes brought about by education including allowing the boys to attend school or being cut in hospital at a tender age to allow them pursue education.⁹¹ This meant that, seclusion became a family responsibility and the duration was also reduced in order to allow boys attend education. As the desire to educate children grew, the whole idea of seclusion period and its meaning lost its value to the hybridized Idakho practice of circumcision rite of passage. The time and duration of stay in the seclusion was also re-organized in the newness of the circumcision practice among the Idakho people.

⁹⁰Oral interview, Shamwama, Ernest, Oct. 7-2027.

⁹¹Oral interview, Muyembe, David, Sept. 10-2022.

Secondly, with the growth of urbanization, some of the elites moved to urban centers in search of employment, they intermarried and also immigrants arrived in Ikolomani, the land of the Abaidakho, this mixing brought in preference in the mode of seclusion and the art of performing circumcision rites of passage. Those who went to towns separated with the community practices and adopted new practices from towns away from the Idakho practices. This promoted individualism in the collective care of the initiates in a common seclusion. The concept of seclusion has been limited to the decision of the individual family unlike in the indigenous where it was a communal decision.

3.2.1.4 Graduation Ceremonies

The post circumcision ceremonies that accompanied Shishevo ceremony are slowly losing the meaning they had before. This is informed by the individualization and the increased poverty among the Abaidakho people. Since many of those embracing the cultural practice are those with less or limited education and with middle living standard. Abaidakho people have been forced to only celebrate when there is enough. In addition, the commercialization of the entire process has left many with limited choice of having a post circumcision ceremony for the new adults who are mostly young to comprehend the responsibility of adulthood.

Intermarriages have brought in fresh perceptions on the Abaidakho circumcision practices. As people come to Abaidakho land to settle, they have introduced different Christian denominational doctrines and Islam faith, affecting Abaidakho practice of initiation rites of passage. Instead of Shisiao ceremony or shialukho, people would prefer taking the boys to be prayed for as a method of celebration. Religious ceremonies have replaced the post circumcision ceremonies held before. Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have absorbed and incorporated this new shades of cultural practices and beliefs to model their new hybridized initiation rites of passage that still gives them identity. As Idakho-land grows and develops into a metropolitan environment, its people are adapting to new ideas and practices, creating an ever-dynamic environment in which a Mwidakho operates. Basically, the Abaidakho people have to change to adapt to the new environment, and as a result, they have gradually changed the way they react and practice circumcision, since culture changes as the environment

changes.⁹² The Abaidakho ritual practices adopted new sophisticated practices from minority groups of immigrants such as different Christian denominational doctrines and teachings.⁹³

The converts to Christianity were discouraged from participating in traditional ceremonies that involved the drinking of Busaa. Initially, the Abaidakho boys and mothers were not exposed to Busaa drinking unless they did so under the strict supervision of the fathers and older men. Mothers and the new initiates were only allowed to drink during graduation ceremonies. However, the teachings discouraged and condemned the drinking of Busaa. Christianity influenced cultural changes that modified the Idakho initiation rites of passage, thus leading to a gradual increase in societal problems. As Christianity demonized the drinking of Busaa, an important and vital aspect of Abaidakho rites of passage, this forced some converts to drink in private and secret; consequently, more people, especially the young, started drinking without the control of their parents and adults. In addition, the concept of individualism cropped up, leaving the young in the hands of individual nuclear families.

The development of the individual Mwidakho involved a series of well-defined stages, each of which is characterized by its own pattern of obligations, privileges, and types of relationships. During the post-circumcision or graduation ceremonies, the young adults were re-introduced to the community, to their extended families, pronouncing their new roles and duties. This stage was important for it united the community and the Bakochi group. Sometimes the relationship extend into early and late adulthood and are linked to urbanization, industrialization, science and technology, and formal education.⁹⁴ Due to the chaos and unpredictability of adolescence, the Abaidakho cultural practices of the initiation rites of passage put measures in place to ensure that the period of adolescence does not become a period of storm and stress. However, the ban of Busaa brewing affected this important stage of initiation.

⁹²Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya: A cultural profile*, Trafford Publishing, April-2013.

⁹³Ibid Pp 30.

⁹⁴McMahon, Elisabeth, *A spiritual pilgrim; the life of Rasoah Mutuha*.

In rural areas, the traditional ritual of cutting is still practiced but it is now dominated by the young, most of who use the opportunity to engage in partying and drinking, while some elders play an advisory role but the majorities have remained aloof. This explains why most adults or the elderly do not participate in or supervise the rites of passage, compelling critics to believe that the era of the rite of passage has since gone by; and that what remains in contemporary society is nothing but partying, drinking and merrymaking by young adults. According to the critics, because of the aloofness of the old, the young adults have initiated a different ritualization process, which is replete with drinking and smoking weed, and grafted it onto the traditional rites of passage. Therefore, Shishevo rites of passage in Abaidakho culture might not be a rite as such but a period where the adolescent perceives themselves as transiting and getting ready to assume adult roles in society by organizing parties and making merry. Apologies, however, strongly feel the practice of Shishevo is still held dearly by the Abaidakho.⁹⁵ This diverging views are highly influenced by the aftermath of the circumcision vices.

During the pre-colonial period, people automatically go through the initiation rites of passage, and not accepting the passage is unthinkable and unacceptable because it is the given way of life and one that is devoid of alternatives. This is hardly the position in contemporary literate society of current Abaidakho, where young elders (the young adults who have literally assumed the roles of elders) have alternatives as to whether or not to participate in the initiation rites of passage with or without the elders' consent. The young adults are mostly led by their desire to drink Busaa and be merry; they have taken up the roles of the old and, in some parts or on some occasions, ignored them completely on matters of the community.⁹⁶ As culture changes within the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, it becomes more beneficial and binding to the people of Abaidakho community. When a culture feels that a certain way of life is better than its own, it is likely that such a culture will adapt to those better ways and incorporate them.

3.2.2 Female Initiation Rite of Passage

As discussed in chapter two, the Abaidakho women underwent a series of rituals and procedures to mark her entry into womanhood. Or to be deemed fit to get married.

⁹⁵Donde, F. M. David, *Chang'aa distillation and drinking in Abaidakho location, Ikolomani Kakamega: impact of the closure of busaa clubs*. 1984.

⁹⁶Oral interview, Wendo, Lawrence, Aug. 7-2022.

However, just like the Idakho boy, so many factors have informed the changes in this practices. Women had an important place in the Idakho community including home care. Therefore, for one to graduate into an Idakho woman, she had to show specific characters and be taken through several rituals and norms.

3.2.2.1 Preparation and Procedures of Becoming an Idakho Woman

Since a girl was observed, Education brought self-awareness, which promoted individualism and democracy to the Abaidakho girls, it became useless that grandparents had to monitor young girls. Formal education for the girl-child has emboldened them in a way that they no longer listen or wait to be guided by the mothers on matters relating to family life. Therefore, the modern Abaidakho girl's initiation rites of passage have now increasingly been connected to the education process. Their status, and place in society is determined by their level of education, which has become the yardstick for evaluating the bride price. Girls can now read and understand their menses, pursue education and make individualized decisions into adulthood.⁹⁷ Humanitarian movements and the rise of human rights have brought in the whole concept of individualism, leaving the whole process of child up-keep a responsibility of the parents. The modern parents are unwilling to leave their children particularly girls who were monitored by the elderly women, in the hands of others or the society (as was practiced in traditional society); instead, they opt to concentrate on the education of their children. The initiation rites of passage procedures for a Mwidakho girls have eroded or eroding.

The influence of mass media has exposed young women to information about sex at a tender age. Mothers are increasingly unable to follow up on the menses of their daughters; this is a consequence of, and results in, the young women getting such information from both the print and electronic media. The appearance of the menses (*khumina maru*) was the main studied change in a girl that showed her maturity to start the process of initiation rites of passage to womanhood. Today, once the female adolescents become aware of these new changes, they hide the revelation of such information hoping to go through education and get married without being detected as

⁹⁷Oral interview, Tendwa, Jonnah, Aug. 7-2022.

having lost virginity.⁹⁸ Besides, they do not believe in cultural practices and they know a husband will not be chosen for them as was practiced in the past. If they lose their virginity and it becomes a requirement for marriage, they can still remain single.⁹⁹ This has resulted in the inability of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage to achieve their true purpose of breeding girls who abstain from sex, who value their virginity, and who become responsible women in society. The permissiveness of the modern society has given the girls choices in life.

The preparation and processing of the Abaidakho girl into a complete Mwidakho woman have been highly challenged by the media. Internet has exposed the young adults to a concept of not a must to undergo rites of passage. Or the “I don’t care” narrative, which has made the young generation shy away from the practices of the rites of passage.¹⁰⁰ Culture change processes occur over time, and the lack of consistent repetition of traditional initiation rites of passage in Abaidakho-land has led to the development of a spontaneous practice in the form of the initiation rites of passage. It may be that adolescents, therefore, have invented their own modes of transitional rites generated by the influence of science and technology.

Converts were discouraged from continuing with the traditional practices, which were deemed as primitive. To this effect, one plausible reason that undermines the Abaidakho women's initiation rites of passage rituals is that, it is practically impossible to physically verify a girl’s virginity. Since virginity was valued and would be used to determine the quality of dowry paid. Influence of education and modern health has denied the control of the girl child.

Since education has become the litmus paper, and modern health has encouraged abortions. In other words, the remarkable elderly women's role in Abaidakho society has dwindled over time. The influence of HIV and Education encouraged individualism of nuclear family in the raising of the girl-child. This eroded the roles, rituals and customs regarding female initiation rites of passage.

⁹⁸Zaremba, (2016), *Influence of globalization on religion issues*, retrieved from www.nodits.com

⁹⁸Oral interview, Wilunda, Havid, Aug. 9-2022.

⁹⁹Oral interview, Simwa, Jeremiah, Sept. 12-2022.

¹⁰⁰Oral interview, Shimenga, Aggrey, Oct. 7-2022.

Lastly, because of education and urbanization, some girls and families have embraced modernism and view Abaidakho cultural practices of initiation rites of passage for girls as uncivilized and local (ushamba); the choices are attributed to the influence of science and technology. In addition, family subject their boys to cut at a very tender age before they become sexually aware or sexually active to allow them grow attending education as a new way of going through the initiation rites of passage.

3.3 What has Continued?

It needs stating here that the hybridization of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage has not resulted in a new, alien cultural trait completely replacing the old one. One might witness a marked departure from the way the traditional Abaidakho people carried out the initiation rites of passage. In other words, the contemporary Abaidakho have altered the old practices to suit their new environment. They have made certain notable changes, while retaining what they deem relevant to keep their identity as Abaidakho. Some of the resilient practices are discussed below:

3.3.1 The Public's Cutting and Pain for Idakho Male

The Abaidakho people still practice the Shishevo ceremony at least once or twice every five years. Despite modernization of the entire cutting process, the practice is still done communally under the Musutsu tree, which still acts as the Luhya place. It is done in the open so that everyone can witness: the young boys have to undergo the pain in public, which is announced to the onlookers who are mostly women and uncircumcised boys; they in turn celebrate if the initiate does not cry or show any cowardice upon announcement. As was traditionally practiced, there is singing and dancing to encourage the initiates to face the pain with courage. The Abaidakho people now use modern surgical scalpels or surgeon scissors in the place of the knives.¹⁰¹

The day and dates for the process are decided by the elders under the guidance of the assistant chief and also decide on a suitable operator. The ceremony is done in the months of August or December because it follows the harvesting seasons in Idakho-land and long holidays when the schools have closed. The circumciser appears before the baraza, to show or prove his expertise in the modern cutting process. His tools of

¹⁰¹Oral interview, Luhava, Consolata, Sept. 11-2022.

operation must be assessed to be in accordance with health protocols regarding surgical procedures for male circumcision, even if it an inherited or bloodline expertise, to avoid the risk of spreading HIV/AIDS. It is important to note that the circumciser must be trained in the modern procedures involved in male circumcision to avoid the spread of diseases.

After the dates are announced, the preparations commence with songs and dances that announce the ceremony, encourage Basoleli to get ready for the procedure, and motivate them to be brave enough to undergo the initiation rite of passage. The measure of a true Mwidakho man still lies in undertaking the cut in public, so as to command respect in the community as a brave and courageous man. However, anyone who doesn't do that is mocked publicly and his voice cannot be respected. Those who have gone through hospital procedures are derided and branded as cowards who went to lie on a bed during circumcision instead of enduring pain in a Luhyia or public space while standing. The Musutsu trees are still planted and kept since they hold important meaning during the initiation rites of passage. The trees bond the initiates who shared its base during the cut. If by chance, one wasn't publicly circumcised or not circumcised and died, his corpse has to be checked or cut before being buried, to complete his cycle as a Mwidakho man.

3.3.2 The Shishevo Ceremony, Seclusion, and Teaching

The circumcision ceremony, also called the Shishevo is practiced in a completely hybridized fashion. Throughout the practice and rituals, the seclusion of the young adults is no longer a community matter. Each nuclear family has a responsibility to ensure the safety and better seclusion of their respective initiates. After circumcision, Musindi remains in family seclusion and the care of the individual family for about four weeks.¹⁰² The common Irumbi is not so important, but each nuclear family has to ensure that the initiates live in sequestration or else they are mocked publicly.

The wound is treated and managed by a Mutili, who is a close relative or the father or guardian. Related families may decide to combine efforts and keep their initiates under one Mutili. During this seclusion, they are taken through the responsibilities of their

¹⁰²Oral interview, Lwane, Jessica, Sept. 11-2022.

new roles, including insisting on taking education seriously, helping with home chores like herding, protecting the home, protecting his siblings, and attention to personal hygiene. In seclusion, the initiates are taught other talents, including singing and dancing.¹⁰³ The initiates are to remain away from the public glare until that day when the operator comes for shialukhu. For one to achieve complete recognition among the community a Mwidakho-man must be cut; this means that the practice of circumcision is and remains compulsory. Musoleli does not attain the full status of an elder or leader and commands little respect. His opinion is never sought or respected, and at the point of his death, he is circumcised before burial.

3.3.3 Graduation or Shialukhu Ceremony and Shisiao Party

The modern Abaidakho still venerate and celebrate Shialukhu, also known as Shisavitso, just like in the pre-colonial era. The newly graduated young adults called Bayayi are given gifts, and the operator is given fine Busaa and food to appreciate the success of his work. Shisavitso is followed by a family party or celebration called Shisiao, organized based on the families' financial ability because it's accompanied with food and the presentation of gifts to the young adults. It is a ceremony of announcement to the family and the community of the new status of the young adult. The ceremony can be done jointly, mostly by the related families.¹⁰⁴ Shisiao has remained an important cultural practice during which the young adults receive gifts and advice and get to interact with relatives and other family members.

Special songs and dances have remained an important aspect of Abaidakho initiation rites of passage during the ceremonies of Shialukhu and Shisiao in encouraging the boys to get cut under the traditional process. The Isukuti drum dance has been integrated into the celebrations and modeled to meet the modernism.

3.3.4 Education as an Initiation Rite of Passage for an Idakho Woman

Mothers are deemed to have considerable integrity to hold the duty to educate the young girls or young women on their duties and responsibilities in raising and uniting their homes. Generally, they are taught so as to meet their motherly duties despite their

¹⁰³ Oral interview, Ashilenje, Peter, Aug. 9-2022.

¹⁰⁴ Oral interview, Ashimosi, Chrispinus, Sept. 10-2022.

preoccupation with matters education and career. A Mwidakho girl who has successfully gone through the initiation rites of passage is expected to show her readiness for marriage by proving to be a mature housekeeper.¹⁰⁵ Idakho initiation rites of passage for Abaidakho girl includes pursuing educational success and also remains a responsible home-keeper. In some cases, she has to prepare Ugali as a sign of a complete woman who is willing and ready to prepare healthy meals for the family.¹⁰⁶ The Abaidakho woman has a voice before her peers based on how successful she has kept and raised her family despite her educational background. To stand before others and command respect, a woman who has a successful marriage is highly adored and respected. Therefore, mothers still carry the burden of ensuring their daughters get the best home-care education that is not offered in school.

The rites of passage for a Mwidakho woman have been heavily dealt a blow by the adoption of formal education. A woman among the Abaidakho has to remain a responsible mother worth respect by carrying herself with the greatest decorum, like remaining submissive to the husband, giving birth, keeping the home clean, cooking for the family, and educating her daughters. Similarly, despite facing great challenge, virginity and fertility are highly respected and appreciated within the Abaidakho group.¹⁰⁷ Parents and the young women themselves understand the importance of preventing pregnancies out of wedlock, notwithstanding the fact that modern influences have highly demeaned the roles of mothers in shaping a complete Mwidakho woman.

3.4 Conclusion

All cultures change through time because no culture is static and rigid. However, some aspects within cultures tend to be conservative and resistant to change. These resilient or resistant practices are critical to the preservation and protection of traditional cultural practices while putting up barriers to alien practices. For example, the Abaidakho initiation rite of passage include dances and songs, as well as the actual cutting process. In Abaidakho-land, the Kenyan Ministry of Health enlisted male circumcision as a tool in the fight against HIV, which became so important to the continuity of the traditional initiation rite of passage. In the same vein, the initiation rites of passage regarding

¹⁰⁵ Oral interview, Akala, Charles, Aug. 10-2022.

¹⁰⁶ Oral interview, Muyembe, David, Sept. 10-2022.

¹⁰⁷ Oral interview, Makaka, Josephat, Sept. 10-2022.

Mwidakho girls have changed, and the nurturing and training of the Mwidakho woman to keep her virginity and be a shrewd housekeeper is no longer a measure of womanhood. Shituati was mocked with songs and hurled insults at and she couldn't stand before her peers. But now, the new practices associated with the Abaidakho initiation rite of passage are rapidly changing all around, regardless of whether Abaidakho try to resist discontinuity or not. A Mwidakho woman with education and marriage success is highly respected regardless of her virginity status. Therefore, Abaidakho initiation rites of passage should act as a means of checking, adopting, and transmitting such changes as technological development, political development, and social development in order to avoid cultural extinction. There is an urgent need for cultural restoration owing to western education influence and urbanization. Later, people have to make up their minds on whether to use the terms of western civilization as a movable indicator of temporal culture change or a fixed chronological change and continuity.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE CHANGES AND CONTINUITY ON ABAIDAKHO INITIATION RITES OF PASSAGE

4.0 Introduction

The Idakho initiation rite of passage were primarily acts of identity and belonging to the Abaidakho community. The emerging trends in these initiation rite of passage have helped create and sustain the identity of the community. The hybridized initiation rites have given a sense of belonging to an individual Mwidakho. The new practices have both negative and positive results for the internalization of the original initiation rites of passage and the original set up of the Abaidakho

This chapter examines the results or impacts of the cultural changes on Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, with a special regard to those aspects that were retained. It proposes that the hybridized initiation rites of passage maintained and adopted what the community regarded as desirable. These refashioned initiation rites of passage, fusing the borrowed and the indigenous, have affected the Abaidakho people in different ways. This discussion begins with a general background on the results of culture change and continuity, before exploring the positive and negative developments.

4.1 Background to the Impact of Culture Change and Continuity

The centrality of individual agency at the intersection of collective agency is important in understanding historical events. At the center of historical events are individual actions that produce envisioned outcomes or otherwise. But these individual actions are defined by societal restrictions and structures.¹⁰⁸ Puberty represents an important age in human growth, and it is a crucial stage that determines human destiny. At puberty, people are neither children nor adults but adolescents who experience varied changes and events in life that influence how they transit into adulthood. There has been a pronounced emphasis on how cultural changes influence the young adult's development into adulthood.

¹⁰⁸Peter, Seixas, *Historical Agency as a Problem for Researchers in History*, *Antitese* (March, 2013):539. DOI:10.5433/1984-3356.2012v5n10p537

As the transition from puberty to adulthood is very critical, this transition is practiced through the initiation rites of passage.¹⁰⁹ After the rites of passage, distinct practices of development emerge, and the initiation subsequently emerges as a unique and separate developmental stage in the life span. Initiation has been described as a stage of breaking away from one's childhood to prepare for adulthood, a period during which there are ever-present conflicting circumstances that young adults experience. Therefore, initiation rites of passage are momentous graduation events that help guide and affirm a transition from one status in life to another. It is a period of training and securing a new adult status, and its goal is the conservation of the best interests and values of the culture of the community for the full identity of the individual within the community.

Abaidakho initiation rites of passage are construed to be ceremonies that relate to and convey dramatizations of major life events and consist of a series of rituals that convey individuals from one status or role to another. Although Abaidakho initiation rites of passage are different for boys and girls, the young adults learn the roles and expected behaviors of the new stage they are entering, along with the responsibilities that accompany the new age. After initiation, the new adults are re-admitted back into society as adults. This usually involves moving the male and female out of isolation and back into the community with a new identity, suggesting that the young adults have returned as a new generation of adults since they have acquired new skills, information, and new ways of thinking and doing things. These are values required for an adult

Mwidakho and for continuity. A successful graduation, according to the Abaidakho people, should retain its balance in the face of the culture change. For that matter, the transition from one phase of life to another is expected to be smooth and successful with the development of positive adult roles and attributes.¹¹⁰ However, modernity and the resultant cultural changes have had an immense impact on the rites of passage. Intrusions and invasions have distorted and altered these rites. A new hybrid practice has emerged where young Mwidakho progress toward adulthood without much reliance on family but rather on the influence of peers, technology and or education. The aim of

¹⁰⁹Shuichi Kato, Kimiko Yagi, and Rebecca Jannison, *Japan as a Hybrid culture: Review of Japanese culture and society* Vol. 1, No. 1, Inaugural issue: Japan and the Japanese (October – 1986) Pp. 15-24.

¹¹⁰Bulimo, A. Shadrack, *Luhya of Kenya; A cultural profile* Pp. 313 -317

this chapter, therefore, is to critically analyze the positive and negative impact brought about by the changes on the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage.

4.2 Positive Impact of Hybridization

There are a number of positive developments resulting from the cultural change and resilience of the Abaidakho rites of passage. The initiation rites of passage have undergone evolution through the adoption of some changes considered best practices leading to the abandonment of those the community deems unfit. During the colonial period, indigenous cultural practices were subjected to ruthless and systematic pruning by both Christianity and British governance institutions. A good aspect of the rite of passage, however, survived this onslaught because it was a way of life that was flexible and adaptable.¹¹¹ In the face of post-colonial Kenya, Abaidakho initiation rites of passage still showed consistency and persistence in the way of practice.

4.2.1 Acculturation and Enculturation

Acculturation is the process by which a culture of an isolated society changes upon contact with another one, while Enculturation refers to an individual's adoption of the behavior patterns of the culture in which he or she is immersed. Culture change and continuity have given rise to acculturation and improved on the value of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, transmittable from one generation to another. During transmission, the practices incorporate issues and practices that result from technological development, new languages, inter-marriage, changes in modes of education, and the official policy from those who control the political system. The responses of the Abaidakho people towards changes in their circumcision rites reveal a community that is receptive of modernity. Due to the demands of health care and the outbreak of diseases like HIV/AIDS, there has been a great change in the handling of the circumcision practices. The operators, Bashevi have been forced by the circumstances to embrace the new methods of cutting and they have been trained to equip them with new skills As explained in chapter three, the use of a surgical scalpel has replaced the common knife Lihalo, with every initiate now cut with their own separate surgical scalpel.¹¹²

¹¹¹Gideon, S. Were, *Essays on African Religion in Western Kenya*. EALB, 1977.

¹¹²Donde, F. M. David, *Chang'aa distillation and drinking in Idakho location, Ikolomani division, Kakamega: impact of the closure of Busaa clubs*, 1984.

The new practice has reduced the incidence of dangerous diseases like HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) that could easily be spread by one common knife.

In addition, the medical world has encouraged surgical operations, which are more secure and less painful. Modern medicine is administered, replacing the traditional herbal treatment Ingoi and fluids from the Murembe tree, which was bitter and painful and designed to enhance the courage and bravery of the initiates. The operator, who initially dressed to scare Musoleli, is now forced to dress normally, friendly, and approachable.¹¹³ Acculturated Abaidakho have now embraced the new traditional practice of rites of passage, which have protected their identity.

The cultural changes in Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have also entailed the expansion of the community's identity beyond their locale to embrace their Kenyanhood. The Enculturation of Mwidakho as a nationalist is a source of peaceful coexistence in Idakho-land.

4.2.2 Promotion of Education

The contemporary Abaidakho society allows the girls, just like their male counterparts, to attend formal education, which undermines the domestication of women. The growth of movements that are campaigning for the girl-child education has seen more girls attending formal education. Consequently, Abaidakho women can now compete equally with men in the Kenyan labour market. Education develops an orientation toward change; this is an important notion in the process of social transformation. Education has replaced virginity as a determinant of marriage bride price, and the young educated female adults are free to make their choices of marriage, which further vitiates the traditional practice of arranged marriages, for Mwidakho woman.

Furthermore, one who has submitted himself or herself in childhood to the process of disciplined learning is more likely to respond favorably to further training and become an agent of change. It was noted that more people preferred educating girls as a way of

¹¹³Oral interview, Wendo, Lawrence, Aug. 7-2022.

improving their worth in terms of bride price.¹¹⁴ The growth of education in Idakho land has had a positive impact on the development of literacy levels. Education has, therefore, become an integral part of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, one that determines the value of bride-wealth. Education has also opened up Idakho Land and allowed intermarriage and resettlement of other communities without conflict.

4.2.3 Promotion of Family Democracy

The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have been influenced by external systems and forces that have ultimately affected individual and nuclear family decisions, promoting the practice of democracy. Mukuvuye, for example, are allowed to marry whoever they feel comfortable. Individual nuclear families are also free to make a choice of either keeping initiates at home or joining others in the Irumbi. Education for boys and girls has encouraged independence, liberal thinking and critical decision-making amongst the Abaidakho youth. Unlike in the past, when young adults had no choice but to abide by arranged marriages, these days, they have choices.

The structure of Abaidakho society was structured along the lines of segmented patrilineal, which legitimized male elders' control over many aspects of life.¹¹⁵ Traditional initiation rites of passage had limited families to the decisions of the male elders. Traditional education of the young adults and their discipline was also a community responsibility. But this has since changed and become the sole duty of the nuclear family. After initiation, the family has a choice about whether to organize graduation ceremonies or not. This liberal atmosphere has deepened the democratic decision-making among the Abaidakho people and families.

Rituals and festive events often take place at special times and places and remind a community of aspects of its worldview and history. In some cases, access to rituals may be restricted to certain members of the community; initiation rites and burial ceremonies are two such examples. Some festive events, however, are a key part of public life and are open to all members of society; carnivals and events to mark a new

¹¹⁴Mutongi, Kenda, *Worries of the Heart: Widowed Mothers. Daughter and Masculinities in Maragoili, of Western Kenya, 1940 -1960* Pp 67-86.

¹¹⁵Oral interview, Ashilenje, Peter, Aug. 9-2022.

beginning of season and end of the harvest are inclusive occasions common all over the world.

Social practices shape everyday life and are familiar to members of the community, even though some do not participate in them. Distinctive social practices that help to reinforce a sense of identity and continuity with the past are given priority in the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage. For example, the traditional graduation ceremony was conducted by the operator; in the modern hybridized practice, the role of the operator is no longer celebrated, especially for those who go to hospital.¹¹⁶ Similarly, practices of giving and receiving gifts may range from casual events to formal arrangements with significant political, economic or social meanings.

¹¹⁷ Individual families can now make decisions on the initiation rites of passage based on their financial muscles and their ability; these contrasts sharply with the traditional practice where the norms required each and every family to equally participate. Consequently, the hybridized culture recognizes and appreciates the difference and capabilities of different families without tying them to one outcome. For example, families are free to decide when to present their sons for circumcision, whether the community may help in molding the behavior of their girls, and whom and when their sons and daughters may be deemed ready to marry or get married. This democracy has also given the girls an opportunity to have a say in the inheritance of their parents' wealth, and the generational continuity.

4.3 Negative Impact on Abaidakho Initiation Rites of Passage

While African communities valued the art of raising children in complimentary family and community settings, they still had their unique ways of carrying out this function. The Abaidakho people had an elaborate system of child upbringing, including the initiation rites of passage.

¹¹⁶ Oral interview, Wilunda, Havid, Aug. 9-2022.

¹¹⁷<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>, the free encyclopedia.

4.3.1 Influence of Colonialism

European Christianity and colonialism submerged and dismantled indigenous practices, and in their place, a foreign rule or order was established. This created a permissive society that contested and undermined the traditional structures. The church and the colonialists perceived traditional institutions as their enemies because these structures anchored the indigenous community's political authority, cultural identity and enhanced order in the community. To establish and entrench control over the indigenous people, the church and colonialists had to destroy the indigenous structures. This is why the church undermined the roles of the mothers who had a duty to produce morally upright girls to grow up as responsible mothers. Thanks to the influence of the church and colonial education, the young adults have found themselves basking in the freedom to choose what they want to do with their lives.¹¹⁸ This has created an increasingly permissive environment in which early marriages, early pregnancies and abortions are on the rise. The permissiveness presented in the new order is bringing up a generation that seems not to care about the advice of the older generation. Formal education has also divided the community by creating an elite social class who are the agents of new cultural practices, and the rural illiterates, who are agents of continuity.

The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have been influenced by external forces, transforming the roles of parents and the community in child-care. The extended family system is rapidly eroding and failing to fulfill its primary role of guiding and shaping a morally upright child into a best fit in the society. Sexual immorality has increased and incest has become rampant because the kinship ties which were highly encouraged under the traditional rites of passage have been ignored.¹¹⁹

In urban areas, for instance, the institution of the nuclear family is pronounced and this is spreading to rural areas, leading to disruption of the societal fabric. Most families are bringing up their children in urban areas and practicing hybrid initiation rites of passage that do not consider the age-set systems of Bakochi. The upbringing of children has become the sole responsibility of the nuclear family, and it is no longer a communal responsibility.

¹¹⁸Oral interview, Ihaji, Bwinstone, Aug. 8-2022.

¹¹⁹Oral interview, Ihaji, Bwinstone, Aug. 8-2022.

4.3.2 Failure of the Hybridized Initiation Rites of Passage

The integrated Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have created a practice that is despised by Abaidakho elite most of whom live in towns. They perceive the hybridized practices as traditional and risky, thereby preferring the process of modernized education, health-care and technology. The conservatives who largely live in rural areas, who are less educated, have transformed the beliefs, rituals and practices of the initiation rites of passage into a theatre of hooliganism, such as, Busaa-drinking, and partying. The elders appear increasingly helpless in the face of these two seemingly opposing forces. Even among the elites, there are those who hold the practices but still don't trust the processes of initiation rites of passage.

The hybrid initiation rites of passage have failed to unite the Abaidakho people, creating a situation that is seemingly a conflict, or a culture struggle. This has resulted into relating the hybridized practice of initiation rites of passage with hooliganism or merely partying of the young adults.

4.3.3 Associating Traditional Liquor with Hooliganism

Busaa was traditionally a respected drink with a pride of place in the entire practice of the initiation rites of passage among the Abaidakho. It was given to children as food during scarcity of food or drought and accompanied in payment of bride price. During initiation, Busaa was only taken by adults, and the young adults were only regulated or monitored during drinking, while children were not allowed to drink. The drinking was done in Luhyia (public) because it was easy to control. However, government ban on this brew led to closure of the brewing establishments which in turn forced its preparation underground. This has resulted in abuse of Busaa, particularly by young adults.¹²⁰ As such, Busaa and Chang'aa brewing and drinking have become disruptive components of the hybrid initiation rites of passage, Shishevo.

4.3.4 Influence of Christian Teachings

During the colonial era and the advent of Christianity, certain changes were introduced that undermined the traditional culture; the new religion had to be lived rather than propagated, and the initiation rites of passage were not left behind. Traditional way of

¹²⁰Oral interview, Ihaji, Selina, Aug. 8-2022.

life was characterized by polygamy, divination, Busaa drinking, superstition, traditional music and dancing, offering sacrifices, celebration of new births, child-naming, circumcision, marriage, and death. These practices had a place for the ancestral spirits. Europeans and missionaries transformed Africans and put converts on probation to ensure they completely abandoned traditional practices.¹²¹ They created Christian villages so as to replace African villages by adopting church structures on the basis of unity and cooperation. Though some Christian villages and African villages were similar, the social relationship that provided the rationale for cooperation and unity was different. For example, the Church of God brought all Christian converts together; young and adults, married and unmarried, circumcised and uncircumcised, from different places into one place, in church, sat them down on the same benches, which was contrary to how they arranged themselves in their traditional villages. Such arrangements paved the way for the repudiation of the roles and duties of every age group in the Abaidakho community.¹²²

The Friends' church became identified with formal emancipation: their Christian converts ate from the same table as a family, which went against traditional norms where the husband ate alone or in company of the circumcised sons, while children and their mother ate while seated on the floor away from their father.

A generation of early female converts believed in education for the girl child and gender equality between spouses. The Catholic African catechist went out to condemn polygamy, traditional dances, songs, and the drinking of Busaa.

4.3.5 Influence of Human Rights Advocacy

In the post-colonial era, the initiation rites of passage gradually changed as did the perception towards the practice. After initiation, it was a time for courtship and preparation to start a family, human rights have encouraged liberty of all including choices of the children and time to marry or get married. For instance, the age of initiates changed from puberty to small boys who could barely explain or comprehend the duties and responsibilities that come with adulthood. These little boys can hardly

¹²¹ Pickering, W.S.F (1974). *The persistence of Rites of passage: Towards an explanation*. British journal of sociology.

¹²² Elisabeth, McMahon, *A Spiritual Pilgrim: The Life of Rasoah Mutuha, an East African Quaker*.

understand the importance of the process because of their tender age. The adopted hybrid practice has seen the abandonment of Irumbi and the attendant traditional informal education process. The young initiates live in homes and are nursed by their parents. Their teaching and Shisiao ceremony have remained a family responsibility and not a community ceremony as before. It is no longer a requirement that the initiation rites be performed under the Musutsu tree or public place. The concept of connecting with the ancestors has been eroded and consequently shunned. The young initiate's roles are changing from providing family security by alerting the father or parents. They take care of the compound and protect the siblings in case the father is away.¹²³ They take care of the cattle while the young girls help the mother with cooking, home cleaning, serving people in the family and visitors, and fetching firewood. Instead, they are occupied by studies and educational demands.

Due to liberty presented humanitarianism, individualism of nuclear families, the bond created by the age-grade Bakochi has lost its traditional significance, since the newly-circumcised are too young to understand the essence of the rituals. Human rights advocacy campaigns have opened the community to liberal permissiveness; this has allowed women to marry whoever they choose, not those men selected for them by the community. This liberal atmosphere has also allowed women taste honey before marriage, and sex out of wedlock has been normalized. As if that is not enough, girls are giving birth in their father's home without any fear, and even the parents are not ashamed of that. The role of elderly women who taught moral values to young girls has been eroded.¹²⁴

Teenage pregnancy is on the increase, and young girls do not regard virginity as an essential requirement before marriage. Young couples increasingly give birth before formal marriage. Some are a result of the men's decision to be sure of their fertility or due to peer pressure. The media, television, the internet, foreign books, and computers have taken precedence as the source of information replacing parents and the elders. As a result, early pregnancies, divorces, single parenting, adultery, and infidelity have become rampant, things that were never heard under the traditional arrangements.

¹²³ Oral interview, Lwane, Jessica, Sept. 11-2024.

¹²⁴ Oral interview, Akala, Charles, Aug. 10-2022.

Lastly, the old traditional practices that led to marriage have been shunned. The old Abaidakho system did not allow a young man or woman to find a lover of their own choice.¹²⁵ Rather, the parents had the responsibility to find a wife for their son or a husband for their daughter. Investigation into the a suitable wife entailed finding out whether the girl's people have been giving birth without difficulties, whether there is a trace of rampant adultery, stealing, or premature death, and whether the family was associated with witchcraft and night running. Due to the current cultural changes, men find their wives on their own without the consent of their parents.¹²⁶ This has often resulted in feuds, regrets and abandonment. It is clear that the present generation has veered off from the traditional practice that ensured low divorce rates because it parents and the community played a vital role in supporting the union, including bonding the couple with their ancestors for spiritual protection.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the positive and negative developments with regard to the Abaidakho initiation rite of passage. The findings show that formal education, modern technology and advancement in health care, weakened of the appeal and solidity of the Abaidakho initiation rite of passage. It is worth noting, however, that modern technology has improved the lifestyle of the Abaidakho in matters such as medicine, education and livelihood support systems. But these notable improvements have brought about the erosion of important values and social cohesion that were associated with the initiation rites of passage. The research established that some aspects of the Abaidakho culture are conservative and resistant to change. For example, the Abaidakho Shishevo ceremony has proved its sturdy resilience against the war against it from multiple fronts. As these cultural practices either subsist or fall into obsolescence, they affect the African setting both positively and negatively.

A culture should act as a means of checking, adopting, and transmitting such changes as technological development, political development, and social development. In order to avoid cultural extinction, there is an urgent need for cultural restoration in Africa due to erroneous impressions or Western indoctrination. This is very necessary because

¹²⁵ Oral interview, Manyoni, Mwanjilwa, Sept. 24-2022.

¹²⁶ Oral interview, Mugala Antony, Nov. 1-2022.

people without a culture are people without an identity. Intellectuals, however, tend to have a great aspiration and the more these elite become conscious of such cultural questioning, the more they wish to attack the hybrid characteristics and to think in terms of eliminating those impurities and intrusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study examined the history of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage between 1918 and 2010. The research established that Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have proved resilient amidst the numerous changes imposed by colonialism and missionaries. The initiation rites of passage were impacted by formal education, modern technologies, access to modern health care, and new economic livelihood systems. In the post-independence period, the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage continued to evolve and to adjust to the changing Kenyan society. Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have remained an important aspect of the Abaidakho cultural, social, economic, and political life in independent Kenya. This research acknowledged the human agency in the historical trajectory of the culture of Kenyan communities and, in particular, the contribution of the initiation rites of passage in defining the history of Kenyan communities in both colonial and post-independence periods.

Abaidakho practice of initiation rites of passage was a sophisticated process that gave them an identity and sense of belonging. The transformation of their initiation rites of passage was not a simple process and did not consist of a clearly defined, logical and progressive replacement of traditional practices with the intrusions. In the colonial era, the sense of ethnic identity or communal belonging was unrelated to the extent to which the customs and beliefs of the Abaidakho were replaced by missionaries, gold-miners, or colonial officials, but still kept the consistency. This created a persistent trend of the initiation rites of passage, rituals, and norms in the eyes of the change. The persistence and change created an aspect of the same social phenomenon of tradition. Which reflected the initiation rites of passage of Abaidakho in the era of post-colonialism?

For a tradition to remain viable or relevant, it should be resilient and malleable to allow both continuity and discontinuity in its practices in order to retain meaning in the face of changing society or circumstances. The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage remained in practice during the colonial era defying the great efforts to transform the practice. The Abaidakho selectively picked some practices they deemed useful from the mission and re-interpreted them in light of their own experiences and culture, putting a distinctly African stamp on the mission's legacy in a uniquely African way that kept their identity.

The apologists will reply that the colonial era at least helped to establish the new regime, which laid the groundwork for modern administrative structures and ushered in an epoch of social revolution. However, it generated a phase of erosion in the aspects of the Abaidakho practice of the initiation rites of passage which defined the status of a complete Mwidakho. The traditions of a people are an important aspect of their cultural heritage. The various rules, taboos, and rituals help to confer a cultural identity to a particular individual. However, like everything else, culture is dynamic and should be enriched with positive values and objectives that the Luhyia people interact with on their journeys across the world. The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage are a cultural practice that confers a cultural identity to a Mwidakho, and as a culture, it is open to changes that enrich its practices. For example, in the post-colonial era, a social revolution which was caused by modern medicine, European diet, formal education, science and technology, ushered in an era of cultural hybridization in Abaidakho initiation rites of passage.

A hybrid culture is a culture that is a product of multiple cultures. It can also be a syncretism of more than one culture that is a mix or an outcome of more than one culture coming into contact with each other and exchanging or mixing their ideas and customs of their practices. For this case of the Abaidakho practice of the initiation rites of passage, had to adopt some values from the environment set up by the colonial era since 1918 and mix them with their own practices to produce their own suitable initiation rites of passage. The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage are a syncretism of cultural practices that, over time in the post-colonial era, have incorporated different demands to produce a newer ceremony to meet the demands of the changing times. In general, when important practices of a culture are mixed and begin to operate, even the people will be directly or indirectly pressed to change their values and thinking, which at one point will seem to be converging. It is, therefore, true to say that the colonization of Kenya changed indigenous communities, imposing new ways of life that were seen to be more advanced than the traditional ones. However, this changes considered the experience of the past in responding to the current.

As such, the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have remained relevant by adjusting to the rapidly changing societal demands. Abandoning what is deemed not necessary and adopting that which is binding and meaningful to the society. Idakho initiation rites

of passage have evolved into a syncretic and distinct cultural practice that can be called or defined as a hybrid cultural practice. It has incorporated foreign elements and refashioned them to suit the changing times. This hybridized initiation rites of passage have brought about both positive and negative results for the Abaidakho people as discussed in chapter four. For instance, the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage were a tool for social bonding among and promotion communal identity, but with the missionary activities and post-independent concepts of Kenyanization, they have been tailored into one of the ways of controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, promoting Education and building national integration.

Traditional practice of the initiation rites of passage prepared one to join the responsible and productive group or class of the community. Initiates were the principal participants, and the ceremony and multifarious rituals observed conferred specific roles on various members of the extended family and the entire community. Among the Abaidakho, as indicated in chapter two, it symbolized a transition to adulthood, implying a greater change in social status of an initiate and being a necessary preparatory requirement for the next phase of life as an opinion leader and warrior. This means it kept the kinship ties of the clan as it was a requirement of the community's life spheres. In hybridized practice, it has remained the individualized responsibility of the nuclear family. The procedures before, during, and after the Shishevo ceremony.

For instance, the night singing of the initiates to prepare and motivate Basoleli, have been dealt a big blow with interference from the police. The ban of brewing Busaa and the connection of hooliganism with Shishevo ceremony is slowly eroding the initiation rites of passage among the Idakho. The current hybridized practice of the initiation rites of passage has been increasingly associated with illegal brewing, irresponsible drinking, and bang smoking, which the government or the police have connected with criminal offenses like robberies, home break-ins, and hooliganism. Because of these delinquent acts, the practice has to be content with the policy of family control and individual family care instead of Irumbi. The hybrid practice of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage is not a true reflection of its traditional antecedent. The Abaidakho people have absorbed these changes and accepted the hybridized initiation rites of passage.

In short, the permissive democratic English society introduced westernized formal education, which changed the perceptions of the Abaidakho community towards collective responsibility in nurturing children. Assisting in the upbringing of young adults and allowing the Abaidakho to appreciate new ways of life, regarding initiation rites of passage for the Idakho young adults.

The young Idakho women for example, have been introduced to modern methods of learning and self-awareness which has in turn encouraged self-independence through formal education. This has left older women with no authority to guide the young women.

From the study of the history of the cultural change and continuity of the Abaidakho initiation rites of passage, it can be concluded that the persistence of the practices during the colonial and post-colonial eras was symbolic of the social, economic, and political status enjoyed by the Mwidakho. The struggle existing in the practice of the initiation rites of passage has created, as discussed in chapter three, a group of conservatives and those who see the practices as primitive. The findings of this study are useful in providing an understanding of human agency in culture change. Although culture changes have histories, these accounts are incomplete without evaluating the individual agency in these practices of the initiation rites of passage at the intersection of the wider society. Throughout history, the individual agency functions within the collective agency, this provides the structures and constraints that shape man's practices. The Abaidakho initiation rites of passage have shaped their identity and sense of belonging. However, the study provides suggestions for further study on the Abaidakho women's initiation rites of passage since this aspect has not been fully explored in this research. In addition, the study was informed by the continuity theory, meaning, there is need for the study to be presented by the gerontocracy theorists to explain the consistencies from a historical presentation of the initiation rites of passage.

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