

*Brian Mwangi*  
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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AKAMBA AND  
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

- A.I.C. - Africa Inland Church  
A.I.M. - Africa Inland Mission  
C.C.C. - Central Church Council  
D.C.C. - District Church Council  
R.C.C. - Regional Church Council



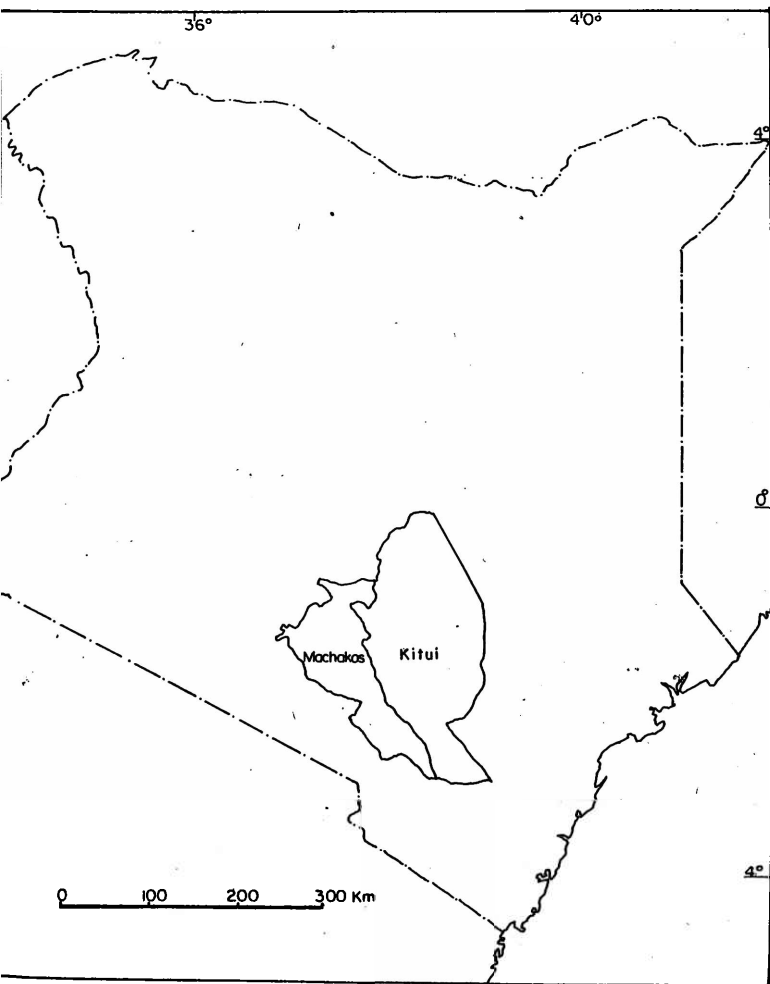


Fig. I: Map of Kenya Showing Kitui and Machakos Districts

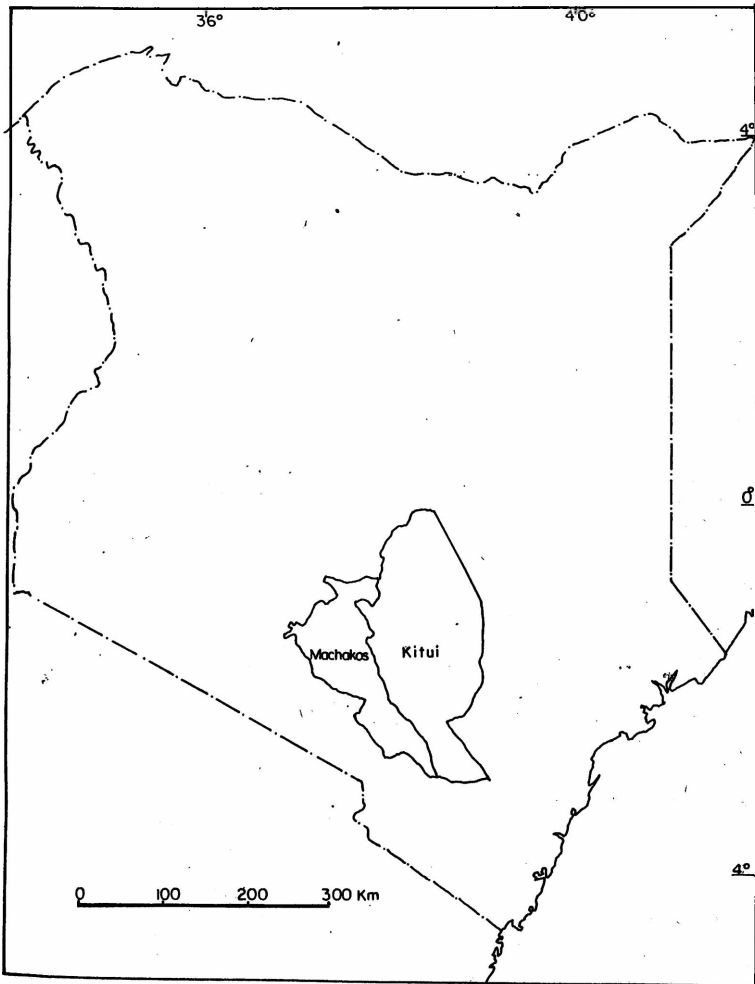
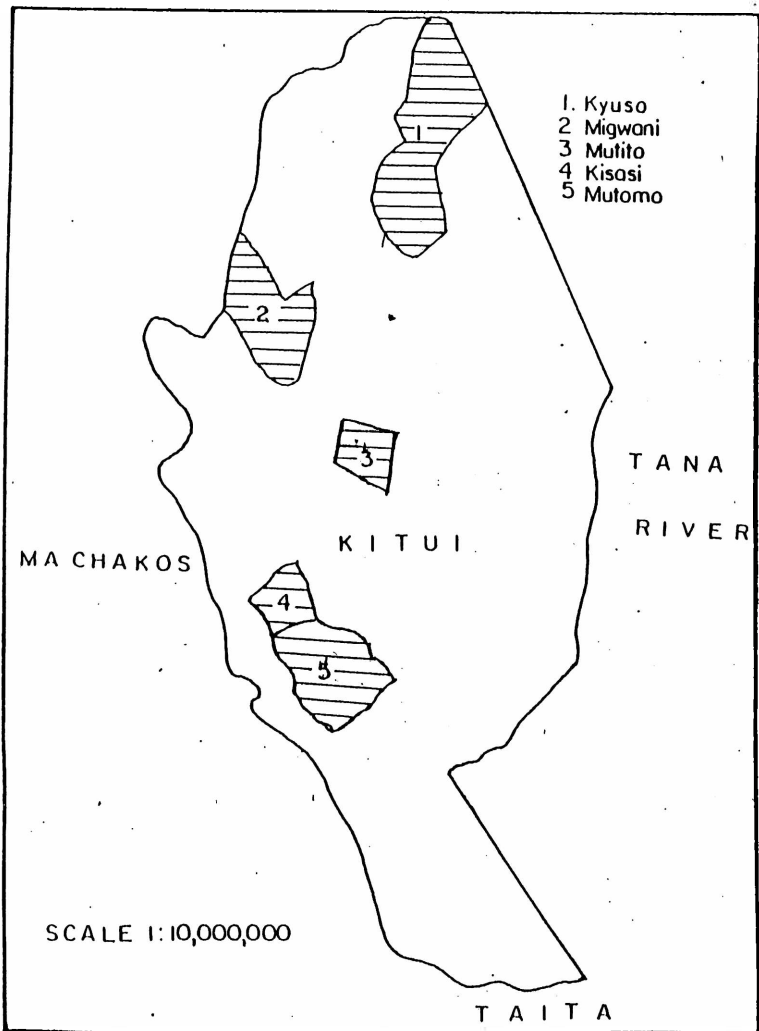


Fig.1: Map of Kenya Showing Kitui and Machakos Districts

Fig.2. Map of Kitui District Showing Study Sites



## ABSTRACT

Christianity was introduced to Africa by western Christian missionaries who believed that African religion was at the base of development. They believed that there were only rudiments of religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, the missionaries who worked in Ukambani saw the Akamba religion as primitive and worthy only to be substituted with Christianity. With this view, they embarked on eradicating Akamba traditional beliefs and practices. If Akamba religion was not well rooted, one would expect Christianity to be accepted with great ease, and the former to be completely forgotten. This has not been the case; for Christianity and Akamba religion have continued to co-exist. The present study has, therefore, compared both traditions, paying attention to their beliefs and worship practices, and their interaction in Ukambani.

Our methodology has been both library and field research. Library research comprised of reading both published and unpublished materials on Akamba people, their traditional religion and also Christian evangelism in the area. The field research was located in Kitui District. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Notebooks and tapes were used to record the information. Examples for Christian tradition were drawn from the Africa Inland Church.

The findings of the study include the following: Before the coming of Christianity, the Akamba had an elaborate religious system. They believed in God, whom they conceived as the creator and sustainer of the universe. He was approached by man any time there was need. The Akamba also believed in the existence of spirits, both general and those of the ancestors. The latter were seen as intermediaries between man and God, and were therefore venerated. Worship in Akamba society was directed to God. They worshipped him through offering sacrifices of animals, foodstuffs and weapons. Prayer accompanied sacrifice; for it expressed the intentions for the sacrifice. Music and dance was also performed as a form of worship.

On the other hand, Christianity introduced new religious beliefs and practices into Ukambani. First there was the teaching on the existence of the Holy Trinity. It also brought the teaching on man's need for salvation. This salvation was to be achieved by believing in Jesus Christ, as the saviour of mankind. Christian worship is therefore, centred on Christ as the sole and final sacrifice.

The interaction of the two religions has brought three categories of people. First, there is the category of believers, that is, those who have taken up Christianity. Secondly, there are the non-believers, who have continued to adhere to the tradi-

tional religion. Finally, there are those who borrow from both Christianity and Akamba religion.

In conclusion, it was suggested to the Christian church to re-examine its doctrines and the Akamba beliefs in order to have an objective consideration for Akamba religion. The church needs to incorporate some Akamba beliefs and practices into its worship. For instance, the church needs to address itself to the question of Akamba world-view. Instead of referring to Akamba belief in God as idolating, belief in gods and spirits, the church needs to realise the fact that Akamba religion was monotheistic. The church needs to include Akamba traditional musical instruments and rhythms into the church worship. It is hoped that if such recommendations are put into consideration, the Christian Church would be more rooted in the Akamba life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The term 'worship' has both religious and secular meanings. In its secular sense, the term means the title of honour used in "addressing or speaking to a person of note".<sup>1</sup> In its religious sense, it is a means of honouring spiritual beings.<sup>2</sup> It is an act of veneration paid by man to spiritual beings.<sup>3</sup> It is this second meaning of worship that we are going to be concerned about. Through worship, man expresses his religious affirmations. For this reason, we can argue that every religion has its unique form of worship which is determined by its religious beliefs.

In our present work, the main task is to study both the Akamba and Christian forms of worship. Since the introduction of Christianity the two traditions have been interacting. It is this interaction and its effect on both religions with which we are concerned. There has been much talk about African Christian living in two worlds, namely that of his

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1. Raymond Abba, Principles of Christian worship, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) p.1.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.

ancestors' religion and world of missionary religious system. It is our task in this study to examine what are the main forms of worship of these two religions. We are going to establish whether or not there are any similar ideas that could be instituted into Christian practices, in order to make the average Akamba worshipper feel at home in the Christian worship. Those religious beliefs that influence worship in each of the traditions have been studied.

At the same time, some scholars have been talking about the rootlessness of Christianity in African soil.<sup>3</sup> The present comparative study will bring up areas that could make Christian worship more rooted in the Akamba context. Among the Akamba, the central form of worship was both sacrifice of animals and offerings of non-animal things. Different types of sacrifice will be studied. Apart from sacrifice, other forms of worship such as libation, prayer and dance will be studied.

When Christianity came to Ukambani, it brought its own ideas and practices of worship. As far as sacrifice was concerned, the church taught that Jesus is the sole and final sacrifice, through whom believers acquire a new relationship with God. In

4. See J.J. Ongong'a, The rootlessness of the church in Kenya. A seminar paper at Kenyatta University, February, 1987.



Christianity, the Old Testament understanding and practice of sacrifice disappears and hence, no animal sacrifice is advocated. The Akamba Christians were required to leave behind their traditional form of worship and embrace the new one. Instead of going to the Ithembo, their shrine, they were now to go to Church, where worship activities included, singing, praying, giving offerings and listening to God's word given in the sermons.

One finds that at times of crisis, some Akamba Christians turn to traditional practices. Akamba traditional religion has become the 'instant religion' for the majority of church-goers.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon has raised, in the mind of the researcher, the urge to investigate what the traditional worship consisted of and what its significance was in Akamba life. Then the study will proceed on to examine the Christian worship, as it was presented by the missionaries; and as it is practiced among the Akamba Christians.

#### RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDY

The main objective for the study is to compare the Christian and Akamba worship, so as to establish whether there are any Akamba ideas and practices that

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5. 'Instant religion' is a term used to refer to the resort to religion in moments of crisis, such as sickness, desparation, emergency and death. See John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, (London: Heinemann, 1969), p.275.

could be incorporated into Christian worship, in order to make the Mukamba Christian feel at home in his Christian worship.

The study will proceed to suggest how the Christian church in Ukambani can re-orientate itself to the African context, by re-examining Akamba religious beliefs and practices in order to pick any desirable tenets that may help in Africanizing Christianity.

The other objective of the study is to examine the conditions of recruiting members to both the Christian church and the Akamba shrine of worship, Ithembo. This will help us in understanding the causes of backsliding among the Akamba Christians.

We are making this comparative study of worship because such a venture is important in understanding the trends of development of Christianity in Africa in general and in Ukambani in particular. It will help us in understanding how far Christian theology and practices could be compatible with African religion.

By looking at the nature of pre-Christian Akamba worship, the study may add another chapter to the records and preservation of the fast vanishing African culture. This is important, especially when one bears in mind that the elders who provide the resource materials for African traditional religion.

### SCOPE

The study is a selective investigation in that it focuses upon Akamba people. Where relevant, reference will be made to other African societies by way of comparison so as to draw some conclusions that are specific for Akamba situation and general for other African peoples.

Christian examples will be drawn from the Africa Inland Church, which is one of the three most popular churches; namely, Africa Inland Church, African Brotherhood Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Where possible conclusions and comparisons will be drawn from these two other churches. The research was carried out in Kitui District.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS AND PHRASES

For purposes of making this piece of study understandable some basic terminologies that are used need to be defined briefly.

(a) Christianity: Generally, this term is used to refer to the historical movement that stemmed from the teachings of Jesus Christ in the first century A.D. It actually began as a renewal movement within Judaism, but later acquired its own characteristics that made it a unique religion, independent of Judaism. There is no uniformity in Christianity

because even before the reformation, there was a division between the Eastern and the Western churches. After the reformation, there was a European-wide shattering of Protestant churches, whose doctrines were opposed to those of the Roman Catholic Church.

By the time Christianity came to Ukambani, it was presented by different groups and denominations. The groups are so many such that any study on Christian influence has to be based on specific cases. For purposes of our study Christian tradition will be drawn from the African Inland church. For comparative purposes, reference may be made to other denominations.

(b) Culture

In our study Ngungi wa Thing'o's definition of the term will be appropriate. He defines culture as

a way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their local environment. It is the sum total of their art, their science, all their social institutions including their systems of belief and rituals.<sup>6</sup>

Christianity came laden with western culture, and so the missionaries, its propagators, tried to erase Akamba culture. Our study will show that although Akamba religion, as part of culture was attacked, it has continued to co-exist with Christianity.

(c) Sacrifice: In a general sense it means something set apart from secular use for the use of the

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6. Ngungi wa Thing'o, Home coming, (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972), p.4.

supernatural powers.<sup>7</sup> In sacrifice objects are offered to the deity with the hope that the broken ontological balance between man and God, man and the spirits, may be restored.<sup>8</sup>

Among the Akamba, sacrifice involved giving animal life to God and other times to spirits of ancestors. Offerings of different types were also made.

In the Christian sense sacrifice is seen as final accomplishment of Jesus Christ on the cross. He became the sole sacrificial lamb for the sins of men. Christians are called upon to present themselves as living sacrifice to God, by living holy lives in sacrificial service to God and to their fellow men, in appreciation for what Christ did on the cross.

(d) Worship

This is a religious ritual by which adherents ascribe to the deity supreme worth. It is expressed through adoration, praise, thanksgiving, singing, dancing and sacrifice. Prayer is also seen as a form of worship.

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7. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 19. (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1977), p.128.

8. J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p.179.

Akamba worship refers to the traditional rituals performed before the coming of Christianity. These rituals continue to take place although with less intensity among some Akamba people.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

During the colonial period, many western anthropologists tried to study the religions of Africa. Their studies were aimed at convincing the western Christians on the need for propagating Christianity. For this reason their research findings were generally superficial and biased.

Among these scholars to study Akamba people was a colonial administrator, Charles Dundas. He summarised his scope of study by stating that,

The following is no attempt to draw up a definite creed for these people, but rather to collect the few scattered elements of religious beliefs in the hope of showing that primitive suggestions of religion are not wanting.<sup>10</sup>

His prejudiced attitude is apparent in the phrases 'few scattered elements of religion', 'primitive suggestions of religion'. Such phrases show that Dundas did not expect Akamba people to have well developed religious beliefs but only rudiments of such beliefs.

When describing aimu (spirits) he used the

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10. Charles Dundas, History of Kitui, Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute. Vol. I (1913) p.534.

Kiswahili term sheitani (devil).<sup>11</sup> He described them as being 'malignant, and either out of revenge or cupidity they plague people'.<sup>12</sup> To him, the religious cult of Akamba was that of attending to demands of spirits, and that the idea of God was lacking among them.<sup>13</sup>

Such findings were distorted and never gave the right picture of Akamba religious beliefs and worship. It is our task at this level to provide the right setting.

Another western anthropologist to study Akamba culture was G. Lindblom. In his book, Akamba of British East Africa, he observed that there were two forms of sacrifice performed by Akamba, namely; public and individual sacrifice.<sup>14</sup> He defined individual sacrifices as the ones performed at a family level, with the head of the family as the officiant. Public sacrifice was seen as consisting of the rites performed by inhabitants of a given zone, which were occasioned by such calamities as epidemics, drought and famine.<sup>15</sup>

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11. Ibid., p.535.

12. Ibid., p.537.

13. Ibid.

14. G. Lindblom, The Akamba of British East Africa, (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1920), p.218.

15. Ibid.

He also gave a thorough description of the three categories of Ithembo attendants. First, there were the Atumia ma Ithembo (elders of the Ithembo). Secondly he recognised the Iveti sya Ithembo (women of Ithembo). Finally there were anake ma Ithembo 'young men of Ithembo'<sup>16</sup>, who did the manual jobs connected with the sacrifice.

Although he made quite a serious study of Akamba culture, he also suffered from the common weakness of the time, namely that of being biased and prejudiced. This is shown by looking at his summary of Akamba religion. He argued that "the religious conceptions of Akamba consists of:

- (a) developed worship of spirits of ancestors;
- (b) vague belief in a higher being (mulungu)"<sup>17</sup>

He seems to have the same idea as Dundas, that there was no developed belief in God.

C.W. Hobley, in his work, Bantu Beliefs and Magic, has described the act of offering sacrifice among the Akamba people. He noted that in the morning, the officiants would take with them such things as a goat, milk, snuff, sugarcane, beans and sweet potatoes.<sup>18</sup> A worship dance called kilumi was also per-

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16. Ibid., p.220.

17. Ibid., p.209.

18. C.W. Hobley, Bantu beliefs and magic, (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1938), p.53.



formed some distance from the Ithembo. The author observed that the worshippers had to abstain from sexual intercourse a day before and six days after the sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> In our study we will compare such preparation done before Ithembo worship with the ones done by Christians going for Christian worship.

The above cited authors have one characteristic in common, that they were all western scholars of early twentieth century. It is already known that scholars of that origin and age were characterised by bias against African religion and culture. They tended to make conclusions that African religion and culture were at the initial stages of development. Okot p'Bitek described their prejudiced scholarship as follows:

One of the most perplexing and amazing phenomena of western scholarship is its almost morbid fascination and preoccupation with the 'primitive' and the hostile and arrogant language of the philologists, historians, theologians and anthropologists.<sup>20</sup>

As such, they never studied any single religious system objectively. Furthermore they did not take time to master African languages and customs, but went ahead to make hasty conclusions.

The present study differs from their study

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19. Ibid.

20. Okot p'Bitek, African religions in western scholarship, (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), p.20.

in that it was conducted by someone who was born and grew up among the Akamba people, and therefore has knowledge of their language and customs. It is hoped to make a clear understanding of Akamba traditional worship as well as the Christian one; and the way the two have been interacting.

John S. Mbiti has written on African religions and culture. Some of his influential works include, African religions and philosophy (1969), Concepts of God in Africa (1970), New Testament eschatology in an African background (1971), and Prayers of African religion (1975). In most of these works Mbiti gives a general survey of religion of African peoples and hence, he does not specialise in studying any single African people. His 1971 publication is an exception to this rule; for in it, Mbiti examines the Akamba as his case study. He studied their beliefs and concept of time and how this is tied to their understanding of the Christian concept of eschatology.<sup>21</sup>

In his 1969 publication, Mbiti dresses African deities in Hellenic robes. He states that God was seen as "omnipotent", "omnipresent" and "omniscient".<sup>22</sup> Such interpretation of African deities

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21. J.S. Mbiti, New Testament eschatology in an African background, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.vi.

22. J.S. Mbiti (1969) op.cit., p.30.

in terms of Christian God does not help us to understand the nature of African deities as they were conceived by the Africans themselves. His work suggests that Africans hellenized their deities even before contact with Greek metaphysical thinking, something p'Bitek sees as absurd and misleading.<sup>23</sup>

In his 1970 publication, Mbiti distinguishes two forms of sacrifice. First, there was 'bloodless sacrifice' where items such as foodstuffs, utensils and weapons were presented to the deity. This, he called 'offering'<sup>24</sup>. He also mentions 'blood sacrifice' in which life is destroyed so as to give it or part of it to the deity. This is what he calls 'sacrifice'<sup>25</sup>. In our present study, both sacrifice and offering will be studied as forms of worship among Akamba people.

In his work, Prayers of African religions, Mbiti surveys different prayers from different African communities. He states that prayer is an important part of worship, for it reveals the worshipper's intentions, fears and frustrations which make him approach the deity. In this case, Mbiti's study is of great value to scholars of African religion

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23. Okot p'Bitek, op.cit., p.80.

24. J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), p.178.

25. Ibid.

because it brings out the circumstances under which prayers were said. He observes that;

The prayers, more than any other aspect of religion, contain the most intense expression of African traditional spirituality.<sup>26</sup>

He also notes that in most cases, such prayers were uttered by someone on behalf of a group or community.<sup>27</sup> At times of sacrifice, prayers were offered to express the intentions of worshippers.

Mbiti's work on prayer lacks details about Akamba prayers, as he concentrates on giving general survey of almost all African societies. It is one of the tasks of our study to fill such gaps.

His most recent publication is Bible and theology in African Christianity. In this work, Mbiti's theme is studying Bible use in the life of the church in Christian Africa and the development of African theology.<sup>28</sup> He examines such Christian vocabulary as the Bible, theology, prayer, faith, salvation and mission. Then he tries to bring out what these terms mean in the context of 'neo-African Christianity'.<sup>29</sup> The book is very useful, as it

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26. J.S. Mbiti, Prayers of African religion, (London: S.P.C.K., 1975), p.1.

27. Ibid.

28. J.S. Mbiti, Bible and theology in African Christianity, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.lx.

29. Ibid. p.x.

shows how African Christians have tried to indigenise Christianity. He states that:

The spreading of Christianity has now gained its own momentum, thanks to the enormous forces contributing to its dynamism. Africa has now a golden opportunity to evolve a genuine Christianity which is rooted in its culture, which promotes worldwide fellowship in Christ and grows to the honour and glory of God."

Mbiti's work is useful in our study because he discusses the indigenization of Christianity.

Another scholar whose work needs to be reviewed is Kivuto Ndeti. In his dissertation entitled Elements of Akamba life, Ndeti has described different Akamba customs, beliefs and religious practices. For instance, he describes a sacrificial ceremony meant for the time of drought. In this case, the animal was burned to ashes and its meat could not be eaten.<sup>31</sup> The sacrificial animal was seen as a scapegoat and burning it to ashes symbolised cleansing the area of evil powers that had affected the rains.<sup>32</sup>

The author observed that the Akamba avoided direct contact with God, who was said to stay very far and disliked being disturbed now and then; hence he emphasised the need for intermediaries in the worship of Ngai. The impression one gets from this

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31. K. Ndeti, Elements of Akamba life. (PhD. Thesis, University of Syracuse, 1967), p.348.

32. Ibid.

argument is that God was unapproachable without the mediation of ancestral spirits. Yet research has shown that not always did one need such mediation. Man could, as need dictated, approach God directly. Ndeti's work fails to point out the changes that have taken place due to the influence of Christianity.

Judith Mbula has concentrated on studying the subject of Christianity and Akamba people. In both her M.A and Ph.D. theses, she specialised in discussing Christian influence on Akamba family. In her work, Penetration of Christianity into Akamba family, Mbula observes that Christianity tried to penetrate and change Akamba ways of worship. As far as sacrifice was concerned Christianity taught the finality of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, as the centre of liturgical worship.<sup>33</sup> She sees Christianity as an agent of change, "a revolutionary agent which demands the change of the individual".<sup>34</sup>

Her doctoral thesis was entitled The impact of Christianity on family structure and stability. She observes that the missionaries failed to totally change the Akamba culture.<sup>35</sup> What resulted was what she calls

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33. Judith Mbula, Penetration of Christianity into the Akamba family, (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1974), p.72.

34. Ibid., p.6.

35. Judith Mbula, The impact of Christianity on family structure and stability: The case study of Akamba of Eastern Kenya, (PhD. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1977). p.(ii).

'Mukamba Christian',<sup>36</sup> an individual who still continued to cherish Akamba culture though a Christian.<sup>37</sup> Religion as part of culture has been greatly changed, but religion as a value system has continued to be held firmly by the Christians. There is therefore borrowing from both religious traditions to make a whole.

On general level, sacrifice as a central form of worship in most religions has been given a lot of attention by different scholars, some of whom have given theories on its origin and development. Among these was Robertson Smith, who wrote the Lectures on the religion of Semites. In this work, he studied religion of such people as Hebrews and Arabs. He contrasted Judaism, Christianity and Islam with ancient Semetic religions by stating that the former "did not grow up like the systems of ancient heathenism, under the action of unconscious forces operating silently from age to age".<sup>38</sup> Hence, he calls them positive religions, for they trace their origin to the teachings of great religious innovators "who spoke as the organ of a divine revelation and delibe-

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36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Robertson Smith, Lectures on the religion of Semites, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1894), p.1.

rately departed from the traditions of the past".<sup>39</sup> He observed that sacrificial meal originated from a feast of kinsmen, with family as the basic unit.<sup>40</sup> Public sacrifices were seen as just an "extension of such an act of domestic worship".<sup>41</sup> To him, sacrifice was a symbol of communion, whereby, the God and his worshippers ate together, in a kind of fellowship.<sup>42</sup> The animal served as the intermediary through which the sacred and the profane realms were joined.

Edward Tylor, a British anthropologist, has traced the origin of sacrifice to 'animism', "worship of souls".<sup>43</sup> It was meant to be a gift to the Gods so as to avert evil, gain good, ask for aid or condone offence.<sup>44</sup> He notes that in the course of religious history, sacrifice has passed into transformed conditions, both of the rite itself and the intentions of worshippers. Tylor's study is generalised in that he draws his examples from many different groups.

Writing of the Nuer religion, Evans-Pritchard noted two broad classes of sacrifice existing among the Nuer people; namely, sacrifices to prevent some danger and those to accompany various social activi-

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p.277.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Edward Tylor, 'Primitive culture, (New York: Brentanos Publishers, 1924), p.375.

44. Ibid.



ties such as rites of passage.<sup>45</sup> The first category he named personal sacrifice, while the second one he named collective sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> He went on to describe the four main acts that compose the sacrificial drama, namely: presentation, consecration, invocation and immolation.<sup>47</sup> In the Nuer case the animal was presented to God by tethering it to a peg and uttering words.<sup>48</sup> After this was done the animal was consecrated by rubbing it with ashes, an act called buk.<sup>49</sup> Invocation was done by the officiant speaking to God over the consecrated animal. It was this invocation which stated the intentions of the sacrifice. The actual slaughter is the immolation of the animal.<sup>50</sup>

Evans-Pritchard has concluded that Nuer sacrifice is a gift, whereby, the animal is given to a deity as if he were a chief. The main motive, according to him, is to "nourish God, obtain favour, propitiate his wrath,....create harmony between man and God."<sup>51</sup> It will be found out in our research that

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45. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Nuer religion, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.198.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p.20.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., p.211.

51. Ibid., p.276.

sacrifices made to Akamba ancestral spirits are meant for communion; whereas those made to God directly are gifts to beseech him to forgive the society of evil done, or to provide the needs of the people.

Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss have both written a detailed work on the nature and function of sacrifice in worship. In their definition, they point out that

Sacrifice is a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned.<sup>52</sup>

According to these two scholars, in every sacrifice an object passes from the common into the religious domain through consecration.<sup>53</sup> In the act of sacrifice they differentiated two terms that are easily confused; namely, 'sacrifier' and 'sacrificer'. They defined sacrifier as 'subject to whom the benefits of sacrifice thus accrue; or who undergoes its effect'.<sup>54</sup> This could be an individual, family or clan. On the other hand, 'sacrificer', is defined as the intermediary between man and God.<sup>55</sup> He is

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52. H. Hubert & M. Mauss, Sacrifice: Its functions and nature, (London: Cohen & West Ltd. 1964), p.13.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., p.10.

55. Ibid., p.22.

the priest who shares the conditions of the sacrificer and at the same time serves as God's minister.<sup>56</sup>

In our study, we will notice that elders played the priestly role in Akamba worship. These elders went before God on behalf of the rest of the community. The spirits of ancestors also did the intermediary role between God on one hand and man on the other.

J. Omosade Awolalu has written a book on beliefs and sacrificial rites of the Yoruba. On their beliefs he states that,

...an indigenous Yoruba has a belief in the existence of a self-existent being who is believed to be responsible for the creation of and maintenance of heaven and earth, of men and women, and who also has brought into being divinities and spirits who are believed to be his functionaries.<sup>57</sup>

God is therefore depicted as being above every other spiritual being. He has no status because he is too great and awesome to be pictured or formed into concrete mount.<sup>58</sup> The divinities are seen as intermediaries between God and man. Among his names, is Olodumare, which means one who has fullness or superlative greatness.<sup>59</sup> In our study we are to examine the meaning of Akamba names for God.

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56. Ibid., p.23.

57. J. Omosade Awolalu, Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites, (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1979), p.3.

58. Ibid., p.4.

59. Ibid., p.11.

Awolalu goes on to give us a working definition for 'worship'. He defines it as,

means of honouring spiritual beings or an act of veneration paid by man to such spiritual beings.<sup>60</sup>

He states that worship is offered by man to a being or beings higher than him. Worship depends on, and is conditioned by man's conception of God.<sup>61</sup>

On sacrifice Awolalu gives both general and religious meanings. In its general and secular sense, it means "foregoing for a particular cause that which is precious; denying oneself certain benefits and advantages for a particular purpose".<sup>62</sup> In its religious sense, he defines it as both, "an act of making an offering (of animal or vegetable life, of food, drink or of any objects) to a deity or spiritual being".<sup>63</sup> Such sacrifices were offered at times of need when man needed God's assistance. For instance, before making a foundation for his house a man had to sacrifice a goat so as to appease any spirit that could be disturbed in the course of the construction.<sup>64</sup> Before planting one had to seek

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60. Ibid., p.97

61. Ibid., p.98

62. Ibid., p.134

63. Ibid., p.136

64. Ibid., p.138

spiritual help by offering sacrifice to the spirit world.<sup>65</sup>

When examining the interaction of this religion with Islam and Christianity, he concluded that,

many of those who openly declare for these two religions, even among the literate are found to revert, at one time or another to traditional beliefs and practices.<sup>66</sup>

This shows that the traditional religion is only 'scorched' and not killed, because it is too deeply rooted to be extirpated.<sup>67</sup>

#### Methodology

Different methods were employed in carrying out this study.

First, there was library research. The researcher spent time reading the existing literature on Akamba people, their culture and religion, Christianity in Ukambani and Christian worship in particular. Generally any relevant material that the researcher laid hands on was read.

Secondly field research played an important role in the collection of the data. Both structured

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65. Ibid., p.139

66. Ibid., p.193.

67. Ibid.

and unstructured questions were used. Where structured questions were utilised, the researcher constructed a questionnaire which gave guidance to what questions to be asked. When the informants were let free to give all the information they had on Akamba religion, the researcher had to sort out the most relevant information.

All the informants were chosen from Kitui District. This was done because Ukambani is diverse and it was not possible to cover the whole area within the limited time we had. Using the present political divisions, the district was put into five units, namely; Kitui Central, Mutomo, Mutitu, Mwingi and Kyuso. Using random sampling technique, one location was chosen from each of these divisions. Hence the locations visited were Mutomo, Mutito, Migwani, Kisasi and Kyuso. The assumption made was that Christian evangelism has been done in each of these zones.

People with a lot of knowledge on Akamba traditional practices gave information on nature and importance of Akamba worship. Included here were traditional medicinemen, diviners, foretellers, Ithembo attendants and others who continue to practise traditional ways of life. On the other hand people well-versed with Christian worship and beliefs, as practised by A.I.C. as well as church-going Christ-

ians who have been baptised, were interviewed. The researcher made use of key informants who gave information on other resourceful people. In all, fifty-two people were interviewed.

Participant observation was also utilised. Discussions with groups of church elders and Akamba traditionalists were held. The researcher also attended, where possible, traditional religious ceremonies, and also Christian worship services. One drawback experienced here was the fact that young women are not allowed to get near the Ithembo. This could not enable the researcher to enter the shrine and hence relying more on the information given by interviewees.

Another problem encountered was that people's attitude on traditional practices has changed such that many people, especially the Christians were unwilling to discuss these things in detail. This applied more to those who had spent time under missionary supervision. Due to missionary influence, these have come to despise their traditional religion. They referred to Akamba religion as Uthaithi wa masatani (worship of devils). The researcher had to spend time explaining to them the importance of informing the young generation about their traditional beliefs and practices.

There was the problem of some informants expecting to be paid so as to yield information. When such pay was not forthcoming, they threatened not to be interviewed. Many times the researcher had to plead with them before any information could be given.



## CHAPTER TWO

### AKAMBA WORSHIP

#### A. Background to Akamba people

In discussing religious worship it is important to highlight the religious beliefs of the community. This is because of the fact that such beliefs influence the manner in which worship is carried. It is also important to have a brief description of the background of the worshipping community. It is in accordance with this argument that we have to discuss the background of the Akamba people.

The Akamba are a Bantu-speaking people who live in the Eastern province of Kenya. They normally occupy two districts, namely Machakos and Kitui. The two districts are divided by Athi River, which also divides the people into two groups with marked differences in dialect, manners and customs. Traditionally, Machakos consisted of Ulu (Iveti) and Kikumbuliu (Kibwezi) divisions. Kitui and Mumoni, Yatta and Kitui divisions. Machakos is named after a famous chief in the area who was called Masaku, while Kitui was named after a government post which was established by the British administrators.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Isaria M. Kimambo, *The economic history of the Akamba*, in *Hadith 2*, B.A. Ogot (ed), (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1970), p.79.

The Akamba people are not limited to these areas, for as early as 1840's, they could be found as far as the coast. Ludwig Krapf encountered them at the coast and had this to comment about them,

The Akamba in the vicinity of the coast are immigrants, who since the great famine of 1836 have settled down on the territory of the Wanika.<sup>2</sup>

There are climatic, economic and social reasons that made the Akamba great travellers.

First, their territory is prone to droughts, brought by lack of sufficient rainfall. Due to this, famines have been very frequent in Ukambani. In times of such hardships, they moved to the neighbouring territories in search of food. When the famine was over, while some would arrange to go back, others chose to remain in these new areas.

Secondly, trade induced them to move quickly. Indeed the Akamba are well known by historians for their active involvement in the famous long distance trade, which existed in East Africa before the introduction of modern trade. As Kimambo observes, the Akamba traded with their neighbours and travelled as far as the Mau, Gusii, Lake Baringo and Samburu regions.<sup>3</sup> From these regions they got cattle and

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2. J.L. Krapf, Travels, researches and missionary labours, (Boston: Tickon & Field, nd), p.117.

3. I. Kimambo, op.cit., p.81.

food for their domestic use. They also hunted for ivory which they took to the coast to sell to the Arabs. From the Arabs, they secured clothes and beads. In this trade, the Akamba, therefore, acted as middlemen. Due to the wealth obtained through trade, there emerged a new class of people who were highly respected by the community. Their source of power and authority was the riches acquired through trade. One of such individuals was chief Kivoi of Yatta. He had met Krapf at the coast on his trading journeys and the two became friends. It was for the purpose of visiting Kivoi that Krapf made his first journey to Ukambani, where he stayed at the chief's home. Chief Kivoi was murdered by robbers when he and Krapf made a journey to Kikuyu country.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, the Akamba loved hunting. Indeed they derived a lot of satisfaction from hunting. Every young man was socialised in the field of hunting. The Akamba moved from one region to another in search of animals. The animals were used in trade. Presently, hunting has died out due to pressure from the government which has been concerned about safeguarding the wildlife for purposes of tourism and preservation of the environment.

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4. Krapf, op.cit., p.244.

As regards their origin, Akamba oral traditions hold that mulungu, the creator, made spirits first. He later created a man and a woman whom he tossed from heaven to earth landing at a place called Nzai. This couple was later followed by livestock. The myth goes on to say that after heavy rains, ant-hills formed and from one of these, there emerged another couple whose daughters married the sons of the first couple.<sup>5</sup> The myth stresses the fact that God is the creator and that he does not allow endogamy in the society.

The myth goes on to explain the existence of other neighbouring communities. It states that when man refused to offer sacrifice, mulungu was annoyed and did not allow rains to fall. As a result a great famine came, due to which many people migrated to other places. These became the Meru, Kikuyu and the Embu, while the remaining group became the Akamba.<sup>6</sup>

Historically there is a theory that the Bantu-speaking people of East Africa were once one group of people living in the Congo Basin.<sup>7</sup> They are said to have come to their present areas through a series of

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5. Ndeti op.cit., p.54

6. Ibid.

7. B.G. McIntosh, 'The Eastern Bantu Peoples', in Zamani: A Survey of East African History. Ed. by B.A. Ogot and J.A. Kieran, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House Ltd., 1968), p.198 ff.

migration waves. This was due to plunder and over-population.<sup>8</sup> They migrated into Central, South and Eastern Africa. As far as the Akamba are concerned, they first settled in Ulu, from either Giriama country or the neighbourhood of Kilimanjaro.<sup>9</sup> From this region, they dispersed into Kitui and Kibwezi.

G. Lindblom dated the crossing of Athi River and settlement in Kitui in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Ukamba country has two rainfall seasons, namely short and long rains. The short rains begin in October and continue through December. January and February is normally dry period. Long rains start in March and continue through May. From June to August, there is a dry cold weather, with July as the coldest month. Rainfall in Machakos District is heavier than in Kitui. This explains why we have areas like Kangundo, Iveti and Kilungu under intensive farming. Most parts of Kitui receive light rains and the main crops are maize, millet, sorghum, beans and cowpeas.

According to the 1979 Population Census the Akamba of Kitui numbered 464,283 while those of

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8. Ibid.

9. J. Middleton, The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya, (London: International African Institute, 1979), p.73.

10. G. Lindblom, The Akamba of British East Africa, (Uppsala, 1920), p.10.

Machakos were 1,022,522.<sup>11</sup> This difference can be attributed to harsh climatic conditions prevailing in Kitui District which have also slowed development in the area.

#### B. SOME BASIC AKAMBA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

##### i) Belief in God

Most of western scholars on Akamba people have come up with biased and distorted views on Akamba religion. Among these are people like J. Middleton, who summarised the religion of Akamba as "a well-developed ancestral cult and a vague conception of a higher power".<sup>12</sup> The same idea was expressed by G. Lindblom when he stated that "the religious conceptions of Akamba consist of a developed worship of the spirits of ancestors and a vague belief in a higher being".<sup>13</sup> Charles Dundas equated Akamba belief in God with their belief in spirits (Aimu or sheitani).<sup>14</sup> He seemed to conclude that the idea of God was unknown among the Akamba. This is shown by his statement that,

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11. Kenya Population Census 1979, Vol. I, Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 1981.
  12. Middleton, op.cit., p.91
  13. Lindblom op.cit., p.209
  14. Charles Dundas, History of Kitui, Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol.33, 1913, p.535.

"It seems that there is no Mukamba word for God, neither do they know of any such being, but the various terms used are merely collective words to denote the plurality of the spiritual world".<sup>15</sup>

Such arguments show that most studies done during this period were prejudiced and what we get is the wrong picture. These scholars wanted to justify the need for introducing western civilization and Christianity.

Like most other African societies the Akamba believe in a Supreme Being. They give him names which describe his nature and activity. One of these is Mulungu. According to A. Shorter, the terms Mulungu, Mungu, Murungu and Mu'ungu are generic Bantu words used in East and Central Africa in reference to spirit, and are derived from the root word - Lungu, meaning 'clan'.<sup>16</sup> He continues to say that "they emphasize the idea of begetting life, and are applied both to the supreme being and to lesser spirits".<sup>17</sup> As far as the Akamba are concerned, the word Mulungu is used exclusively to refer to the creator and has nothing to do with clan or spirits. Whenever the Akamba use the term, they do so having in mind the one who is above creation and who controls

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15. Ibid., p.535

16. A. Shorter, African Culture and Christian Church, (London: Geoffrey Clapman, 1973), p.53.

17. Ibid.

activities on the earth.<sup>18</sup> He was seen as the giver of children to women, and of rain and good harvest.

According to Profesor Kibicho, the word murungu in Kikuyu usage was employed to signify the "otherness, mystery, power and mercy of God, all combines".<sup>19</sup> The Akamba used Mulungu to signify the attribute of incompatible greatness and power. The term expressed God's ability to control everything in the world. Whenever a Mukamba was faced by hard situations he would seek help from Mulungu who was able to clear a path where human beings were defeated.

God was also referred to as Mumbi. In most cases the Akamba would combine both Ngai and Mumbi, Ngai Mumbi (God the creator). Mumbi is derived from the verb kumba, meaning to 'mould', to 'fashion'. Thus a potter is called mumbi wa mbisu, that is, one who gets clay and moulds it into pots. God is, therefore, depicted as the moulder or creator of man and the universe in general. There is a belief that God created the livestock and gave it to man to herd it. As creator he is thought of as having a lot of wisdom because he created from his own imagination.

The word Ngai, for God, was common among the Kikuyu, Maasai and the Akamba. It is not clear then

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18. Theswa Mbatii. Interview, Migwani, December 12, 1985.

19. Samuel Kibicho, The Kikuyu conception of God, its continuity into the Christian era and the question it raises for the Christian idea of revelation, (PhD. Thesis, Nashville: Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 1972) p.59.



who had borrowed from the other. But according to Kibicho, the word in Kikuyu is derived from the stem - gaya, meaning to 'divide' or 'distribute'.<sup>20</sup> In this case Ngai means the great distributor or divider.<sup>21</sup> This signifies that "God as the creator and ruler of all things is the one who gives and distributes everything to his children everywhere".<sup>22</sup> Similar ideas among the Akamba were expressed by one of our informants who said that

Ngai niwe uanasya liu. Ainenga aimu, na iimu  
yi kwosa Kilungu iekyayo yikuetee andu

("Ngai is the one who divides food. And gives to the spirits, and every spirit brings its share to its people).<sup>23</sup>

Kwaanya is used here in the same sense with the Kikuyu kugaya. God was seen as the one who gave riches and children to different people. This was expressed in the blessings given to the young people by the elders, Ngai aunenge syana na uthwii (may God give you children and riches), or when referring to a childless woman the Akamba would say, Ngai ndaamune nga syana (God has not given her children). Ngai is therefore, seen as the supreme being who controls the universe and human destiny.

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20. Ibid., p.59

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Kivinda Simbu, interview, Migwani, May 12, 1986.

Mwatuangi is another Akamba name for God. The word is derived from the root - tuanga, which means to 'split', for instance, wood into smaller pieces. According to Edwin Smith, the name "gives the sense of making a new thing out of something which was in existence before".<sup>24</sup> God is seen as a cleaver, who fashioned the fingers and toes in the same way a piece of wood is split. The name describes his creative abilities and especially the aesthetic fact of his creation. He is seen as the one who orders the universe and co-ordinates every part of the body.

Such are some of the terms used to refer to God. They describe his nature and attributes. Some people even call him Munengani wa syonthe<sup>25</sup> (giver of all things) to describe their reliance on him for all their needs. He is seen to have all power even of communicating with animals. One Akamba myth explaining the origin of death states that, after creating all creatures, Mulungu endowed them with many natural powers. Some could fly, while others could only live on land. God then sent a chameleon to inform man that after death he would resurrect. But the chameleon was slower though reliable. The hare

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24. Edwin Smith, African beliefs and Christian faith, (London: The United Society for Christian Literature, 1936) p.31.
25. Ngeli Musyimi, interview, Migwani, February 22, 1986. Also Nzoka Muindi Kamungu Nzuki, interview, Mutitu, January 13, 1986.

who was a mischief-maker decided to pretend that he was the one sent. So he went and while the slow chameleon was trying to deliver his message in a formal and modest way, the hare said that people would die and never rise.<sup>26</sup> Such a myth shows people's belief that God has ability to speak with animals.

God is seen to have always existed. He has no beginning nor end. The Akamba do not conceive a time when God was not there. He is above aimu and all powers of nature.<sup>27</sup> His actions cannot be enumerated or limited. This indicates what Mbiti calls 'God's transcendence'.<sup>28</sup> He states that such transcendence has to be balanced with his immanence. He continues to state that, "the two attributes are paradoxically complementary. This means that God is conceived as being far (transcendent), while at the same time he is near (immanent)".<sup>29</sup> This shows that God cannot be reached by man, but at the same time he comes close to man. He can see all the actions of man. This is expressed by Akamba people when they tell an

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26. Lula Kitema, Wamuo Mwaniki, Ngithi Mukura, interview, Migwani, January 20, 1986. See Ndeti, op.cit., p.349.

27. Lindblom, op.cit., p.244.

28. John S. Mbiti, Concept of God in Africa, (London-S.P.C.K., 1970), p.12.

29. Ibid.

evil doer, Ngai no ukwene (God can still see you). They express God's transcendence by stating that "twakwata liu no Ngai wisi" (if we get harvest, it is God who knows). This shows that as far as human knowledge is concerned there may not be food, unless it comes through God's mysterious action. Hence God is seen as a mystery, beyond human understanding. He is limitless and unexplainable, defying human comprehension.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the Akamba believed in a God both far and near them. They saw him as the creator and sustainer of the universe in general and of man in particular. Man turned to God for solutions to his needs and also for thanksgiving at times of plenty. God's immanence was expressed through worship, prayer and blessings. When a Mukamba was going on a journey he would approach an elderly person who would pray for him and say, Thi na Ngai (go with God), or when one blessed a young girl he would say Ngai naku-nenge usyao (may God give you offspring). At times of need one prayed spontaneously and uttered such words as "help me o God" (Ngai ndethya). Such acts do not portray a God who is remote to the people, but one close and not bound to religious formalities.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Ibid., p.15

31. Mbiti (1969), op.cit. p.65

God was also seen as a loving one, who was concerned about people's well-being. Hence the common saying among the Akamba, that Ngai ni museo (God is good) and the prayer Ngai mbiwa tei (God have mercy on me). The latter was expressed at times of great need while the former was used to express God's intervention in one's life. God was seen to show his providence through fertility and good health of humans, cattle as well as plentifulness of children and harvest. He could heal the sick and give children to the barren. When one recovered from sickness, for instance, he would praise God by saying kethiwa ti Ngai nithiwa ni mukwu oyu (if it were not for God, I would be dead by now).

ii) Belief in Spirits

In his 1971 publication, J.S. Mbiti has differentiated the common spirits and ancestral spirits by use of aimu for spirits and 'living-dead'<sup>32</sup> for the spirits of ancestors. Yet in Kikamba language there is only one term, aimu for the two categories. For purposes of our study, we are going to use terms 'spirits' to refer to general common spirits and 'spirits of ancestors' to refer to what Mbiti calls 'living-dead'. The Kikamba term 'aimu' will be employed to refer to both cases, but the difference will be realised through description.

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32. Ibid., p.75

Mbiti depicts general spirits as "common spiritual beings"<sup>33</sup> who are supposed to have been ancestral spirits before their memory lapsed out of people's minds.<sup>34</sup> He goes on to add that "they live in the intermediate modes between God's and man's modes of existence and their world must not be allowed to get either too close or too far from human world".<sup>35</sup> People spoke of aimu as though they have human characteristics. They were said to be able to speak, think and have wives, just like human beings. They were also said to have extraordinary abilities, such as eating human beings, consuming a lot of water, running very fast, flying in the air, assuming any shape and walking on one leg.

Such spirits were believed to stay in the woods, forests, mountains and around villages. Hence man felt that he was not the only one in his environment but that spiritual beings also surrounded him. Mbiti says that man may not want to be in an entirely strange environment when he dies.<sup>36</sup> He therefore has to take the spirits to be in the same environment with him.

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33. Ibid., p.78

34. Mbiti, (1971), op.cit., p.134

35. Ibid., p.134

36. Mbiti (1969), op.cit., p.80

The Akamba had mixed feelings about spirits. They believed that spirits could be employed to help human beings by pouring libations to them. They also believed that spirits were dangerous and could inflict pain on people. In this case, people feared walking near areas said to be abodes of spirits. Spirits were believed to be able to throw stones to passers-by.<sup>37</sup>

The Akamba also differentiated between local and foreign spirits. Foreign spirits were associated with strangers. For this reason whenever a stranger passed through Ukambani the path he had used had to be cleansed by sprinkling blood on it. For instance, when Krapf passed through Kambaland his path was sprinkled with blood.<sup>38</sup> If one went on a journey his welcome back home included cleansing ceremonies to make sure that no strange spirits were allowed into the village. Epidemics and calamities were associated with foreign spirits.<sup>39</sup>

The fear of foreign spirits by the Akamba can be easily illustrated by looking at a recent case in Mulango location in Kitui District. The villagers

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37. A story was told to the researcher by Lula Kitema that a man called Mwinzi Kamalu, who was a medicineman, was chased by spirits at nights. These spirits knew him by name and called:

Mwinzi niki utukiawa? (Mwinzi why do you come home late?)

He had to run away. (Lula Kitema, interview, Migwani, January 20, 1986).

38. Lindblom, Op cit. p.225

39. Ibid

decided to withdraw their children from a school said to be infested with foreign spirits, majini, from the Coast.<sup>40</sup> The spirits were said to have tormented the pupils such that learning was impossible. Kajiwe, a magician from the Coast, had to be called and was reported to have managed to clear the area of those spirits.<sup>41</sup> The irony of the whole event was that Mulango was the first area in the District to receive Christian influence. Even after many years of vigorous Christian witness, the people still believe in the power of the spirits.

iii) Belief in the spirits of ancestors

The spirits of ancestors, aimu ma aa ithe mautu (spirits of our forefathers), are what Mbiti calls the 'living-dead'.<sup>42</sup> He argues that though dead they are still immersed in former life. He states that,

The departed up to five generations are in a different category from that of ordinary spirits.... They are still within the sasa-period, they are in the state of personal immortality, and their process of dying is not yet complete.... They are the closest links that men have with the spirit world. But the living-dead are bilingual. They speak the language of man with whom they have lived until recently;

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40. Daily Nation Newspaper, September 4, 1985.

41. Ibid.

42. Mbiti, (1969), op.cit., p.83



and they speak the language of the spirits and God, to whom they are drawing nearer ontologically.... They are still part of their human families, and people have personal memories of them..... when they appear, which is generally to the oldest member of the household, they are, recognised by name as 'so and so'..... The 'living-dead' are still 'people', and have not yet become 'things', 'spirits' or 'its'.<sup>43</sup>

Mbiti's description of ancestral spirits emphasizes the fact that these have recently died. He uses 'time' as the determining factor.

According to the findings of our research, there seems to be two categories of spirits of ancestors. First, there are ancestors for a single family. Here, all members of family unit who died at a mature age were seen as ancestors and communication between them and other living members was maintained. They were seen as forefathers of the family. They were said to visit the family in dreams and visions, so as to make their wishes known. In every meal the head of the family would pour out part of the food or drink as libation. The libation was mainly in form of usuu (porridge), uki (beer), uki wa nzuki (honey) and iaa (milk).<sup>44</sup> Those who died young, though referred to as aimu, were not given the status of ancestors. What mattered was the hierarchical order of ones dignity which went hand in hand with age.

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43. Ibid.

44. Nzikali Musili, interview, Migwani, May 5, 1986.  
Kivinda Simbu, interview, Migwani, May 12, 1986.  
Musili Ndaisi, interview, Migwani, May 11, 1988.

Secondly, there were ancestors who were seen as national heroes. Those who had given their lives to the service of the clan or community when alive, were seen as national or public spirits of ancestors. After death they were still seen to be concerned about the welfare of the community. Included here were the members of the Nzama (council of elders) and also religious leaders, who enhanced the standing and prestige of the society.

For instance, in Kitui District, a story is told of a girl, Muyumbi who was given by her father to be sacrificed at a time of great famine. On the spot where she was sacrificed, a big mumbu<sup>45</sup> tree grew. She belonged to mbaa Kithumbi (Kithumbi clan). Since that time this girl's spirit has been revered as a national heroine whose life saved the society from hunger. Her spirit is seen as people's representative to Mulungu.<sup>46</sup> Her spirit possesses a woman by the name of Kivinda Simbu. According to Kivinda, Muyumbi is very possessive and jealous. She experienced this one time when she decided to become a Christian. On her way to the market, the next day, she broke her toe. She attributed this to the anger of Muyumbi's spirit. Her confession was that "I had

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45. Mumbu is a type of wild fig tree.

46. Kithumbi Teta, interview, May 12, 1986.  
Nzoka Muindi, Mutitu, interview, January 13, 1986.

to repent and vow never to turn away from her".<sup>47</sup>

People gather from far and wide to offer sacrifice to Muyumbi, who they believe, has powers of interceding for them before God. Such recourse to ancestors cannot be said to be opposed to worship of Ngai, but as complementary. This conclusion has been reached after looking at some of the arguments of the informants. When asked how they reconcile the veneration of spirits, of ancestors and God, they stated that aimu are only God's creation and as such there was no contradiction as to who was greater.<sup>48</sup> Both Kivinda and Kithumbi Teta stated that "Ngai no umwe, ula ni Ngai mumbi"<sup>49</sup> (God is only one, that is God the creator). Aimu were referred to as syana sya Ngai (God's children) who were nearer God than man.

The belief in spirits of ancestors used to act as a check on people's way of life. They were seen to be concerned about the morals of the society. Any behaviour contrary to the accepted norms and customs was said to call for punishment from the spirits. Mbiti states that the spirits acted as guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and

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47. Kivinda Simbu, interview, May 12, 1986.

48. Ibid., also Luka Kitema, interview, Migwani, December 12, 1985. Mbuli Ndeke, interview, Migwani, January 12, 1986.

49. Kivinda Simbu, Kithumbi Teta, interviews, op.cit.

activities.<sup>50</sup> They were also seen as "invisible police of the families and communities".<sup>51</sup> For this reason, everyone was careful as to how he behaved. Everyone felt not only responsible to the living members, but also to the spirits of the departed.

### C. FORMS OF WORSHIP AMONG THE AKAMBA

Worship is a religious ritual through which devotional acts are done in honour of the deity. In worship, the worshippers' response is evoked by reflective discernment of the nature and actions of the supernatural. Worship depends upon worshippers' conception of the divine being. According to Mbiti worship in African societies was 'uttered' rather than meditational, in that it was expressed in external forms.<sup>52</sup> It is these external forms of worship that we are concerned about in Akamba religion.

Like many other African societies, the Akamba were a worshipping community. In their religious life, emphasis was put on the need for having communion and good relationship with the supernatural world. Worship ranged from offering sacrifice of animal life, food, drink to prayer and religious

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50. Mbiti, (1969), op.cit., p.83.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

dances.<sup>53</sup> Each of these is going to be described briefly. One point that should be made clear is that offering sacrifice was the central form of worship. The other components of worship could be employed to accompany sacrifice. For instance, during the sacrificial ceremony a religious dance kilumi was performed. Prayers were said to express the intentions of the sacrifice. Hence as far as the Akamba are concerned prayer and religious dance can be seen as complementaries of sacrificial worship; although prayers and kilumi dance could be made on their own without having to accompany sacrifice. Libations were made to the ancestral spirits, as a form of communion and remembrance.

i) Sacrifice

As said before, the term sacrifice is used in this study to incorporate both animal sacrifice and offerings of food, drinks and any other thing of value presented as a form of worship to the deity. According to Mbiti, these were offered to one or more of the following: God, spirits and living-dead.<sup>54</sup> The second and the third category are seen as intermediaries between God and men, "so that God is the ultimate

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53. Ngeli Musyimi, interview, December 12, 1985.  
Nzikali Mugili, interview, May 5, 1986 at Migwani.

54. Mbiti, (1969), op.cit., p.58.

recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that".<sup>55</sup>

As far as the Akamba are concerned, there are two types of sacrifice namely individual and family sacrifice, on one hand and public sacrifice on the other.

(a) Individual Sacrifice

Individual sacrifice refers to personal initiatives to offer something to a deity. An individual would decide to seek divine assistance by means of offering a sacrifice. First he had to seek advice from the diviner, who would give him guidelines as to how to perform the sacrifice. If a person was sick, he could approach the head of his family, who was seen as the priest for the family worship.<sup>56</sup> No one could offer sacrifice on his own behalf. Hence individual sacrifice rightly fell under family sacrifice.

Family sacrifice was localised in that it involved members of the same lineage. Mbula states that "each Mukamba family was the centre of religious worship and religious activity".<sup>57</sup> Each Akamba family had an Ithembo, where sacrificial worship could take place. This was Ithembo ya musyi (family shrine).

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55. Ibid.

56. Nzuma Kitema, Musili Ndaisi, interviews, Migwani May 13, 1986.

57. Mbula, (1977), op.cit., p.86.

It was a small grass-thatched hut, constructed under a big tree or in a cave. It was inside this hut that sacrificial materials were taken. Inside the Ithembo sacrifice ranged from offering daily libations to the ancestors, to offering sacrificial animals to God either as a way of giving thanks for his provision or as a way of supplication for the needs of the family. It could also be a way of re-establishing a broken relationship, as a result of breach of taboos. When a family member got sick, for instance, a diviner would be consulted so as to establish the cause of the disease and how it could be healed. Sometimes the disease would be attributed to spirits of ancestors who had been annoyed due to unbecoming behaviour in the family.<sup>58</sup> In such a case, the annoyed ancestor would be approached with some beer and a goat, and a prayer made,

aa<sup>59</sup> umau, osai kaluki kaa na mbui-Nitumanyite  
kana nitunakukoseie.Tuikasyoka kwika uu yingi  
vosya mwana witu na umenenga usyao mwingi.

(The company of our grandfathers, receive this little beer and the goat. We have realised that we have wronged you. We will never repeat it again. Heal our son and give him plenty of offspring).<sup>60</sup>

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58. Nzasu Ngungu, interview, Kyuso, February 6, 1986.
59. aa - means collective part. An elder could not be called without use of 'aa' which implied respect. Hence to mention the name of an ancestor, 'aa' had to be used.
60. Nzikali Musili, interview, Migwani, May 5, 1986.

When a new child was born the members of the family met for a ceremony called Ndua.<sup>61</sup> It was a time of feasting and joy for the new baby. A sacrifice was also offered to God for giving them a new baby and for the safe delivery. The blood of the sacrificial animal was collected in a container and then offered to God. Blood was significant in that it was seen as containing the soul of the victim, a sign of life; and hence, life was being given back to God.<sup>62</sup> Prayers were said to accompany the sacrifice, expressing its intentions.

Ngai mumbi ula umbaa andu onthe Utwikie undu  
museo muno Utunenga kana kaa.

(God the creator, who creates all people, You  
have done us something very good, for giving  
us this child).<sup>63</sup>

At such a ceremony the Akamba expressed their happiness and gratitude to God. The meat at the ceremony was feasted upon in great joy. While they thanked God for the baby they also, asked him to protect it and enable it to grow to maturity and be fruitful.

Family sacrificial ceremonies took place to mark other rites of passage, such as marriage, initia-

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61. Mutethya Munguti, interview, Migwani, November 18, 1985.
  62. Munyuki Kithongo, interview, Mutomo, December 18, 1985.
  63. Mbuli Ndeke, interview, Migwani, January 12, 1986.  
See J.S. Mbiti, Prayers of African religion,  
(London: S.P.C.K., 1975), p.152.



tion and death. At initiation and marriage sacrifice was offered to ask for God's blessings upon the initiates and the new couple, respectively. The spirits of ancestors were also approached since they were seen as members of the family. At death sacrifices were offered so as to introduce the dead person to the spirit world.<sup>64</sup>

Included in the family sacrifice was the daily offerings and libations given to spirits of ancestors. At every meal time, a portion of the food was poured near cooking place, for the ancestors. Daily libations<sup>65</sup> - such as usuu (porridge), nzakame (blood), uki (beer), uki wa nzuki (honey), and mauta ma ngombe (ghee) - could be given to the ancestral spirits. While pouring such libations, prayers were said to express people's feelings. One such prayer said in the presence of the researcher went as follows:

Aa<sup>66</sup> Mbati na aa Nzinga, Kamalu na Mwinzi, Nzuna na Kalunda, Kundai kalila kau Kithanze Kivoo Na muituetee moathimo na liu na syana na indo.<sup>67</sup>

(The company of Mbati and Nzinga Kamalu and Mwinzi Nzuna and Kalunda Drink that little milk

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64. Munywoki Kithongo, op.cit.
65. Libation is used to refer to offerings given by pouring out some liquid to the ancestors.
66. See p.52 and also A.I.M., Kamba Dictionary, (Nairobi: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1939), p.1.
67. Theswa Mbati, interview, Migwani, December 20, 1985.

in peaceful mood And bring us blessings of food, children and animals).

The informant started by mentioning the most recently departed ancestors. The most recently departed ancestors were seen to be nearer man than those who died long ago.

Offerings made to the spirits of ancestors were important in that ancestors were man's representatives to God. Mbiti states that,

Because they are still people the 'living-dead' are therefore the best group of intermediaries between men and God; they know the needs of men, they have recently been here with men, and at the same time they have full access to the channels of communicating with God.<sup>68</sup>

This explains why they had to be considered every time there was a meal. By giving food to the ancestors, a Mukamba affirmed that these ancestors, though dead, were still members of the family. Mbiti goes on to state that such offerings of food and drink were given as a sign of fellowship, hospitality and a symbol of remembrance.<sup>69</sup> The Akamba believed that if the ancestors were not given daily libations, they would be annoyed and inflict punishment in the form of diseases and epidemics.<sup>70</sup>

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68. Mbiti, (1969), op.cit., p.83

69. Mbiti (1971), op.cit., p.95

70. Nzikali Musili, interview, Migwani, May 8, 1986. also Lula Kitema, interview, Migwani, December 20, 1985.

The veneration of ancestors did not overlook the worship of God the creator. The spirits were seen as higher than human beings, but lower than God. Their veneration can be attributed to their position in society: that is, elder brothers of the living members and hence intermediaries. When going hunting a Mukamba had to approach his ancestors so that they in turn could approach the creator for him. When going to towns to look for jobs, some Akamba people have to offer a sacrifice. A specific case is that of one of our informants, Mutia Masila.<sup>71</sup> According to Mutia, his son had looked for a job in Mombasa for a very long time. When he came home, the father approached a diviner who advised him to offer a goat to the ancestors to bless the son. Mutia believed that once such a sacrifice was offered the spirits of ancestors would be pleased and approach God, the final giver, on the son's behalf.<sup>72</sup> By the time the researcher met Mutia, the latter was going to look for the goat for the purpose of sacrifice.

Such beliefs prevail even among church-going Christians. Some find themselves incorporating traditional practices with Christian celebrations. During Christmas and Easter celebrations this group

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71. Mutia Masila, interview, Kisasi, December 4, 1985.

72. Ibid.

sees a chance to remember their dead ancestors while observing the birth of Christ, for instance, they also include the veneration of the ancestors. They may first attend church service, but later in the course of the day, they offer something to the departed forefathers.

We participated in a ceremony where a certain family belonging to Matuki Kitema decided to commemorate Christmas, and remember also their dead ancestors. The argument put forward was that over the years, the family had undergone a lot of trials and disunity. This was attributed to lack of respect and remembrance for the dead father, Kitema.<sup>73</sup> The whole family, incorporating daughters, sons and grandchildren together with daughters in-law came together and on the Christmas morning, a bull was slaughtered. Those members who were Christians were allowed to go to church, but on coming back they joined the rest and had a feast together. About three elders of the family took a few pieces of meat and blood and went behind the houses and offered them to the departed spirits of their forefathers. The three held the container with blood and as they poured the blood they also said this prayer:

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73. Kaingi Kitema, interview, Migwani, December 23, 1985. She is the one who donated the sacrificial bull.

Kitema na Nzinga, Nzamba na Muitu, Ukai tuisanie liu uu Osai nzakame nayo munywe Na muisisya musyi witu Muutungianie nundu niwavalanie Tueteei wiwano vaa musyi.<sup>74</sup>

(Kitema and Nzinga, Nzamba and Muitu, Come we eat together this food. Take also blood and drink it and help our family to bring it together for it is disunited. Bring us unity here in our family)

The rest of the meat was eaten by the members of the family. There was a lot of joy. Sharing and eating the sacrificial meat was seen as means of establishing a bond of unity between members of the family. The occasion served as a time for reconciliation. Those members who had disagreed with others came to solve their differences and agreed to start afresh. One member stood up and explained how he had disagreed with another member of the family and sought the intervention of the elders. The head of the family, Maluki, gave his advice on how to stop quarrels and be united as a family. He advised them to forget the past and start anew. Hence a bond of unity was established or renewed between, first the living and the dead ancestors, and also among the living members themselves.

(b) Public Sacrifice

Apart from individual and family sacrifices, there was the most solemn and broad sacrifice,

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74. Kitema was their deceased father, while Nzinga was the grandfather. Nzamba and Muitu were Kitema's wives.

namely Public sacrifice. It was public in that the whole community was involved in the ceremony. Different villages (motui) came together to organize a religious worship. This was necessitated by some unique event such as drought, delay of rains and epidemics. Included here were also seasonal sacrifices offered during planting and harvesting seasons.

Every zone had its own Ithembo. An Ithembo was the sacred shrine where sacrifices were offered. As stated earlier, it was a small grass-thatched hut, built under a tree or in a cave. It was a revered place and whenever one passed near it he had to throw some snuff, so as to acknowledge the powers that dwelt there.<sup>75</sup> It was prohibited to collect firewood near that area.

Before we describe what used to take place at public sacrificial worship, we are going to discuss main officiants at public sacrifice.

It should be pointed out that not everyone was eligible to conduct a sacrificial ceremony. Only a few privileged members of the society could approach the shrine and conduct the ritual. There were three categories of officiants concerned with sacrificial worship.

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75. Mutethya Munguti, interview, Migwani, December 26, 1985.

First, there were the Atumia ma Ithembo (elders of the Ithembo). These were great men of respect, who had lived a morally exemplary life and were industrious. They had to have portrayed their wisdom in participating in matters affecting the community such as being good speakers and arbitrators. For one to be accepted as a mutumia wa Ithembo, one had to have gathered enough knowledge about the norms and values associated with Ithembo by helping the current officials, in carrying out some of the duties performed before a sacrifice was made. Such duties included, bringing the sacrificial animal to the shrine, collecting firewood for roasting the meat, and skinning the animal. He then had to give a bull to be slaughtered and eaten by current elders of the clan. Most members of Atumia ma Ithembo used also to belong to the Nzama ya atumia (council of elders) which formed the judiciary of the society. It was therefore only some of the old people who could attain this dignified position in the community. It was the Atumia ma Ithembo who did the actual presentation of the sacrificial animal. They also presented the needs of the society to God. They also approached spirits of national heroes who were revered by the community.

Secondly, there were Iveti sya Ithembo (women of the Ithembo). These were old women who had

reached menopause. Like Atumia, not every old woman could be accepted but those whose husbands were men of respect and could be approached for advice. To be accepted one had to pay some membership fee. She had to give fellow women elders bananas while her husband had to give the atumia ma Ithembo a goat to feast on. It was after such a feast that the woman could be made a member of Iveti sya Ithembo.<sup>76</sup> At the Ithembo, their main work was to take with them farm produce such as mwee (millet), malenge (pumpkins) and milk, porridge and flour. They also performed the kilumi dance before and after the offering of sacrifice. When it came to sacrificing to the ancestors, these presented it to the women ancestors.

Thirdly, there was the class called Atumia anini ma Ithembo or Anake ma Ithembo (young elders of Ithembo). These were men aged about thirty five years. They were seen as more energetic and so their work was mainly manual. They could run errands for the elders, and other most demanding jobs, such as carrying heavy loads, leading the animal to the Ithembo, slaying and skinning the animal, and roasting the meat to be eaten by the elders. They would carry beer to the Ithembo. By the time they grew old they had gathered much experience such that they were accepted in the highest rank of atumia ma Ithembo.

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76. Lydia Syingi, interview, February 13, 1985. Also Viata Ngave, interview, same date at Kisasi.



These three categories were of great importance to the sacrificial worship, and they were respected by the whole community. There was another personality who played quite some part in the worship. This was the mwathani (seer or foreteller).<sup>77</sup> According to Mbiti, athani (plural) have got no other special religious functions in society except to foretell what had to be done about the sacrifice.<sup>78</sup> They were men and women who were said to have ability to communicate with the spirit world. They spoke with aimu through visions, dreams and spirit possession. Mwathani would get possessed by a spirit and could inform the worshippers what sort and type of sacrifice was to be offered. People would talk of going to mwathani's home to hear what God had said concerning different circumstances through the mwathani. For instance, in Kyome sub-location, Migwani location in Kitui District, Kivinda Simbu acts as a mwathani. People come from far and wide to hear her words. At times of drought they gather at her home so that she could communicate what she has foreseen.<sup>79</sup> Before any sacrifice is performed, worshippers first seek

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77. Mbiti (1971), op.cit., p.136

78. Ibid.

79. Participant observation, at Migwani, November 20 1985.

her word and then they proceed and act accordingly.

For any sacrifice to take place each category of officials played its part. In describing what used to take place at a public sacrificial ceremony, we have to look at specified sacrifices namely, sacrifice for rain, planting ceremony and harvest sacrificial ceremony.

(c) Sacrifice for Rain (at times of drought)

At times of severe droughts elders would gather and consult a foreteller, who would give information as to the cause of the drought and also give guidance on the type of sacrifice to be offered. The sacrificial animal had to be of single colour, such as black, white or brown. Single colour signified purity. The Akamba used goats, sheep, bulls and chicken for sacrificial purposes. No deformed animal could be offered.

If there was no one to donate the sacrificial animal, the whole community made contributions of grains which was used to purchase the animal. Such contributions were taken to the leader of atumia ma, Ithembo (elders of Ithembo) who would organize, together with other elders, where to get a fat animal of the needed colour.<sup>80</sup> Two days before the actual day of sacrifice, old women would stage a religious

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80. Nzikali Musili, op.cit.

dance, kilumi. The dance was seen as an important part of the worship. There was a belief that even the spirits enjoyed the dance and would be pleased.<sup>81</sup> The dance would continue for a full week, within which the sacrifice was offered. The worshippers had to be in a state of spiritual purity. This involved keeping away from sexual intercourse. It was a taboo to have sexual intercourse with one's partner or with any other person two days before and after the sacrifice was offered.<sup>82</sup> They had to go before the deity with no sign of human desires. They had to kwinengane mbee wa Ngai (to present oneself before God in a state of holiness).

On the material day, the elders would consecrate the animal by applying ia (white diatomite)<sup>83</sup> on its head. After this the sacrificial animal was taken round the village by two men and two women. This is called kuthyuukya nthi (to take round the 'world').<sup>84</sup> At long last the animal was brought to the Ithembo, where other men and women would be waiting at the Ithembo. After the procession, with the sacrificial animal, reached the shrine, women and

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81. Ngina Uenge, interview, Kisasi, January 12, 1986. Also Mutethya Munguti, interview, Migwani, December 5, 1986.

82. Ngeli Musyimi, interview, Migwani, December 22, 1985.

83. ia - a magical powder which was used in religious ceremonies for consecration.

84. Ngeli Musyimi, op.cit.

men sat separately. This was due to a belief that even the spirits sat separately, men on one side and women on the other. The animal was either suffocated or killed with a knife. The method had to be decided upon by the mwathani. If the method was killing using a knife, then the animal had to be pierced, first at the neck, so that blood could gush from the vein in the neck. If the knife came out stained with blood on both sides, there was to be plenty of rainfall.<sup>85</sup> The blood was poured into a container (nzele) and if it made mavuyu (foam), this was also seen as a sign that there was to be a lot of rainfall. If the opposite of the above happened, the elders took it as a sign that there would be no rain.

After the animal was killed, the skinning was done by the Anake ma Ithembo. In some cases the skin was used to cover the Ithembo, while in others it was given to an elder who was expected to produce the sacrificial animal for the next time. Then seven pieces of meat were cut and put into small holes made on the floor of the Ithembo.<sup>86</sup> Beer was also put into seven small containers made from stems of mwaiki (castor plant). These were placed

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85. Nzoka Muindi and Ndungi Muindi, interview, Mutitu, February 7, 1986.

86. Lula Kitema, interview, December 4, 1985; also found in Mutemi Sungi, Akamba Oral Texts, 1977, Kenya National Archives. No page number.

into the seven holes in the shrine. By giving the seven pieces of meat and seven containers of beer, they believed God would be pleased. As they presented the meat to God, one of them, mainly the oldest said a prayer expressing the need for rains;

Ngai waitu, mwene tei nawendo, Mwene itu na nthi  
Nitwooka mbee waku Ame Ngai tuetee mbua Nikana  
syana na Nyamu Ukwate liu.

(Our God, owner of mercy and love, owner of heaven and earth, we have come before you in need of rain O God bring us rain, so that children together with animals may get food).<sup>87</sup>

The container with the blood was held by all the atumia ma Ithembo and poured slowly on the floor as libation to the ancestors.

After this the women elders would take their turn to offer their farm produce. These were placed on the ground inside the Ithembo. The efficacy of such sacrifice was expressed by the informants when they stated that immediately after this was done, rains started falling.<sup>88</sup>

At times of severe droughts the animal was burned to ashes. This was done as a sign of cleansing the community of any evils that may have been done and had annoyed God.

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87. Nzikali Musili, op.cit.

88. Mutethya Munguti, op.cit., Kivinda Simbu, op.cit., Kithumbo Teta, op.cit. Ibid.

Child sacrifice was also reported among the Akamba. This was necessitated by prolonged severe droughts in the area. Such a child was kidnapped among the neighbouring communities such as Kikuyu and Embu. Akamba of Kitui kidnapped a child from those of Machakos, and vice-versa. For instance, those of Kibauni in Machakos were feared in Kitui for being notorious at kidnapping children for sacrifice. At Mumbuni in Machakos there was a big Ithembo where human sacrifice was prevalent.<sup>89</sup>

The child to be sacrificed had to be a young girl, about five years old and a virgin. Her age could lead them to believe that she had no knowledge of sex. This was seen as sign of purity and innocence.<sup>90</sup> The girl was mainly cheated by the kidnapppers so that on the journey to the place of sacrifice she did not know what was to befall her. When they reached the Ithembo the girl was smeared with mauta ma ngombe (ghee) all over her body.<sup>91</sup> This was a way of consecrating her. A hole was dug inside the Ithembo and then the girl was put inside upright. Then all the sacrificial materials such as porridge,

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89. Ngeli Musyimi, op.cit., c.f. Hobley, C.W., Ethnology of Akamba and other East African Tribes, (Frankcass & Co.. Ltd., 1971), p.85.

90. Ngeli, op.cit.

91. Lula Kitema, op.cit.

millet and flour, covered her until she could not be seen. The worshippers believed that she had kulika nthi (sunk into the ground). Then she was left to die.<sup>92</sup>.

The next day, after the sacrifice, people had to rest. By resting they believed that they had given God time to act on their needs. If any one did any work, the effects of sacrifice could not come. Today those who continue to practice sacrificial worship argue that Christians have created problems, because they do not rest after the sacrifice and hence hindering the effects it could have. For this reason the sacrificers have decided to offer the sacrifice on Saturdays so that their resting day coincides with the Christian one.

(d) Planting Ceremony

This ceremony was performed by women<sup>93</sup> and in the month of September, just before the short rains started. Old women gathered at a seer's homestead, where they staged a kilumi dance. They carried with them all kinds of foodstuffs, such as millet, beans,

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92. Lula Kitema, op.cit.

93. In Ukambani, general farm work, except clearing of virgin land, was done by the women. They did the planting, weeding and harvesting. Hence they were the right people to carry out planting ceremonies. Men's work included beekeeping, herding and hunting.

peas, sorghum and maize.<sup>94</sup> They then proceeded to the Ithembo. When they reached the Ithembo they presented the seeds to God, by placing them inside the holes made in the Ithembo. Prayers were said to invoke God's blessings upon the seeds. The prayers expressed the need for God's intervention. One of such prayers had the following details.

Ngai waitu, Mulungu athima mbeu ino yaitu  
Nikana twavanda isyae usao museo tukwate liu  
wa syana situ.

(Our Ngai, Mulungu bless our seeds so that when we plant it will bring good harvest so that we get food for our children).<sup>95</sup>

After invoking God's blessings, the worshippers took some of the seeds and presented them to the national spirits, who were believed to have farms which needed seeds from the people. This offering was also accompanied by a prayer which went as follows;

Munguti na Kalwe, Mwinzi na Kalunda nitwamuetee  
mbeu, Nikana nenyu muvande, Na indi athimai  
miunda yaitu, Nikana twithiwe na ngetha .  
Tulungisyeyi miimu yonthe

(Munguti and Kalwe, Mwinzi and Kamalu we have brought you seeds for planting; so that you can plant also and then you bless ours so that we have good harvest. Chase away all diseases).<sup>96</sup>

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95. Mutethya Munguti, op.cit.

96. Mutethya Munguti, op.cit.



After this presentation, the remaining seeds were given to a few selected women, who were to start planting (kuelya). It was only after they had planted that other villagers would plant their farms.

#### D. Libation

Libation is used to refer to the act of pouring out some liquid to ancestors. Every Akamba family gave daily libations to the spirits of the family ancestors. Such libations included liquids such as usuu (porridge), nzakame (blood), uki (beer), uki wa nzuki (honey) and iia (milk). The head of the family was the sole presenter of the libations.

It was important to give libation to the spirits of ancestors because these were seen as intermediaries between God and man.<sup>97</sup> Hence lines of communication had to be established so that there was good relationship with both the ancestral spirits and with God.

The spirits of ancestors were considered still members of the family and for this matter they had to receive their share, whenever a drink was available. Before any serious discussion was carried out, libations of beer and porridge had to be

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97. Mbiti, (1969), op.cit., p.83

offered. The elders having the discussion would put some beer in a container and then all tried to hold the container each with one hand, and in unison they poured the beer on the ground. One of them, mostly the oldest in the group, invited the dead ancestors to participate in the family discussion. He said,

Kamalu na Mwinzi kundai kaluki kau na muyuka  
mututetheesye maunduni aa tunena.

(Kamalu and Mwinzi drink this little beer and come to help us with the things we are discussing).<sup>98</sup>

When there were to be discussions for bride price, libations had to be given. Before the wine from the in-laws could be tasted by the living members, part of it had to be poured as libation to the forefathers, who were seen as the most senior parents of the daughter. When a woman made porridge, the oldest mother in the family was to give some of it to the women ancestors. By so doing, the Mukamba believed that he was sharing whatever he got with the dead members of the family, and in return these would beseech God for prosperity of the community.

#### E. Prayer

A prayer is a very important element of worship. According to Awolalu,

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<sup>98</sup> In family discussions, there could be about  
elders. Holding the container together  
signified unity of the family.

It is a means by which man makes a devout supplication to, and enters into communion with the object of worship.<sup>100</sup>

Through prayer man expresses adoration, praise and thanksgiving to the deity. Man recalls God's attributes and acts of kindness. In other words, it is a means by which the worshipper pours his mind completely to his God. Whenever a sacrifice was performed, its intentions were expressed through prayer. As we have seen, whenever a Mukamba presented some sacrificial material to God he said a short prayer. Such prayers expressed the needs of the community. At the same time prayer could be made without having to accompany any sacrifice. These were the spontaneous prayers necessitated by immediate needs of an individual. For instance, when a Mukamba was faced by danger, he prayed, Ngai Ndethya (God help me). Such a short prayer asks God to intervene in the situation. Hence what one prays is conditioned by the circumstances that induce the prayer. The Akamba pray both in sorrowful and joyful moods.

For instance, when one is sick, the prayer is made in a sorrowful mood, but when they are giving thanks for a new born baby, they are joyous.

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Prayer was said anywhere and any time. One did not need to go to the shrine to offer prayer. When a woman was on her way to fetch water and a situation that needed prayer arose, she could say it as she continued with her mission. When she was grinding millet, she could still say her prayers. Prayer could be uttered or made in one's heart.

#### F. Religious Dance

Akamba people are well known for being great dancers.<sup>101</sup> Not every Akamba dance was a religious dance. Most of them were for entertainment with an exception of the kilumi dance. The kilumi was a religious dance, which was both seasonal and all-year round dance. It was occasional in that it was done mostly when rains had failed or before testing newly ripe crops. Then, all-year round, because a person possessed could call for the dance any time the spirit asked for it.

Kilumi was a dance involving movement of shoulders, hands and the legs. It was done by women just before and after a sacrifice was performed. It could take as long as six to seven days being danced day and night.<sup>102</sup> Other women could bring cooked

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101. For more details on Akamba dances see P.N. Kavyu. An introduction to Kamba music. (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1977), p.47ff.

102. Ngeli Musyimi op.cit., also cf. Kavyu op.cit., p.50

food from their homes to the dancers. Instruments of various types were used. There was a drum, which was made of a log of tree, with a hollow at the centre and covered with a goat's skin. Whistles of different shapes were also used. The instrumentalists were placed in one line with the soloist at the middle. When these are drumming and the latter leading in songs, the rest of the worshippers dance following the rhythm of the drums. The dancers are young women who put on traditional dress and ornaments, such as bangles, necklaces and leg-jingles, which make musical sounds as one moves around.

The songs made praise to God and the spirits. Some of them were sung to the researcher by the informants, for example, the following;

Withauka na Ngai Yova i<sup>103</sup>, mundu mue ndathaukaa, ula uasya mbua, mundu mue ndathaukaa, ula utene-  
ngae syana, mundu mue ula mwene itu, mundu mue  
ndathauka.<sup>104</sup>

(You play with Ngai Jehovah, a medicineman never plays, the one who makes rainfall, a medicineman never plays, he who gives us children, a medicineman never plays, he who owns the heavens, a medicineman never plays).

In such a song God is praised and his works are enumerated. He is also seen as the great medicine-

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103. The Jewish name Jehovah has also been incorporated into traditional religion and God is referred to as Ngai Yova (God Jehovah). Yova must be seen as originating from Christian influence on traditional religion.

104. Ngeli Musyimi, op.cit.

man who never plays. Other songs praise the spirits of the ancestors,

Muyumbi ni itumbi ya uwe; iii ni itumbi ya uwe;  
Iyanyaa yalekwa thome, yosi we kwa mbaa Tyaka  
tukithauka iii ni itumbi ya uwe.

(Muyumbi is an egg for medicine; yes she is an egg for medicine; that of the ostrich was laid outside, it was collected by family of Thyaka, Yes she is an egg for medicine).<sup>105</sup>

When such a song of praise was sung for Muyumbi,<sup>106</sup> her spirit would possess one of the dancers who could declare her wishes to the community. Such songs were for praising the spirits. The Akamba believed that the spirits loved kilumi dance very much and could be actually heard dancing at a distance with a lot of joy. Whenever a public sacrifice was to take place, kilumi was staged near the Ithembo. The one possessed had to be danced for, for some time before she could speak the word from spirit world. Hence kilumi was said to induce one to communicate with spiritual realm. At other times an instrumentalist could just decide to drum and sing alone at the homestead. One of them argued that after seeing a diviner, she was advised that her ancestral spirits required the dance, and so she

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105. Kivinda Simbu, op.cit.

106. Muyumbi, in a national spirit which is venerated in Migwani location of Kitui District. People travel from all over the location to come and hold kilumi dance for her. She is seen as a female spirit.

had to do it privately.<sup>107</sup>

Dancing as a form of worship was not only reported among the Akamba but also among other African communities. For instance, Awolalu reports some of the songs sang by the Yoruba in praise of the divinities;

"The powerful one. You who dwell with a person and make him prosperous The chief commander. You who multiply only one into two hundred persons. Multiply me into four hundred, multiply me into two hundred, multiply me into one thousand four hundred and sixty persons.<sup>108</sup>

Like the Akamba, the Yoruba would praise their deities, and enumerate their attributes and abilities. The one important difference between the two was that the Akamba danced and sang in praise of God and the ancestral spirits and not to the divinities. Hence religious dance and music was not uncommon among the Africans in general and the Akamba in particular.

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107. Mutethya Munguti, op.cit.

108. Awolalu, op.cit., p.106.

### CHAPTER THREE: CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Christian worship came into Ukambani after the introduction of Christianity into the area. For that reason, before we discuss the nature of Christian worship, we trace how Christianity was introduced into the area.

Christianity was first introduced to East Africa by the Augustinian Friars from Portugal in the 17th century A.D. They established a monastery at Mombasa and also built the famous Fort Jesus for their defence from enemy attack. Their influence was limited to Mombasa, Pate Island and Malindi.<sup>1</sup> This early introduction of Christianity was rooted out by Muslims who rebelled against the Portuguese and took over leadership at the Coast.<sup>2</sup> From then Christianity was overshadowed by Islam and in that first phase of its introduction, it never reached the interior.

The second phase of missionary endeavour in East Africa was pioneered by Ludwig Krapf of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1844. He was a German, trained at Basle Protestant Institute, who had volunteered to work in Africa with the

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1. Roland Oliver, Missionary factor in East Africa, (Longman Group Ltd., 1952). p.160
  2. Ibid.



C.M.S<sup>3</sup> His main ambition was to reach the Galla and evangelise them but when he failed to do so from the north, he decided to approach them from a southerly direction. He therefore established himself at Rabai in the coast. It was during this second phase that the Akamba were first reached by the Gospel.

Krapf himself had a great vision of establishing mission stations across Africa. He once stated that; "I used to calculate how many missionaries and how much money would be required to connect Eastern Africa and Western Africa by a chain of missionary stations".<sup>4</sup> He therefore worked for the achievement of these aims. Before he moved inland, Krapf had met Akamba people who had migrated to live at the coast as a result of a famine in Ukambani in 1836.<sup>5</sup> His description of the people was typical of European prejudice;

Like most savages they are very fond of ornaments, especially beads and copperware .... They have a reputation of being great beggars and great liars ... and have no king or chief recognised as such by the nation; nor have they any laws universally binding".<sup>6</sup>

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3. A.J. Temu, British Protestant missions, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1972, p.5
  4. J.L. Krapf, Travels, research and missionary labours, (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, nd), p.109
  5. Ibid.
  6. Ibid.

Although Krapf described the Akamba in this manner, he sought their assistance when need arose. When going inland to the Kikuyu zone, Krapf made use of chief Kivoi of Akamba.

Krapf had met Chief Kivoi at the coast and they both agreed on a visit by Krapf. The Chief was of much help to Krapf for the latter camped in the chief's homestead during his journeys to Ukambani. During his first journey, he founded no mission station. The object of his second journey was to open one at Yatta, which was to be the first in a chain of mission stations.<sup>7</sup> His intentions were frustrated when on his way to Kikuyu country, his caravan was attacked by robbers who also killed Kivoi.<sup>8</sup> Krapf had to return to the coast as a frustrated man. His initiative can be said to have been therefore unsuccessful.

The third wave of missionary penetration was aimed at abolishing slavery and slave trade. The urge to stop this trade was triggered by evangelical revivals in Europe and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Christians in these continents felt that time had come when they had to atone for the part they had played in the evil trade,<sup>9</sup> by

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7. Ibid., p.244

8. Ibid.

9. D.N. Sifuna, Vocational education in schools, (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1976), p.38

spreading Christianity, introducing trade and commerce and western civilization. Activities of Dr. Livingstone inspired more and more Christians to embark on the mission of evangelization of what they called the 'dark continent'. Livingstone had spent time exploring East and Central Africa, in order to expose more the evils of the trade and show how missionaries could reach the areas. Even the arrival of his embalmed body in 1874 caused renewed interest and effort to evangelise.<sup>10</sup> Other missionaries were challenged to give their lives for spreading the gospel to the Africans. Once freed, slaves had to be settled in mission stations as potential converts.

Due to this missionary zeal, in 1891, the Imperial British East Africa Company established a mission station at Kibwezi, under the name 'East African Scottish Industrial Mission'.<sup>11</sup> The Akamba proved to be unresponsive and the mission was moved to Kikuyu.<sup>12</sup> In 1892, another protestant missionary group, 'Evangelical Lutheran Society', from Leipzig, opened a mission station at Ikutha in Kitui. Due to hardships in the area they gave up their work, and moved to Mulango.<sup>13</sup>

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10. Ibid.

11. J. Mbula, Penetration of Christianity into Ukambani, op.cit., p.50

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

The missionary group that was to succeed in Ukambani was the 'Africa Inland Mission'. It was started in America as an interdenominational mission, composed of Christians from Methodist, Baptist and Advestist churches, with Peter Scott as the head.<sup>14</sup> In 1895, he opened the first station in Nzau at Machakos. In 1896 another station was opened at Kangundo.<sup>15</sup> After his death other missionaries who had joined the mission continued to evangelise Ukambani. These were men like W. Hotchkiss, who after a few years of evangelization wrote that,

"Windows in their houses now let in the heavenly light and air, where formerly disease breeding darkness and suffocation prevailed. So too, have windows of the soul been thrown open to let in the light, and all the foul brood of superstition and ignorance are sculting to their holes. No man can look into the face of Jesus Christ and be the same afterwards. That look will compel a cleansing up inside and outside".<sup>16</sup>

These statements indicate that by the time he was writing, Christianity had already a markable impact on Akamba society. The church continued to open new mission stations in Ukambani. In 1896 they opened one at Muisuni in Kangundo; in 1902 another one was opened at Mumbuni in Machakos. In 1908 and 1915 stations

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14. Oliver. op.cit., p.171.
  15. J.S. Mbiti, New Testament eschatology in an African background, (1971) p.12.
  16. W. Hotchkiss, Then and now in Kenya colony, (New York: Flemmy H. Revell Company, nd), p.106.

were opened at Mbooni and Mulango, respectively.<sup>17</sup> At these stations the church continued to enrol more and more members. Most of the first converts were misfits in society. Wives who had run away from their husbands and the cursed members of the community found the Christian message very appealing. They went to live in the mission stations and hence they were assured of protection from outside influence. By 1943 the church had undergone great growth and had formed its own first constitution under the name 'Africa Inland Church' (A.I.C). Later in 1952 the A.I.C became independent from the mother mission, the Africa Inland Mission (A.I.M).<sup>18</sup>

The AIC is headed by a bishop, and the current one is Ezekiel Birech. He is elected by the highest governing body called Central Church Council.<sup>19</sup> His tenure of office is normally four years. His work is mainly to co-ordinate all the activities of the A.I.C in consultation with other leaders. He presides over the meetings of Central Church Council (C.C.C). In other words he is the overseer of all matters affecting the church.

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7. Mbula, op.cit, p.53

8. Ibid.

9. Africa Inland Church, Constitution, (Kijabe: Kesho Publications, 1972) p.38.

The Central Church Council (C.C.C) is the supreme council of A.I.C. Its members include the bishop and assistant bishop, administrative assistant, treasurer and delegates appointed annually by Regional Church Councils (R.C.C).<sup>20</sup> It is the responsibility of C.C.C to issue constitution and regulations of church policy. It appoints committees for Bible schools, Theological colleges, primary and secondary schools and medical services run by the church.<sup>21</sup>

Below the C.C.C is the Regional Church Councils (R.C.C's). Their functions are determined by C.C.C. Each region has an office, and is composed of officers appointed by the Council and representatives from District Church Councils. The Council officers include the chairman and deputy chairman, Bishop of A.I.C (ex-officio), executive secretary (who runs the office of the region and ensures that there is good relationship between the region and the headquarters) and a treasurer. The R.C.C's responsibility is to run the matters of the church at regional level.<sup>22</sup>

The District Church Councils (D.D.C's) are formed by the R.C.C of each area. The members are elected by branch councils from among the deacons,

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20. Ibid., p.36

21. Ibid., p.37

22. Ibid., p.34

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20. Ibid., p.36

21. Ibid., p.37

22. Ibid., p.34

elders and pastors. They run the office and coordinate the work of the District. They supervise churches and congregations.

A. CENTRAL BELIEFS OF THE AFRICA INLAND CHURCH

i) Belief in God

The doctrines of the A.I.C are similar in some ways with those of other related protestant churches such as Presbyterian, Methodist and the Baptist churches. As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the A.I.C was begun by Christians from these churches in America. It is no wonder then that such similarities are prominent.

As regards the church's belief in God, he is seen as a spirit who has no beginning or end.<sup>23</sup> This is supported by what John says in his gospel, that "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). This belief rules out any further discussions about the origin or future state of God.

By emphasising that God is spirit, the church tries to declare that God cannot be seen with human eyes, but with spiritual eyes through faith. The church believes in the "unity and trinity of God,

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23. A.I.C, Kikamba Catechism, (Kijabe: Kesho Publication, 1982) p.5.



eternally existing in three co-equal persons; the Father, Son and Holy Spirit".<sup>24</sup> These three are basically one and equal in power and holiness.<sup>25</sup>

God is seen as the creator of everything. Man is among this creation but is seen to have been created a special being, in that he was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). This God-like image was spoiled when man sinned against God by eating the forbidden fruit. Due to this disobedience man was condemned. This necessitated the coming of God the Son into the world to redeem man. The church affirms, therefore, the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. During the incarnation Jesus Christ acquired a second nature, that is, human, and became man, so that through him, man could be reconciled to God.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus, as the Son of God who became man, is believed to have been born without an earthly father. He was born by holy conception through the Holy Spirit. He was born by a virgin who was shown earlier by the angel that she was to bear a son through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' ministry on the earth is emphasised. His death on the cross is seen as a means of reconciliation of man and God. The church believes

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24. A.I.C. Constitution, op.cit., p.28

25. A.I.C. Catechism, op. cit., p.5

26. Ibid., p.6.

that he was bodily raised from the dead, and he ascended to heaven, where he is believed to be seated at the right hand of God; the constitution states that, members of the church have to believe in;

The deity and humanity of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who being very God, also became man, being begotten by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, was crucified, dead. On the third day he rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father; whose two natures continue eternally and inseparably joined together in one person.<sup>27</sup>

The church believes that at the end of times Jesus will come back to judge the world and rule over his people.

On God the Holy Spirit the church believes in;

"The deity and personality of God the Holy Spirit and the necessity of His work to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting him repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and in his ministry dwelling permanently within and working through the believer for godly life and service".<sup>28</sup>

The work of the Holy Spirit is therefore, that of assisting and helping the sinners acknowledge Christ as the atonement for their sins. He leads the Christians and directs them on how to please God.<sup>29</sup> The church believes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place the minute one declares his faith

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27. A.I.C Constitution, op.cit., p.28

28. Ibid.

29. A.I.C. Catechism op.cit., p.7

in the Lord Jesus Christ. He as God, is seen as a stamp, whereby every Christian is sealed as a child of God.<sup>30</sup>

ii) Belief in the Scriptures

The church believes that the New and Old Testament contain the inspired word of God. This word is seen as absolute and final authority of God.<sup>31</sup> The church believes in;

"The divine verbal inspiration and infallibility of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as originally given and their absolute and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct."<sup>32</sup>

The scriptures are therefore seen as infallible and with no mistake in them. It is from the Bible that the church draws solutions to all matters of faith, conduct and values. The ministers of the A.I.C. church draw the sermons from both the New and Old Testaments. Whatever is in the Old Testament is seen as pointing to Jesus Christ and hence, the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament.

iii) The Church

The A.I.C believes in the true church "whose head is the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose

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30. Rev. Maanzo, interview, Ziwani (Nairobi) November 12, 1985.

31. A.I.C. Constitution op.cit., p.28

32. Ibid.

members are all regenerate persons united to Christ and to one another by the baptism of the Holy Spirit".<sup>33</sup> After confession of faith in Jesus Christ, one is enrolled in the catechumen's class, where he is taught the doctrines of the church. After this, he is baptised and henceforth he is seen as a full member of the church. To be in full fellowship with other members of the church, one is initiated by being greeted by all the church elders. This is called kwoko kwa muamba (hand of fellowship). This initiation allows a member to be able to participate in the mesa ya mwiaii (Lord's table).

The A.I.C believes that all believers are the same before God and so there is none who can go before God for another. Each individual is encouraged to approach God directly.

On resurrection, the church believes in the literal resurrection of the body.<sup>34</sup> All people who have and will have died by the time Christ comes will be resurrected. Such beliefs are expressed in sermons and hymns that are sung. One of such song says that,

Ala akwu me anyuve makasyikwa kioko kiu, naa  
two vaa na thayu tukialyulwa mii, tukikwatwa  
vamwe name, tukithauwa ni Yesu onthe makitalwa  
nivo ngethwa nyie.<sup>35</sup>

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33. Ibid., p.29

34. A.I.C., Constitution, op.cit., p.29

35. A.I.C., Kikamba hymn book, (Kijabe: Kesho Publications) No. 59.

(Those who died when chosen will be resurrected that morning and those of us who will be alive, we will be changed bodily, we will be picked together with them, we will be met by Jesus, when they will be counted, I will also be there).

Members of the church are encouraged to be prepared for this second coming of Jesus Christ, by living holy lives and serving God with whatever they have, including material possessions.

#### B. FORMS OF WORSHIP IN THE AFRICA INLAND CHURCH

Like the Christian doctrines Christian worship is determined by the church's beliefs about Jesus Christ, and his relationship with God the Father and man. In this worship, animal sacrifice has no place. This is the great contrast between Christian and Akamba traditional worship. Christians believe that Christ, as a representative of humanity was offered as a sacrifice for all men. He is seen as the sufficient sacrifice. Christians are encouraged to offer praise and adoration to God in appreciation of what he did for them on the cross. Christian worship also differs from the Hebrew one in that the latter was centred on animal sacrifices and offerings. The Jews brought prescribed gifts of sheep and oxen before God, and the greater its value, the more it expressed man's recognition of God's supreme worth. Hence, like the Akamba sacrifice, Hebrew sacrifice provided a means of approaching God.

The Christians emphasize the fact that Christ is the sacrificial lamb of God that was slain for the sins of the world. The A.I.C upholds this same belief and one of its initial emphasis was that on believing in Jesus Christ, the Akamba should forsake their traditional worship, in which animal sacrifice was given prominence. Instead Akamba Christians were encouraged to attend Christian church worship services. There are stipulated methods of worship that every full church member of A.I.C is expected to adhere to, and we are going to discuss each of these in depth.

Akamba Christians have got two words that they use to mean 'worship'. One of these is kivoyo (the word comes from kuvoya, to pray). This word is used to refer to the Sunday worship service and also the week-day prayer hour.<sup>36</sup> The connotation one gets is that attending church service is essentially seen as occasion for prayer. In this case all the activities that take place in the church are regarded as ways of prayer. The other term for worship is uthaithi, from the root kuthaitha meaning to 'plead' or 'beseech'.<sup>37</sup> Christians believe that they go to church to beseech God with humility and respect. For this reason, hats are removed, when one is entering the church. Women are encouraged to cover their heads as a sign of

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37. Ibid.

humility before God and also before the men who are seen as above the women. Stories are told of how members of the church were excommunicated in the past due to their conduct and manner of dress in the church. Hence Christian worship is approached with a lot of awe and humility. While in the church people's emotions are controlled, such that even when the preacher makes a joke, people must laugh modestly. In the following section we are going to give a description of what takes place in the A.I.C. worship.

i) WORSHIP SERVICE

There are two days of the week when worship can take place. There is the Sunday service and then the prayer day (muthenya wa kivoyo) when Christians meet for public worship. The service is led by a pastor or a deacon in case there is no pastor. The pastors who work in Ukambani are trained at Mulango Bible School Institute and Scott Theological College in Machakos. The latter is the most senior A.I.C Bible institution and it produces fairly qualified manpower for the church in Kenya.

The pastor and the elders of the church have the responsibility of planning the service. This programme includes choosing which songs to be sung, what announcements to be made and what parts of scripture to be read. The pastor prepares his sermons

independently. The A.I.C does not have a common programme for the services. It is up to the head of each congregation to choose whatever subject matter he wishes to preach on. The Easter and Christmas celebrations are an exception to this rule. During these occasions, the Central Church Council (C.C.C), based in Nairobi, draws up the programme, giving the order to be followed. It sets out the scriptures to be read and the songs to be sung. This is the only time there is a uniform worship service for every congregation in the country. In the worship service, different activities take place.

(a) Singing

Singing forms an important part of worship, for in it every member of the congregation is involved actively and directly. The hymns express adoration, invocation, supplication and thanksgiving. A hymn can also be used as a confession of faith, a declaration of God's love in creation and redemption. The hymns are chosen from the Kikamba hymn book called mbathi sya kumwinia Ngai (songs for singing for God). Some of these songs were locally composed while others were translated from English into Kikamba.<sup>38</sup> One of the popular locally composed song has the following words:

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38. Pastor Joel Mwema, interview, Mutomo, December 2, 1985.



Ngai mwene tei na wendo ki, Nitwooka mbee waku,  
Utunenge uathimo, We kwa wendo waku, Undu ula  
wonthe tukuenda, Uathimo mwingi waku, Ithyi  
twetele na muikio Yesu oke ingi.<sup>39</sup>

(God of mercy and love, we have come before you,  
give us blessings in your own willingness,  
everything we want a lot of blessings from you  
we are waiting with faith for Jesus to come  
again).

During service, the opening songs, sang while  
standing, are meant to invoke God's blessings upon  
the congregation. They express people's beliefs and  
trust in God. They give praise to God, who is seen  
as the sustainer of the worshippers. Those songs  
translated from English words ended up having diffe-  
rent meaning. The tune may be the same, but the  
words change meaning. A good example is the common  
English hymn, 'What a friend we have in Jesus'. Its  
words in English for the first stanza are

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins  
and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer, can we have a  
friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows  
share, Jesus knows our every weakness, take it  
to God in prayer.<sup>40</sup>

When we come to the Kikamba hymn sung in the same  
tune, we find quite different words, which when  
translated into English would be as follows:

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39. Kamba Hymn Book Committee, Mbathi sya kumwinia  
Ngai, Kijabe: Kesho Publications nd. song no. 27
40. Redemption songs, (London: Pickering & Inglis  
Ltd., nd.) No. 559.

Jesus is my friend, and I am his friend, every time we walk together, I and by saviour, all days he does me very good with mercy, and I will listen to him while staying with him.

Hence, Akamba songs are not mere stereotypes of English songs, but they express Akamba belief in God and his relationship to them as Christians.

In any given worship service several songs are sung. Singing is done with no sign of movement, to accompany the songs, nor do the worshippers clap their hands. The A.I.C. has not tried to africanise its songs. Africanization would mean introduction of traditional rhythm and instruments. The worshippers are led to stick to the methods taught by the European missionaries. The latter taught that dancing and use of instruments was meant for spirit worship. Hence Christians were not to do such things in worship. Hence the singing tends to be monotonous and quite boring, a fact that has brought misunderstanding between the young and old members of the church. The young people, having been influenced by revival movements, want to sing with dynamism while the old ones are still conservative and want to maintain the status quo. Choruses are rarely sung because they are associated with revival movements, which the A.I.C looks at with condemnation.

Church choirs differ from the congregational singing, in that, they make use of traditional

musical instruments, such as drums, sticks, and bells. They also use traditional folk-song melodies for praising God. This state of affairs did not exist until 1969 when students from Scott Theological College went out to do research on the use of traditional musical instruments and melodies in churches.<sup>40</sup> The students went out to different churches and using these instruments, they realised that they were appealing to the Christians.<sup>41</sup> Due to their research, choirs in the A.I.C have been revolutionalised and today they use traditional rhythm and melodies. Their songs are more appealing and drive the message home.

ii) PRAYER

During the worship service, any member of the congregation can be called upon to pray. Prayer is a prominent feature of African Christianity. Christians pray both in the church and also at their homes. Mbiti observes that;

The proliferation of praying services which are not directly initiated by missionary or official churches is a sign that they do not get enough of praying within the official framework.<sup>43</sup>

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41. David B. Barrett, ed., The Kenya churches handbook, (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1973), p.70.

42. Ibid., p.76

43. Mbiti (1986) op.cit., p.69

Both in church and at their homes Christians present their needs before God. Christians pray for life, health, healing, prosperity and man's work, salvation and deliverance from danger, Christian maturity and for the leading of the Holy Spirit in the Christian walk. In prayer, there is direct use of Psalms and other quotations from the bible to strengthen the power of faith in prayer.<sup>44</sup> God is praised for his saving mercies and for keeping the Christians throughout the week. He is also praised for giving them a chance of worshipping him. Below is an example of such a prayer:

Ngai waitu mutheu, nitwooka mbee waku, tuikutungia muvea, nundu wa jutusuvia kyumwa kyu kyonthe. Asanta nundu wa kutuete vaa tuke kuuthaitha. Tongoesya kyathi kii Naituathima, syitwani ya Yesu nituuvoya: Amen.<sup>45</sup>

(Our holy God, We have come before you, giving you thanks for protecting us the whole week. Thank you for bringing us here to worship you. Guide this meeting and bless us in Jesus' name we pray: Amen).

The length of the prayer depends on the many needs that have to be presented to God. It also depends on the memory of whoever is saying the prayer. The congregation listens as the prayer is said and at

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44. Ibid. 78

45. This prayer was said by Kanathi Ngwae, at church, in the presence of the researcher.

the end they only join in saying: Amen. This is quite different from what happens in revival and pentecostal meetings. In these latter cases, every worshipper is encouraged to talk to God simultaneously such that an outsider may think that they are making noise, but to the worshippers God is said to be able to listen to all of them and so they all pray at the same time. The case is different with A.I.C. There is order and discipline in the service. Charismatic prayers are not permitted and in fact, any member found to be involved in charismatic movements is excommunicated.<sup>46</sup>

Whenever a need arises, Christians are taught to pray. Hence prayer is an important form of worship. In fact, Mbiti states that due to African background of praying for all circumstances of life, the African Christians bring their whole lives before God.<sup>47</sup> Hence the prayers are very sensitive to both physical and spiritual aspects of human life.

Apart from the prayers said in the church service on Sunday, Christians pray on their own. They pray for other members of the church who may be needy and more so for the church ministers so that they may

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46. Pastor Ndinda, Kyome, 'Sermons', December 25, 1985.

47. Mbiti (1986), op.cit., p.93

get wisdom to lead the church in spiritual matters. Once in the course of the week Christians meet together for prayer. This time (about two hours) is dedicated to singing and prayer. A small portion of scripture, relevant to the subject of prayer is read. The songs that are sung here are meant to encourage the praying community and assure them that God listens and answers prayer.

(c) Sermon

The sermons are seen as God's message to the worshippers. The Christians believe that through the sermons God feeds their spiritual lives. The sermons are given by the pastor of each congregation, but at other times visiting pastors are allowed to preach. Giving a sermon is seen as kuithya iithya ya Ngai (feeding the flock of God). For this reason whoever is to give the sermon has to pray and read the scriptures widely so that by the time of the service, he is prepared to deliver the sermon in a systematic form.

The sermons are drawn from both the Old and the New Testament. There is a lot of linking between the biblical world and the African heritage as well as contemporary life. If the topic for the day is 'morality', the pastor will quote cases in the Old Testament where individuals did exercise morality and

and what the consequences were. He may even compare with another case where people behaved in immoral way. Then he quotes the New Testament and tells the congregation what Jesus taught about the same issue. When it comes to contemporary setting, he stipulates the behaviour expected from the Christian community.

Every sermon has an introduction, the exposition and the conclusion. The concluding remark in the A.I.C is an altar call, for any person who may want to become a Christian, or any other person who may want to come back to Christ after a period of backsliding.

Sermons are therefore important forms of worship for through them the church teaches its doctrines and beliefs. Hence in every Sunday worship service, a sermon has to be delivered.

(d) The Lord's Table

The Lord's table (mesa ya mwiaii) is what is also called the 'Eucharist'. Mbiti says that it is an "act drama portraying comprehensively all events, both historical and suprahistorical, from incarnation to the glorification of Christ".<sup>48</sup> It is a memorial service, whereby the Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hence the sacrifice at Calvary is seen as the centre of litur-

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48. Ibid., p.104

gical worship.<sup>49</sup> This idea is expressed in the constitution, where it states that the members should believe in

the sacrificial death of our representative and substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, by the shedding of whose blood atonement was made for the sins of the whole world and whereby alone men are redeemed from guilt, penalty and power of sin.<sup>50</sup>

The Christians see the death of Christ as an important event and remembrance of this death is vital in worship. The Christians believe that by participating in the Lord's table, they are obeying Jesus' command that 'do this in remembrance of me'. Hence the A.I.C does emphasise that the ritual is purely a memorial service.

The Lord's table is observed once a month. A warning is given to the worshippers, that they must examine themselves, so that as they partake of it, they are in a state of spiritual holiness. Mbiti observes that such a warning is a great deterrent to people with such a sensitive magic-curse mentality.<sup>51</sup> As a result, many people are advised to leave during the ceremony. The church emphasises that it is only those who have repented, been baptised and have received the kwoko kwa muamba (hand of fellowship) who

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49. Mbula (1974), op.cit., p.92

50. A.I.C., Constitution, p.1

51. Mbiti. (1971), op.cit., p.104



are permitted to participate - polygamous Christians are also denied participation in the sacrament, an act that seems to contradict the gospel message that Jesus washes all sins away and does not remember them any more.

Before giving the elements the pastor reminds the worshippers what Jesus did at the last supper. That he took bread, blessed it and told the disciples, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me". He also took a cup of wine and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant which is given in my blood" (Luke 22:19,20). The pastor reminds the church that the purpose of Christ's death was for the sins of mankind. The bread is distributed among the members and eaten as a symbol of Christ's body, and wine is given as a sign of Christ's blood. When every member has received a share the pastor announces, 'Let's partake together'. Eating together and at same time, is seen as a sign of unity and fellowship.

(e) Offerings and Tithes

Another form of worship is nthembo (offerings). The word nthembo originates from the Akamba traditional sacrifice. As said in the previous chapter, the Akamba would always offer something to God whenever they would approach him in times of need.

Whatever is offered in the church is used for the advancement of the work of the church and the upkeep of the church ministers. Offering is given in form of money. It is seen as a gift to God, as a sign of gratitude for his salvation and provision of material possession. Hence some time is set apart during the worship service when the worshippers are called upon to worship God in material offerings. Each member is encouraged to give out of his own free will. Hence there is no announcement as to who has given and how much one has given.

Apart from weekly offerings given on Sunday, there is the ngetha (harvest) also called kilungu kya ikumi (the tenth piece). At the end of the month, Christians are supposed to give a tenth of whatever they have acquired over the month. Akamba Christians are very good at giving the ngetha because in their traditional religion they presented part of whatever they had acquired either to God or to the spirits of ancestors. They give food crops such as millet, sorghum, maize, potatoes and also their domestic animals such as goats, chicken and sheep. The church auctions these items and the money is put into the church treasury.

The pastor admonishes Christians by quoting from Malachi, that whoever does not bring the tithe will be stealing from God, for he deserves a tenth of whatever one has acquired through farming or

salary.<sup>52</sup> Songs that are relevant to encouraging Christians to give the tithe are sung. One of the popular songs in the A.I.C church goes as follows:

Kaisali kyake na Yeova kyake, tumisyei Yeova kila kimwaile  
Mbemba, mboso, mbui na ngombe ete kwa Yesu  
Maiu nduma, kitunguu na malenge, Kila kindu  
kyonthe, no Kilungu kya ikumi one ndulu, Mbuthi  
sya ituni nikavinguka, Mwathimwe mwaiwe ni va kwikia.<sup>53</sup>

(Ceaser his and the Lord his, we give to the Lord what is fit for Him  
Maize, beans, goats and cattle bring to Jesus  
Bananas, arrow roots, onions and pumpkins  
Everything is a tenth piece even pepper, holes from heaven will open, you will be blessed and miss where to put).

Apart from traditional worship, Christians are encouraged to live lives that depict worship of Christ. This is supported by words of Paul to the Romans that "I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, to present you bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship", (Romans 12:1,2). Their lives are expected to portray worship of Christ. Unfortunately some Akamba church-going Christians adhere to Christian worship so long as things are well. At times of crisis, they turn to traditional practices. While they may pray over the situation, they consult traditional medicine-men for guidance. Hence they seem to be children of

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52. Malachi 3:8-10

53. Participant observation, December 25, 1985.

two worlds, the Christian world and that of traditional religion.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTERACTION OF AKAMBA AND  
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND THE CONCLUSION

Since the introduction of Christianity into Ukambani, Christian and Akamba religious traditions have been interacting. Initially, Akamba people were unresponsive to Christian doctrines. This was because their traditional religion was deeply rooted in their lives; and apparently it was meeting their religious needs quite adequately then. They could not see the sense of joining a new religion. Hence the first converts were outcasts, undesirable fellows in society; wives who had quarreled with their husbands and other people who had faced misfortunes. An example of the latter group is well demonstrated by Ema and Mulyingi Kiiti<sup>1</sup> of Kyome in Migwani Location. This couple had been giving birth to children who all died at an early age. Ema was quoted as saying:

"this incident struck us very much and we felt as if we were no people and as a result, we began to find a way by which we could change from being Akamba to something else".<sup>2</sup>

When Christianity was preached to them, they accepted it with a lot of enthusiasm and went around proclaim-

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1. Kevin Ward, Development of protestant Christianity in Kenya, 1910-40, The Cambridge University 1976, p.109.
2. Ibid.

ing the gospel in their areas. These two became pillars of Christian community that grew up around Kyome.<sup>3</sup>

As time went on the Akamba came to realise the value of mission activities. This was especially true in relation to learning which was given at the mission. Attending school came to be associated with new chances of employment. To be admitted to the school, one had to declare himself a Christian. Through this method the church became quite popular and more and more people joined the church, either out of sincerity or just to get the benefits associated with the new learning.

With Christianity introduced into Ukamani, the community was henceforth divided into about three groups; the believers (Etikili), the non-believers (Alei) and the nominals (Elikya). The believers were those who got converted into Christianity. The non-believers were those who refused to accept the new teachings and continued to worship as before. The nominals were those who professed Christianity but were not committed to church activities. For instance, they were not keen enough to attend catechetical classes so as to get baptised.

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3. Today, 90% of the villagers around Kyome belong to the A.I.C. There is a mission station and an A.I.C secondary school run by missionaries from America. Kyome is also the headquarters of one of the District church councils in Kitui.

When analysing the interaction of Christianity and Akamba traditional worship, we examine how the three categories of people reacted and continue to react to both Christian and Akamba beliefs and worship. We will also find out that in both traditions there are similarities and contrasts.

A. BELIEFS

i) God

Similar ideas about God can be noticed in both Akamba and Christian religion. He is seen as a supreme being who is the creator of the universe. The Christian religion inherited the Jewish beliefs about creation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".<sup>4</sup> He also created man, but as a special creature, created in the image of God.<sup>5</sup> God is therefore depicted as all powerful and all-knowing. He continues to sustain the universe and man. He provides rain and healing to man. The same idea is expressed in Akamba religion. God is depicted as creator and sustainer of the universe. Stories of how man was created may differ from the Christian ones, but one thing is common in both cases, that man is answerable to God. Man is seen

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4. Genesis 1:1

5. Genesis 1:26

to be at the mercy of God; for if God wants to take him away, he does this with great ease. This fact emphasizes the fact that God is in control. In both Akamba and Christian beliefs God is depicted as majestic and above all.

In both cases God is approached whenever need arises. In the Christian context, God is seen as father and for that case all needs of man are directed to Him with hope that he would act upon them accordingly. In the Akamba tradition, man freely approached God and poured out his needs to him. The Akamba Christians have continued to use the traditional name for God, Ngai. This can be an indication that there is some radical continuity of Akamba beliefs in God into Christianity. They associate the Christian God with powers they attributed to God in their traditional religion. In the traditional setting whenever there was no rain, they went to an Ithembo to offer sacrifice and ask God for rain. In the A.I.C church and many other Christian churches today, Christians meet and pray to God for rains. Hence the concept of God among Akamba people seems to persist into and through Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time we find areas of contrasts in the two religions. The idea of the Trinity is lack-

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6. See Kibicho, S., The Kikuyu conception of God, (1972), op.cit. P.59.



ing in the Akamba religion. Christianity teaches that God is in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> They are seen to be one and equal in power. The Akamba conceived God as only one to whom they attributed the work of creation. The christocentricism in Christianity is also new to Akamba people. Christianity was founded upon the teachings and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason Christ's death is very central in Christianity; for through it man is believed to have been reconciled to God. Hence Christians are those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and that they have been cleansed through his blood. Christ is seen as the sole solution to man's needs. He is seen as object of adoration and prayer. It is only through him that salvation of man from his sins and troubles can be achieved. Christ is seen as the intermediary between the believer and God. This is why whenever a prayer is said, it is concluded with the phrase, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen'.

Most songs of praise are addressed to Jesus Christ as one who died for humanity. God the Father is also praised for sending Jesus to save man. In Akamba traditional religion, it was inconveivable

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7. A.I.C. Constitution, op.cit., p.28.

to think of God in plural form. They only believed in one god whose greatest action was that of creation and sustenance of the universe and man. To the Akamba Christians the trinity was completely a new teaching, which they grasped with a lot of problems.

ii) Spirits

As we have said in chapter two the Akamba had a firm belief in spirits, both general and those of the ancestors. The belief in spirits was based on a general belief that after death one continued to live but in a different state, that of aiimu (spirit). The spirits of ancestors were seen to be in a position to intercede for man before God. Hence they had to be beseeched and remembered every time there was a meal. Also they were still considered as members of their families.

By way of comparison, the A.I.C does believe in life after death. When one dies when he is a Christian, he is said to go to heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. His spirit would rejoin the body at the day of resurrection. But he is not in a position to help the living. Those who die when they are not Christians are said to go to hell, a place of torment. On the day of resurrection, their spirits would also join the body to await judgement from Jesus Christ. After this judgement, they

are to be in hell for ever. Christians are therefore encouraged to lead good lives so that when they die their spirits may go to heaven instead of hell.

A.I.C. Christians are called upon to leave behind all practices associated with their former beliefs and turn wholly to Christian practices. In fact the belief in spirits of ancestors is seen as belief in demons. Those who turn to Christianity have to denounce any practice of what is seen by missionaries as 'ancestor-worship'. The outcome of this situation has been that many Akamba Christians tend to continue communion with ancestors in secret. When problems arise they call a traditional medicine-man and at night, they practice their traditional invocation to spirits of ancestors to intervene. This is why the traditionalists say that etikili maitawa utuku (Christians are treated at night by traditional medicineman). These Christians turn to traditional religion at night because they fear the Christian pastor and other fellow Christians. They do not want anybody to learn that they are still adhering to traditional practices. They are also afraid of being excommunicated by the church. Some informants pointed out that Christians attend ceremonies for spirits at night.<sup>8</sup> Some of them even contributed the animals to be sacrificed. Cases are

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8. Kivinda Simbu, interview, op.cit.

reported where some church elders are sent on spying mission on those suspected to be double-minded. When the case is established, the people concerned are excommunicated (kumwa muambani). This means that one can attend the church services but cannot participate in partaking the holy communion, neither can he be given position of leadership in church activities. One result is that enmity is created between the one who reports and the one reported about.

## B. WORSHIP

### i) Sacrifice

As far as sacrifice is concerned, we see diverse ideas from the Akamba and Christian religions. For the Akamba, the central form of worship was through sacrifice. A true pure Mukamba was determined by whether he knew how to offer a sacrifice. Ndeti has summarised the Akamba belief in the power of sacrifice by quoting a common saying found among the people, namely,

Nyie ni Mukamba kivindyo ula wisi ng'ondu yi mwana akamanya undu wimbanga na akamanya uthemba mbua yie. Kuikiithya kana ni Mukamba vyu-uikiie kana mundu muka utasyaa e mutonye ngondu nokusyaa ....na wisi kuthaitha Ngai kute mbua kukaua.

(I am a true Mukamba who knows that the 'Ng'ondu' rite has the efficacy to birth of a child (where there was none) and knows a thing that can cause danger; and knows how to sacrifice for rains to fall. To prove that I am a true Mukamba who believes that a barren woman can give birth if

the 'Ng'ondu' rites are performed on her... and who knows how to worship when there are no rains and it rains).<sup>9</sup>

As said earlier in chapter two, sacrifice was offered both at times of distress such as times of drought, sickness as well as times of happiness when man went to God in worship for thanksgiving. Christianity came with new teachings about sacrifice. As far as the church was concerned Christ was the sole sacrifice for sins of men. Akamba Christians were supposed to stop attending mathembo worship and turn to church worship. The believers saw the traditionalists as a hindrance to God's blessings. A campaign was set up to destroy all the mathembo by the Christians. This did not succeed in solving the problem. Instead the traditionalists accused the Christians of being the sole cause of calamities due to their refusal to offer sacrifice at the traditional shrines, and also the fact that they went to work on the day after a sacrifice was performed, a day when everybody was expected not to work. According to Kinyanye Mbuvi, the traditionalists would put one stick on each side of the road and a piece of skin was put across the path. The aim was that when Christians passed through that point they were said to have worshipped whether they liked it or

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9. Ndeti, k., Elements of Akamba life, op.cit., p.435.

not.<sup>10</sup> When they erected mathembo on the roads the Christians went out to destroy them. Sometimes the differences could only be solved by the colonial government, who advised the traditionalists to erect mathembo at their homes. Today there are very few mathembo in Ukambani. Even those who continue to practice traditional rites erect the shrines and dismantle them after use. According to some informants, many witches have realised that the easiest way to eliminate a person is to use his Ithembo.<sup>11</sup> Individual sacrifice has persisted, but at a limited and sometimes hidden level, because many people have joined Christianity. It is only a limited number of what may be called nominal Christians who still sacrifice and when they do so, it is done in secret. Public sacrifice is practised by those who have remained adamant traditionalists. These people are very proud of having remained faithful to their traditional religion and whenever they stage a sacrificial ceremony, they do so with a lot of confidence. They continue to meet for kilumi religious dance, after which they offer either a bull, a goat or a sheep, as advised by the seer.

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10. Kinyenye Mbuvi, interviewed by Mutemi Singi, 1977 at Migwani.
11. Nzikali Musili, interview, Mutethya Munguti, op.cit.

Christian worship has been accepted by Akamba Christians. Every Sunday they are ready to go to church and worship (kuthaitha) Ngai. The emphasis in the church is worship of Christ as the lamb of God given for the sins of man. Christians are encouraged to remain faithful to Christ. The songs that are sung in worship discredit the traditional sacrifice but credit the sacrifice at Calvary. One of such songs which is sung when Christians go out to evangelise has the following words:

Aimu ma muthinisye maumwitya mbui. Ngombe na  
nzau i nziu. Ndwikalate nduu yakwa ndukese utiwa  
Nikyalo kya ituni. Kivuli kivungitwe ni mwiaii  
Yesu.<sup>12</sup>

(Spirits have troubled you asking for goats. A cow and a black bull are most valuable. Hurry up my friend so that you are not left by the journey to heaven. The lock is locked by Lord Jesus).

Hence Christians look at traditionalists as people still in bondage who need redemption by Christ's blood.

The Lord's table is a unique feature in Christian worship. It is a revered ceremony, where Christians partake of bread and wine as a remembrance of Christ's death. It is only etikili ma mesa (Christians of the table) who partake. These are

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12. This song was sang to the researcher by Lula Kitema, Migwani, December 12, 1985.

Christians who have been baptised and confirmed. Excommunication may mean that one who could partake the emblems has been stopped until a future time when he would be re-instated.

The Christian worship does also include giving of offerings. To Akamba Christians, this is not something new because in their traditional worship they also gave offerings of foodstuffs and their animals. Christian worshippers, therefore carry with them at least some money, foodstuff or even animals to church. This offering is not meant for expiation of any sin or eradication of disease, as it was in the traditional worship, but it is meant to express gratitude to God, for the salvation got through Jesus' death and also for provision of material wealth to the believers. By giving such offerings, Christians believe that they are doing God's work; for whatever they give is used in the evangelization of non-believing communities and also for the sustenance of the church ministers.

In both Christian and Akamba worship the role of religious officiants is emphasized. In the Akamba worship, the elders of the Ithembo belonged to a prestigious class and were seen as men of wisdom, to whom any person who was needy could run for some assistance. Similar prestige and popularity is accorded the ministers of the church. A minister in charge of a congregation is called Pastor, a name



that denotes a shepherd of a flock. Church members may go to him when they need to be assisted in prayer or in material needs. When one is seen talking with a Pastor, he is looked at as a special person, who befriends God's ministers. Akamba Christians have a notion that if one mistreated muthukumi wa Ngai (God's worker), he would be cursed and experience calamities. Hence Pastors' homes are revered and even those who smoke put off their cigarette before they visit such a home. Therefore in the two religious traditions, religious leaders are revered.

The same reverence was accorded the places of worship. In the Akamba worship, the Ithembo was seen as a sacred place, where only the officiants could enter, and only at times of worship. The A.I.C Christians respect the church building greatly. Although every one is allowed to enter the building both young and old, one must enter with a lot of respect. People change their faces when they get into the church building. Even when the minister cracks a joke, worshippers laugh in a controlled manner. This is done as an expression of respect for God. The A.I.C teaches that there must be order in the worship service; otherwise disorderly behaviour is associated with the devil. The service is taken with a lot of seriousness. This was also evident in the Akamba traditional worship.

ii) Prayer

Prayer as a form of worship is central in both Christian and Akamba traditions. In both cases worshippers offer prayers of different forms to God. Some are supplication prayers where one beseeches God to be helped in some ways. Others are intercessory, whereby a worshipper presents other people's needs before God. There are also prayers of thanksgiving for some good done by God. In the Akamba religion prayers were offered as situations dictated. When faced by a dangerous situation, a Mukamba could utter a short prayer, such as 'O God help me'. Similar prayers are found in Christianity. Man turns to God spontaneously. At times of joy a Mukamba gave a prayer of adoration, whereby he acknowledged God's intervention in his life.

When Christianity came to Ukambani, prayer tradition was encouraged. The new converts were encouraged to pray for every situation in life. Akamba Christians have continued to value prayer. They pray in church services on Sundays, individually at their homes and also on week-days when they meet again at the church and offer prayers to God. They offer prayers of adoration, penitence, petition and thanksgiving.

The great difference between Christian and Akamba prayer is the Christocentricism found in

Christian prayer. Here prayers are directed to God the Father through Jesus Christ. This is based on the belief that through Christ, man can freely approach God directly. There is no need of other intermediaries as Christ is seen as sufficient. In traditional prayer, man prayed to God through ancestral spirits. Hence the Akamba Christians had to adjust from going to God through their ancestors, to going through Jesus Christ. Christ is said to be interceding for the believers before God; and for this reason the name of Jesus is common in any Christian prayer.

iii) Religious music and dance

As far as religious music is concerned Akamba worship seems to have had different forms of musical instruments. These were locally made and could be used to illuminate the singing such that those present would get ecstatic. During a kilumi dance different instruments could be used. The songs were composed by few individuals who were seen as specialists. The music was always accompanied by some movements. Religious dance was therefore an important part of the worship.

In Christian worship, a Mukamba has to do a lot of adjustment, because singing is done while standing still. The dance found in traditional worship disappears. There is less emotion expressed.

The Akamba Christians are deprived a lot of involvement that could be experienced if there was flexibility and less rigidity. But as far as the A.I.C is concerned church singing has to be done in 'emotion-proof' circumstances. No dancing is allowed. Rarely, do they use any musical instrument; due to the fact that modern musical instruments, are too expensive for any local church to afford. Traditional instruments were associated with traditional worship. The missionaries who introduced Christian worship also taught against Akamba culture and for this reason traditional musical instruments were condemned and depicted as representing the old religion. It is only the church choirs who once in a while use limited forms of these instruments, and in any case this practice started in the early seventies. A.I.C. Christians have tried to adapt to western modes of worship, due to rigorous indoctrination done by the early missionaries and the catechists.

While Akamba religious songs praised the ancestors and God, Christian songs praise Jesus Christ and God. Other songs express gratitude to God for sending his son Jesus Christ to die for man. There are others which praise the Holy Spirit and call upon him to inspire and teach the Christians. One finds songs that call upon Christians to get encouraged and do God's work, while waiting for Christ's second coming.

Church music therefore, serves as an aid to worship, for it makes Christians think about God. Through singing Christians are enabled to forget their problems and concentrate on thinking about God. It is also a means to worship<sup>13</sup> for through it Christians adore and praise their master. Christians believe that through singing they are also witnessing to non-Christians, and therefore, doing God's work, for which they expect to be rewarded in heaven.

iv) Sermons

This is a unique feature in Christianity which was not found in traditional society. Through sermons the church believes that God is speaking to his people, revealing to them his wishes and desires. Sermons are actually interpretations and applications of the Christian scriptures. The church ministers teach the congregation about God and how he has dealt with man throughout history.

Although sermons are lacking in traditional society, religious truths were taught. The teaching was done by the elders. Every parent was seen as a religious and cultural teacher who could teach the young traditions of forefathers. Such teachings took place in the evenings when the mothers and daughters were busy in the kitchen and fathers and sons were warming themselves outside at a place called thome. At thome, boys could be taught about the beliefs of

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13. Abba, op.cit., p.121.

Akamba people and also religious practices. The girls would be educated by their mothers about the same issues.

After the coming of Christianity, religious teachings are given in the church. The children are taught in Sunday school services, while the adults attend the Sunday worship services, where Christian doctrines are taught through the sermons.

Therefore we realize that Christian worship has some points of similarity with Akamba traditional worship, and also points of contrast. Where dialogue is possible, Akamba Christians have had no problems in adjusting. But where there is contrast, they have found it hard to leave completely their traditional practices. An Akamba Christian may not attend a kilumi religious dance or a public sacrificial worship, but he will approach a traditional medicine-man, who will pour some libations on his behalf. This mainly happens at times of sickness and distress. One may go to church to pray, but between Sunday and Saturday, he approaches his ancestors for help. Mbiti calls this situation 'religious concubinage' and he says that being in that position "gives a feeling of social security, and provides an escape from the full demands of the religions involved".<sup>14</sup>

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14. Mbiti, op.cit. (1969), p.264.

The majority of the nominal Christians belong to this category; for although they go to church, they are not committed to church teachings and turn freely to traditional practices. They seem to be satisfied with their state and support themselves by saying that 'Ngai no umwe' (God is still one).<sup>15</sup> Most of them are not baptised and other Christians look at them as secondrate Christians. Due to fact that they lack fellowship in church they tend to miss most church services and may go there very occasionally. Even when they go to church, they are never given responsibilities, although their offerings and tithes are accepted.

### C. CONCLUSION

In concluding this thesis, we need to highlight the major findings of our research.

In the first chapter, we stated our problem as that of investigating on Akamba and Christian forms of worship. This involved studying religious beliefs in both traditions; because such beliefs influence the way in which worship is carried out. It also involved looking for areas of contrast and similarity in both religious traditions. The rationale for the study was given as that of understanding modern trends in the development of Christianity in Africa in general; and in Ukambani in particular.

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15. Lydia Syingi, op.cit., Mbeti Musee, interview, op.cit.

In the second chapter we gave a brief background of Akamba people; stating their geographical location and climatic conditions of their zone. We proceeded to discuss their basic religious beliefs such as belief in God, belief in general spirits and spirits of ancestors. God was seen as the creator of the universe and man and he was approached both directly and indirectly. Directly, he was approached through prayers; while indirectly, the Akamba utilised spirits of ancestors as intermediaries.

Different forms of worship among the Akamba were studied. Sacrifice of both animals and non-animal offerings was found to be the central form of worship. There were both individual and public sacrifices. Individual sacrifice refers to personal initiatives to offer something. Public sacrifice involved the whole community, where it could gather and perform a sacrifice to God to get his assistance or even to show gratitude for doing some good to them. Officiants in public sacrifice included Atumia ma Ithembo, Iveti sya Ithembo and Anake ma Ithembo. These offered the sacrifice on behalf of the whole community.

Prayer was also noted as a form of worship. The Akamba people prayed at different times. At times of need as well as times of plenty to express gratitude to God. The Akamba also gave libation to the ancestors. There was also religious dance and



music performed just before and after a sacrifice was given.

In the third chapter, we looked at the Christian worship. We started by tracing how Christianity came to Ukambani. We noted that it was the Africa Inland Mission (A.I.M) which was the first to succeed in penetrating into Ukambani. We then proceeded to look at the central beliefs of the Africa Inland Church (A.I.C), such as belief in God, scriptures, and the church. It was noted that worship in the A.I.C is centred on Christ, as the lamb of God, given for salvation of mankind. He is seen as the sacrificial lamb of God. He is therefore seen as the sole and final sacrifice made by God the Father for man's sins. Christians are to dedicate themselves to God as a way of appreciating his salvation. Ritualistic Christian worship is carried out mainly in the Sunday service. In the service, worship rituals include singing, prayer, reading of scriptures, listening to sermons, partaking of Lord's table and giving tithe and offerings.

The fourth chapter dealt with the interaction of both religious traditions and the conclusion. It was found out that Akamba people have reacted differently to the Christian message. There are those who have believed the gospel message referred to as believers. There are the non-believers; that

is, those who have refused to believe the Christian message. These adhere to traditional Akamba practices. In between these two groups are those who continue to borrow from both religious traditions.

Areas of similarities have been noted in both religions. The belief in God as the creator and sustainer of man is common. Therefore both religions are monotheistic. In both traditions God is approached when need be. The Christian monotheism gets complicated when it comes to the issue of the Trinity. In Christianity worship is centred on Christ. In both traditions, religious officiants are given a lot of prestige and reverence. The same reverence is accorded the places of worship; namely mathembo for the Akamba and churches for the Christians. In both traditions, prayer is found as a means of expressing one's needs, feelings and gratitude to God.

Sermons are a unique feature in Christianity. Through them the church teaches its doctrines and beliefs. In the Akamba traditional society, religious truths were taught by elders to the young.

Therefore, where there are similarities Akamba Christians find no problems in adjusting; but where there are contrasts, they have found it hard to leave behind their traditional practices. As a result, backsliding and nominalism is common.

The Christian church, therefore has a task, that of making its teachings more applicable to

Akamba life. It needs to re-examine its doctrines and Akamba beliefs and practices so as to try and reach the non-believers. To combat backsliding among the Christians, the church needs to make its worship and teachings more applicable to Akamba people in particular, and other African communities in general. It is time the church stopped branding Akamba traditional religion as 'worship of gods and demons'. Instead, the church should relate the fact that God was known among the Akamba and that he was not remote from people.

The church needs to re-orientate its worship such that some of the Akamba practices are incorporated. For instance, africanization is necessary in church music. This would mean modernization of church music, inclusion of traditional rhythm and folk-song melodies into church singing. Christians need to be encouraged to compose songs of praise to be used in church singing. There is need to include traditional instruments, such as drums, bells and sticks. This, it is believed, will make the Mukamba Christian more interested in the church services. It will also attract the non-believers. It will mean that people with talents of composition of songs have a chance to develop such talents. Many people especially the young, will find the church more attractive.

On the issue of the Lord's table, the church needs to re-examine its present practice; where single

parents and polygamous Christians are denied the chance to participate. Denying them such a chance of remembering Christ's death, is itself a contradiction of the gospel's message that Christ came for the lost. The Lord's table should be seen as a fellowship for all Christians regardless of their backgrounds. This would safeguard backsliding and nominalism among the people. It would also ensure that there is harmony and love in the Christian church. It is hoped that if these recommendations are put into consideration, the Christian church will be more rooted in Akamba life.

APPENDICES

A. Glossary of Kikamba Words

<u>Aimu:</u>	Spirits.
<u>iimu:</u>	Singular form of <u>aimu</u> .
<u>Atumia ma Ithembo:</u>	Elders who officiate at the religious shrine.
<u>Anake ma Ithembo:</u>	Young men who assist in sacrificial worship.
<u>ia:</u>	Milk.
<u>Ithembo ya musyi:</u>	A shrine belonging to a single homestead.
<u>Iveti sya Ithembo:</u>	Women who officiate with men at the shrine.
<u>Kilumi:</u>	A religious dance, mainly for women, which involves movement of shoulders and legs, plus drumming and singing.
<u>Mathembo:</u>	Shrines set apart for the purpose of sacrifice.
<u>Muthukimi wa Ngai:</u>	God's servant; God's worker.
<u>Mwathani:</u>	Seer, foreteller.
<u>Nzakame:</u>	Blood.
<u>Nzama ya atumia:</u>	Council of elders, who formed the judiciary in the traditional society.

<u>Uki wa Nzuki:</u>	Honey
<u>Uuu:</u>	Porridge
<u>Utavanyo:</u>	Sermon.

B. Questionnaire

I am a student at the University of Nairobi, and I am seeking information on Akamba and christian worship. This research has permission from the Office of the President. I would be grateful if you can answer the following questions.

SECTION A

1. (a) Name ..... Age: .....  
Sub-location .....  
Location .....
- (b) Sex .....
- (c) Marital Status: (i) Single .....  
(ii) Married:  
One wife .....  
More than one .....
- (d) Occupation .....
- (e) What is your religion?  
(i) Traditionalist .....  
(ii) Christian .....  
Denomination .....

SECTION B

On Akamba Beliefs

2. According to Akamba beliefs, what is the origin of the universe? .....  
.....

3. What are some of the names Akamba give God?  
.....  
.....
4. To whom was Akamba worship directed? ,  
.....
5. Where did God originate?  
.....
6. Who controls the universe?  
.....
7. How many types of spirits exist among the  
Akamba?  
.....  
.....
8. What is the importance of spirits of ancestors  
in Akamba life?  
.....  
.....
9. What is the difference between worship of God  
the creator and the veneration of spirits of  
ancestors?  
.....  
.....  
.....
10. What was the general attitude of people towards  
(a) General spirits?  
.....  
.....



(b) Foreign spirits?

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SECTION C

On Akamba Worship

11. What are some of main forms of worship among the Akamba?

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12. What is the meaning of sacrifice among the Akamba?

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13. What are the main types of sacrifice offered among the Akamba?

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14. What was the importance of individual sacrifice?

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15. Describe the process of performing a public sacrifice.

.....  
.....

16. What was the attitude of Akamba people towards an Ithembo?  
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.....  
.....
17. Do you think it is important to offer sacrifice? Why?  
.....  
.....  
.....
18. Who officiated in a sacrificial ceremony?  
.....  
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19. What is the importance of prayer in worship?  
.....  
.....  
.....
20. What was the place of religious dance and music in Akamba worship?  
.....  
.....  
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SECTION D

On christian beliefs and worship practices

21. What does the African Inland Church teach about God? .....
- .....

22. What is the church belief about the scriptures?  
.....  
.....
23. Who are the true members of the church?  
.....  
.....
24. How is the worship service conducted?  
.....  
.....
25. What are the activities involved in the service?  
.....  
.....
26. What is the importance of prayer in worship?  
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.....
27. How far has the church tried to indigenize  
christian worship? .....
28. What was the reaction of Akamba people towards  
introduction of christianity in Ukambani?  
.....  
.....
- How has this changed in the course of time?  
.....  
.....

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