

**PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DEATH AMONG THE AKAMBA IN
KIBWEZI DIVISION, MAKUENI DISTRICT, KENYA.**

By

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Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
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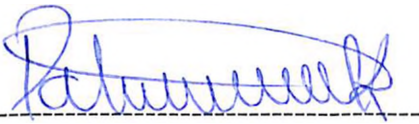
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an academic award in any other university.



Patrick Isika Muia

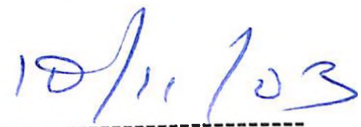


Date

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



Dr. S.M Nangendo



Date

DEDICATION

To my wife, Jacinta and daughter Maureen. Also to my father Benard Muia and mother Victoria Mukulu, and all my family members and relatives whose encouragement and inspiration has propelled me to where I am now.

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This thesis could not have been completed without contributions from other people. However, only a few will be mentioned. First, I express my sincere gratitude to the Germany Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for granting me a scholarship to pursue my M.A. Degree. I also thank the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank for funding my fieldwork through the Kenya Quality of Life (KENQOL) project. Second, my special thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Stevie Moses Nangendo, for his patience, guidance and constructive criticisms, which shaped this work. I also thank Dr. Charles Nzioka, of Sociology Department, University of Nairobi, and Dr. Julia Fox-Rushby, Public Health and Policy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, for their parental advice and for devoting their time on reading and commenting on the first draft of this work. I also thank them for organizing the seminar in Amsterdam, Netherlands, where the preliminary findings of this study were presented. I appreciate the comments I got from Prof. Benjamin Nganda and Mercy Mugo of Economics Department, University of Nairobi. I cannot forget to thank Johnstone Kathae Kamau and my classmates Elizabeth Ngalu, Jane Gatune, Jared Siso and Vincent Okungu for their encouragement throughout the taxing work of writing this thesis. I also thank my field assistants, Justus Mutunga Keli, Jones Kavatha and Alex Muvea, for their hard work throughout the data collection period.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceptions of death among the Akamba. Specifically, the study sought to identify the explanations of death, the mortuary rituals, the society's response to death and the circumstances under which death is discussed.

This study was conducted in Kibwezi Division, Makueni District, Kenya and this was also the area of focus for the Kenya Quality of Life project which funded the fieldwork. The study was carried out for a period of three months from November 2000 to January 2001. A total of 40 key informants were selected through purposive sampling technique. These were composed of different categories of people and they included 12 gravediggers, 3 oath specialists, 3 traditional men, 3 traditional women, 4 women healers, 3 cleansing specialists, 4 death attendants as well as 4 old men and 4 old women. In-depth interviews were carried out with these key informants so as to collect in-depth data. Also two case studies and four life histories were similarly selected through purposive sampling techniques.

The study mainly used qualitative methods of data collection, namely, participant and direct observations, Interviews, case studies and life histories. Because of the nature of the data, qualitative techniques were used in data analysis while the study used symbolism as its theoretical framework.

The research findings revealed that death must have an explanation, even if it has a medical diagnosis. The findings also indicated that mortuary rituals and rites of purification are very vital when death has occurred. It was further observed that the society responds to death in a positive manner and that death is not and cannot be an openly discussed subject prior to it occurring.

The study recommended that any intervention aimed at the eradication of diseases causing death among the Akamba should take into consideration the

perceived cultural causes of such deaths. This is because, among the Akamba death does not just occur but it is caused by an agent whose explanation is given. The study recommended further research on the mechanisms by which the causal agents of death, such as witchcraft, work as this was beyond the scope of this study. Finally, the study recommended for more social science research on death as many researchers have opted to shy away from the topic. Therefore, this, study which will form ethnography of the Akamba on death, should be a precursor to similar ethnographies on other societies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.0 Introduction

All human cultures attach a central place to interpreting the process of human existence. Among these, the processes of reproduction and the representations of death as well as their associated practices are always of the greatest importance. Munday (1981:5) notes that among the Abaluyia it is the responsibility of each person in the society to ensure its survival by producing children who are the means by which the continuation of life is assured. Elsewhere among the Edo of Northern Nigeria, to die childless or without a son is the most dreaded fate. In this society sons play an important role in the mortuary rituals especially of their fathers, therefore, children provide a sure way for one to be accorded these rituals at death (Bradsbury 1965:97). According to Mbiti (1975), reproduction ensures that human life is preserved, propagated and perpetuated since children continue the society by replacing those who die. Once an individual gets married the society places a responsibility on the couple to give forth children and a failure to do that puts the couple into focus. Mbiti (1975) observes that women who are barren are accorded low status than those who have children in many societies.

Death seems to be an intruder into the intended patterns of things since it implies the cutting of the vitality in any one's existence (Awolalu 1978). Specifically, death is the supreme and final crisis of life, therefore, it is of great concern to all human beings because it is unbelievable that someone with whom others shared many things is snatched away by death. In fact, it becomes even more difficult to imagine one's own death as being inevitable. Traditional beliefs among Babukusu of Western Kenya indicate that death is inevitable and timeless and that it afflicts and affects all people at one time or another (Nangendo 1996 b: 24).

In many societies, however, researchers have downplayed or ignored altogether issues surrounding death (Were 1991). The rhythms of a new generation start with birth and end with death. The origin of death is a mystery in many societies (Were 1991), although it is one of the most universal and mysterious experiences that all human beings have to undergo (Kariuki 1989). It is not surprisingly, therefore, that there are so many myths about its origin and so many ideas seeking to explain it (Mbiti 1975: 116). However, speculations about the origin of death by human beings are normally found in myths. In many cultures, death is thought to be caused by the unforeseeable and unavoidable intrusion into society of an external and superhuman power. This power is beyond ordinary human comprehension nonetheless the living must somehow control or postpone it through medicines lest they are overwhelmed by it (Kariuki 1989:55). Death itself is full of emotions and it sets in motion a series of rituals and activities that determine the relationship between the deceased and the bereaved (Whyte 1997).

Among all phenomena death remains the most disrupting and similarly inevitable in human societies. It is disrupting in the sense that normal tasks in a society are suspended and inevitable since everyone has to face it. Death stands between the world of human beings and the world of spirits, between that which is visible and the invisible (Mbiti 1969:149). Intrinsically, death is bad because it shatters all human defenses and securities against its occurrence (Nzioka 2000:1) and ruins the last identity of a physical person (Nangendo 1996 b: 24).

According to Mbiti (1969), death is something that concerns everybody, partly because sooner or later every one personally faces it and partly because it brings sorrow to every family and society. In non-western societies, the cause of death is only a speculation since most people in these cultures believe that death cannot be natural even in situations where it is caused by accidents (Were 1991). Death is the supreme loss since people cannot share with an individual in the act of dying because death is basically individualized (Elias 1993, cited in

Nzioka 2000:1). Since death remains a mystery when it strikes it fills the survivors with awe and especially fear. The way people perceive death determines the way they will carry out pre-mortuary and post-mortuary activities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Death instils fear in the minds of human beings in regard to their relations with the corpse, afterlife, ancestors and the Supreme Being. This fear of death and afterlife ensures that mortuary rituals are properly carried out. Similarly, death leads to the loss of an individual from the family and the larger society in general. Death also marks a physical separation of the individual from other human beings. This loss through death leads to physical, economic, emotional and psychological trauma to the bereaved members of the family. Socially, the way the family and the larger society respond to death is important in understanding the cohesiveness amongst the members of the family or society. Similarly, the way people perceive death illustrates their views of the future for the living and the departed. Where the dead person was the breadwinner of the family, his or her death occasions economic constraints which may lead to children dropping out of school and to an increase in poverty. Furthermore, death disrupts the normalcy of life and symbolic activities are performed which portray deeper meanings surrounding death.

This study tried to understand how the Akamba perceive and respond to death. Since death is sorrowful there are, therefore, many complex and even long rituals and ceremonies associated with it. In every society people are very sensitive about what is done when there is a death in a family. Specifically, as death makes a radical change in relations the funeral rites and ceremonies are meant to draw attention to that permanent separation. An analysis of these death rituals and ceremonies is, thus, important in understanding how the Akamba, for instance, perceive death. Discussions about death in many societies, for example, the Nuer are limited to whispers among the old people especially when

death strikes a family or a village (Evans-Pritchard 1956). Elsewhere Mbiti (1969) notes that old people among most societies in Africa seem not to fear death because of their advanced age. For instance, among the Abaluyia and the Akamba old people are the ones who are summoned when someone is at the point of death (Mbiti 1969; Hopley 1938). The study of perceptions of death among the Akamba is thus important because some aspects of culture are revealed only when there is a death in society. This study sought, therefore, to answer the following questions.

1. What are the explanations of death and how are they interpreted?
2. How does the society respond to loss through death?
3. Which are the different ways of treating and disposing the dead, the mortuary rituals are performed and the circumstances under which death is discussed?

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 General Objective

The overall objective of this study was to explore the ways through which the Akamba of Kibwezi Division, Makueni District, perceive and respond to loss through death.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to find out the:

1. Different explanations of death and their interpretations.
2. Societal responses to loss through death.
3. Different ways of treating and disposing the dead, the mortuary rituals performed and circumstances under which death is discussed.

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1.3 Justification

The study of death is a positive endeavour because, regardless of whether a custom calls for festive or restrained behaviour, the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values of the daily lives and experiences of the people (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:25). Life becomes transparent against the background of death and fundamental social and cultural issues are revealed. Therefore, knowing the way the Akamba perceive, experience and categorise deaths is very important. Similarly, an analysis of their social responses to death will throw light on the physical, emotional and psychological disturbances that death occasions. The way a society stresses mortuary rituals and the disposal of the dead will help social scientists in determining the way the Akamba view death itself as well as their beliefs of life after death. Since culture is dynamic it is also important to highlight the changes which have taken place through time. Therefore, a study of death among the Akamba not only shows the peoples' understanding but also their interpretation of death and how this affects the society in general. Finally, this study will form an ethnographic study of the Akamba, thus, becoming an important resource to those interested in reading about this community.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The study was carried out in Kibwezi Division, Makueni District, Kenya. Due to limited time and funds the study was conducted for three months of which the researcher collected all the data. Since death is a very sensitive issue the respondents were not comfortable discussing it. However the researcher clearly explained the topic so as to dispel any fears. Also the time to undertake the ethnographic study was not enough. The study limited itself to the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter divides the literature reviewed into five parts and these include the explanations of death, categorization of death, death and burial as well as purification rites and social responses to death. It also deals with the theoretical framework, the assumptions which guided the study as well as a definition of terms.

2.1 Explanations of Death

Beliefs concerning of death vary greatly among different societies and among various communities of Africa natural causes are often not considered sufficient as explanations (Ochola-Ayayo 1989). The explanations of death range from witchcraft, sorcery and magic, curses, afflictions of the living dead and spirits (Mbiti 1969,1975; Evans-Pritchard 1956; Geertz 1964; Ochola-Ayayo 1989; Buckley and Gottlieb 1988). Death seems to be an intruder into the intended pattern of things (Awolalu 1978:35). In many societies, the explanation of death is only a speculation. For example, most Africans believe that death cannot be natural even where death is caused by accidents because no death in African societies is without cause (Were 1991; Mbiti 1969, 1975). Most societies have mythological explanations on how death first came into the world. For instance, the Akamba believe that death came into the world because of the chameleon that delayed the message of eternity given by God (Ndeti 1972:10). In the belief system of the Thonga, death is attributed to the power of the sky, thus, when death strikes a village, the Thonga believe that the sky had fallen on such a village. Twins who are associated with the sky and are, therefore, believed to be the bearers of a death-carrying power (Heusch 1987:32). In the Runda myth, death is personalised as an animal, which was

once hunted by Imana the ancestor of the Runda who wanted to kill it so that the people could enjoy immortality. However, a woman, due to her mercy, gave this animal protection when it was being pursued, thus, symbolically giving death protection and since then death has remained among humans (Magnet 1991).

Even though people believe that death came into the world at a very early date in the history of human beings, they also believe that every time a person dies this death is "caused" (Mbiti 1975:117). Therefore, when someone has died, people often try to find out who caused the death of a particular person. This means that someone is often blamed for the occurrence of death and in some cases the suspect may be beaten to death, fined or thrown out of the society (Mbiti 1975:117). According to Kenyatta (1961), among the Agikuyu if a witch or a sorcerer was proved to have caused the death of a person, he or she was brought to the council of elders and sentenced to death. The accused was asked to kill a goat as a symbol of his own death.

Elsewhere among the Ezo people of Nigeria, death is believed to occur due to visitations by angered gods and divinities invoked to avenge a wrong done to the invoker, false swearing and violations of taboos (Ifie 1982:75). He further notes that even death occurring as a result of accidents such as being scolded in hot liquids, or being burnt by fire, are attributed to witches and wizards. According to Awolalu (1978:37), among the Yoruba of Nigeria, all efforts are made to prevent death from occurring especially those of young people. Oracles are consulted to find out the wishes of the gods who are believed to cause death if they are angered.

2.1.1 Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery

The term magic has a neutral connotation in the sense that it might involve a positive or negative application of magical powers. Fortes and Dieterlen



(1965:21) define magic as ritual acts involving the manipulation of material substances and the use of verbal spells or addresses, all directed towards influencing the course of events. This definition dichotomises magic into good if used for productive, protective or curative purposes and bad magic when used for destructive ends. Witchcraft involves harming other people mystically and illegitimately by the means of psychic emanations from an inherent psychological condition that is transmitted biologically. Sorcery on the other hand involves practicing destructive magic to harm people (Fortes and Dieterlen 1965; Durkheim 1965). It is clear, therefore, that differences between sorcery and witchcraft are largely ones of technique.

The commonest explanations of death in non-western societies are believed to be witchcraft, sorcery and magic (Mbiti 1969:155; Turner 1965). A sorcerer and a witch are both enemies of society and it is this fact that makes sociological generalizations about either largely applicable to the other (Fortes and Dieterlen 1965). The belief that death is caused by witchcraft, sorcery and magic is found in most non-western societies though with varying degrees of emphasis. However, someone is always blamed for using these methods to cause the death of another person. Specifically, witchcraft is a term used more frequently to describe all sorts of the evil employment of mystical powers generally in a secret fashion. For instance, the Azande believe that some people are witches and can injure others by virtue of having inherent malevolent powers. They also believe that sorcerers may inflict harm by performing magic rites with bad medicines (Evans-Pritchard 1956). Witchcraft may be unconscious and involuntary, though it is also often intentional, inherited from one generation to the next and inherent in the person practicing it. According to Geertz (1964), accusations of witchcraft among the Javanese are common, but they are never made openly and directly against anyone for fear of retribution. These occasions are only whispered to others in the form of malicious gossip or they may be discussed rather abstractly as hypotheses to account for events or misfortunes. Elsewhere among the Ezo of Nigeria, the belief in witchcraft and sorcery is rapidly gaining ground

throughout the clans (Ifie 1982:75), while among the Yoruba, also of Nigeria, the belief in witchcraft and sorcery is widespread (Awolalu 1978:74).

On the other hand, it has been suggested that sorcery is always conscious and voluntary and it is taught and often bought by its perpetrators (Turner 1967). Technically speaking, however, "sorcery" involves the use of poisonous ingredients, which are put into the food or drink of someone. Among African peoples, for instance, sorcery stands for the antisocial employment of mystical powers, thus, sorcerers stand for the most feared and hated members of their communities (Mbiti 1969:200, Kenyatta 1938). Among the Javanese, sorcery tends to be practised on neighbours, friends, relatives and other acquaintances fairly close to one another (Geertz 1964). According to Douglas (1963), the Lele employ the term sorcerers to persons who allegedly strike other people with misfortunes or death while the Nandi use the term to refer to those who have the power to kill or injure people by means of spells (Middleton and Winter 1963). However, the Akamba, Abagusii, Gisu, and the Javanese have a dichotomy in which women are witches while men are sorcerers although their use of magic is geared towards doing evil (Mbiti 1969; Geertz 1964; Johnson 1999). Magic is generally considered under "good magic" and "bad magic". The use of good magic is accepted and esteemed in any society since it is used to counter bad magic.

It is chiefly the specialists, and particularly the medicine men and women, diviners and rainmakers, who use their knowledge and manipulation of mystical powers for the welfare of their community. The diviner as well as a medicine man or woman provide amounts of mystical powers to people in the form of charms, amulets, powder and feathers. Evil magic involves the belief in and practice of tapping this power to do harm to other human beings or their property (Mbiti 1969:199). However, it should be pointed out here that a great deal of beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery and magic are based on, fear, suspicion, jealousy, ignorance or false accusations. For instance, in Africa people feel and believe that all

various ills, misfortunes, sickness, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers and unhappy mysteries which they encounter or experience are caused by the use of mystical powers in the hands of sorcerers or witches (Mbiti 1969:200). It is here that we may understand, for example, that a bereaved mother whose child has died from malaria will not be satisfied with a scientific explanation that a mosquito carrying a malaria parasite stung the child and caused it to suffer and die of malaria. She will wish to know why the mosquito stung her child and not somebody else's child. The only satisfactory answer is that "someone" sent the mosquito, or worked other evil magic against her child. Nothing harmful happens "by chance" since everything is "caused" by someone directly or through the use of mystical powers (Mbiti 1969:201).

2.1.2 Curse

Mbiti (1975) argues that there is a mystical power in words, especially those of a senior to a junior person in terms of age, social status or office position. The words of parents, for example, carry power when spoken to children. These words "cause" good fortunes, curses, success, peace, sorrows or blessings especially when spoken in moments of crisis. A curse is something greatly feared in many societies and a powerful curse is believed to bring death to the person concerned. Among the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia, a hunter may fail to kill any animal if an elder or an old man or woman spoke bad words to him prior to the hunting expedition. Also a strong curse among the Ndembu is used as an explanation of death (Turner 1967). Elsewhere among the Abaluyia unnatural conditions of barrenness are believed to emanate from curses (Munday 1981:5). Conversely, among the Nyole of Uganda a curse is made by a living person who feels offended and is in a position of power in relation to the victim of the curse. The typical curser among these people is a parent or a senior blood relative who has been wrongly treated and calls upon their common ancestor to punish a child. Other people curse too especially if the situation can be modelled on that of disrespect to a parent or a senior (Whyte 1997). The

relationship between the curser and the cursed is important. Whyte (1997:100) states:

Cursing implies connectedness and the power of the curse lies in the relationship between the curser and the cursed, mentioning their common ancestor affirms the relationship. Among these people curse is said to cause death.

2.1.3 Living Dead and Spirits

The living dead and spirits are believed to be another explanation of death in many non-western societies. This applies to those belonging to a given family particularly the living dead who may have been offended before they died, who may not have been properly buried, or those who have a grudge against someone. The Nyakyusa of Tanzania believe that the living dead and the spirits have the power to send misfortunes and death to the living (Wilson 1939). Thus, if a family feels that its living dead are dissatisfied, it immediately takes measures to harmonise the situation, and avoid its deterioration to the point of actual death. Conversely, the Lughbara of Sudan believe that the elders can invoke the ancestors and the spirits to cause harm to those who contravene societal taboos (Douglas 1988). Munday (1981), argues that among the Abaluyia, the living dead are actively involved in matters concerning the living. For instance, among these people, if a baby cries continuously for no apparent reason, it is believed that the living dead are demanding that the child be named after one of them. A particularly difficult labour or excessive pain is similarly attributed to the living dead or the spirits of the dead.

Spirits are the destiny of men and women and beyond this is God. Metcalf and Huntington (1991) argue that upon death the soul of a human being becomes a spirit and, therefore, a human being need not, hope to become a spirit, he or she will inevitably become one just as a child will automatically grow into an adult,

under normal circumstances. Spirits may be of animals or human beings but those which are important to human beings are those which were once human. The living people are most concerned with this category since the living dead have not yet cut links with them. It is through the living dead that the spirits world becomes personal to human beings (Mbiti 1969:83). The living dead return to the human families and share meals with them from time to time, however, symbolically. When they appear, which is generally to the oldest members of the household, they are recognized by name as "so and so", they enquire about family affairs and may even warn of impending danger or rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. If the living dead were improperly buried or were offended before they died, it is believed that they will bring suffering and misfortunes to their living relatives. People are, therefore, careful to follow the proper practices and customs regarding the burial or other means of disposing off dead bodies (Geertz 1964). Among Abagusii when a person dies a goat of the same sex as the deceased is slaughtered to placate the deceased and failure to do this will result into afflictions to the survivors of the homestead (Levine 1982, cited in Nyamongo 1999).

2.1.4 God

According to Mbiti (1969, 1975), deaths, especially those for which there are no satisfactory explanations are attributed to God. Death through lightning, for example, among Agikuyu death is believed to be "caused" by the anger of God to bad people (Kenyatta 1961). Also, death due to very old age or where a person may contravene an important custom or prohibition such as committing incest are examples of deaths believed to emanate from God. Among Babukusu, God is said to punish women for committing adultery by letting their children die. On the other hand, men in the same society were given a number of rules and taboos such as incest which if broken, misfortunes, illness and death will ensue (Wagner 1991).

Even when God may be seen as the ultimate cause of death people provide a scapegoat and a person will definitely be accused of causing it through witchcraft or other evil mechanisms (Turner 1967). Death among most societies is seen as a departure and not a complete annihilation of a person (Mbiti 1969). Among Babukusu, the Nyakyusa and Akamba when a person dies he or she is described as having gone home. Specifically such a person moves to join the company of ancestors (Kimilu 1962; Wilson 1939; Turner 1967). This implies that most societies in Africa believe that life continues after death and this is shown in some societies through the pouring of libation to the dead. Although in many societies death is highly feared it is still seen as a bridge to the world of spirits (Geertz 1964).

2.2 Categorization of Deaths

According to Nzioka (2000:4), it is possible to have "bad" and "good" deaths but the degree to which an individual's demise is socially evaluated as good or bad depends, among others, on dominant social and religious systems within particular cultural contexts. Death during the old age is "natural" and, thus, it is dignified whereas that of the young is seen as an explicable tragedy that points to moral disorder in the lives of both the individual and the society (Magesa 1997:155). In traditional societies the social meanings of death were determined by the sacred canopy, which sustains a shared vision of the world, the body and self-identity. In such societies a good death is one that serves to re-assert the power of the group and re-assures survivors that the deceased has gone to a new life (Nzioka 2000:4). However, a bad death negates a chance of regeneration for the individual and the group. This is highly feared and people do all what is in their means to avoid such deaths because such deaths might put the deceased and the whole community into ceremonial impurity.

In many African societies people who died of "bad" diseases were either thrown away in the bush or were buried unceremoniously because their deaths were

believed to be shameful (Larby 1944). Any contact with such bodies was highly avoided because they were believed to cause ceremonial impurity. Unceremonial burials are brief and not accompanied by elaborate ceremonies. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, there are some deaths which are categorized as bad and others as good. If a person for example, is struck by lightning and thunder and he or she dies as a result, the people will quickly conclude that the victim was a wicked person because it is the people's belief that thunder god (*songo*) does not strike an innocent person. The thunder the god (*songo*) it is believed, usually manifests the wrath of the Supreme Being (*Olodumana*) and whom He strikes, he does so to punish the offender and to warn other evildoers (Awolalu 1978:38). He further notes that for such a death people do not mourn but rather rejoice that one of the evil ones has been cut off and he or she is buried away from human habitation (1978:38). Dignity and social status of the deceased for, example, among the Luo of Kenya are factors that determine the nature of the burial, that is, whether to be accompanied by elaborate mortuary rituals (Nyamongo 1999).

2.3 Death and Burial

The fear of death is a universal human experience and, although people are rarely aware of it, the terror of death lies in the background of everything people do. Whether all people fear death is a matter of debate, but people look for ways to come to terms with the inevitability of death through religion, science and philosophy. According to Kariuki (1989), individual views of death are largely shaped by the belief systems of a culture, which gives people a way to deal with death, reconciling them to the fact that their existence on earth must come to an end.

According to Gennep (1960), death is one of the crises of life. He views death as one of the rites of passage which, include among others, birth, naming, puberty, initiation into adult status and marriage. In addition, Mugambi (1989:178)

observes that when a person dies physically, this is not the end, because a person is more than blood, flesh and bones. Death marks the end of the procreation cycle, and at the same time it anticipates the renewal of life through the next cycle, thus, death anticipates birth.

The individual is not totally separated by death from his or her clan, he or she is only transformed from the physical being to the spiritual being of the same clan. Thus, according to Ocholla-Ayayo (1989), in many African societies, the rites of passage, the manner of death and mourning, and the form of burial are important considerations in the transition from the physical to the spiritual mode of existence. The occasion of death creates a new realisation of the place of the members of the community in the continuum of life.

Among most people, irrespective of their stage of culture, definite ceremonies have to be observed upon the occasion of a death and before the bereaved can return to their normal lives (Hobley 1938). When a man or woman lies at the point of death he or she summons his or her children to give them his or her last advice (Lindblom 1920:103). Death is marked differently in different communities, for example, among the Luo burial ceremonies involve a lot of celebrations which take several days together with the slaughtering of several animals (Nyamongo 1999). Elsewhere, Geertz (1964) describes the burials of the Javanese as calm, undemonstrative and just a brief ritualised relinquishment of a relationship no longer possible which are not accompanied by any ceremonies. This is basically the opposite of the Nyakyusa, the Luo and other African societies whose funerals are emotive and highly demonstrative and are marked with long ceremonies which can continue for almost a year (Wilson 1939; Mbiti 1969; Murdock 1959; Richards 1956). Disposal of a dead body among non-western societies is by burying under the ground, thus, according to Larby (1944) burying under the ground is the most common way of the disposal of the dead body. In some societies such as the Edo of northern Nigeria, digging of the grave is the duty of the young energetic men (Bradsbury 1965). However,

among the Javanese the grave is dug by hired men (Geertz 1964). The alignment of the grave among the Nuer and the Akamba is in the southern direction while the body is laid with the face turned east or west. The man is laid on his right hand while the woman is laid on her left-hand side (Evans-Pritchard; 1956 Larby 1944).

2.4 Death Rites and Rituals

There are many complex and even long rituals and ceremonies associated with death. However, circumstances surrounding the death of a person, age, sex and social status of the dead are the most important factors dictate these rituals and ceremonies (Awolalu 1978:37). In every society people are very sensitive about what should be done when there is a death in the family (Mbiti 1975:119, 1969:155). Death throws normal life into jeopardy and, thus, calls for a return to normal life especially after burial. This return is usually through rites and rituals which must be performed. Death causes ritual impurity especially to those who are related to the deceased (Lindblom 1920; Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Among the Beng of Cote d'Ivoire, if a related menstruating woman were to touch or fan a corpse, she runs the risk of being ritually polluted (Buckley and Gottlieb 1988). Among the Nuer all the people except the gravediggers leave the homestead where death has occurred until after the burial (Evans-Pritchard 1956). In other societies like Javanese coitus serves as a purifying act while in others like Beng it is a source of impurity (Geertz 1964; Buckley and Gottlieb 1988; Douglas 1963). Before the old men who were in charge of the burial among the Akamba, for instance, have completed their task, and before they go away, they prescribe for the inhabitants of the village their proper rules and conduct. For example, no one may have sexual intercourse until the people have been purified and anyone who offends against the direction contracts ceremonial impurity, a disease which often overtakes just the person who has become ceremoniously unclean (Lindblom 1920:108; Hopley 1938). However, the purification is performed on people who came into contact with the dead body.



Among the Javanese purification is undertaken on all the people who participated in the funeral irrespective of whether one came into contact with the corpse or not (Geertz 1964).

This means that death suspends normal order in society which has to be returned to through purification. Conversely, the oldest son of the deceased performs mortuary rituals among the Edo of northern Nigeria and this ritual is the most potent symbol of the parent-children relationship (Bradsbury 1965). The importance of this ritual explains why among the Edo to die without a son or worse to die childless is a dreaded fate. Having children is an assurance to the parents that they will be buried according to their traditions.

2.5 Social Responses to Death

In societies where kinship and affinal relationships are strong, death is considered to be a disintegrating factor, not only to the immediate members of the kinship and affinal units but to the entire kinship and affinal networks of the larger community (Ocholla-Ayayo 1989). One of the most prominent aspects of death is its potential for intense emotional impact on the survivors. This is a simple but often scarring fact of separation from a loved one, the realization that he or she will no longer enjoy the fruits of life; the suddenness with which death may strike and the fear of the power of death in general (Metcalf and Huntington 1991:43). Although death is highly individualised in the sense that people cannot share in the act of dying, families, clans and villages come together to sympathise with the bereaved. Among the Adaman of the Adaman islands, after a death, the relatives and friends embrace the corpse and weep over it. According to these people, this ritual weeping is an expression of a feeling of attachment between persons to affirm the existence of social bonds between two or more persons (Radcliffe-Brown 1964:240). In these cases of weeping it is obvious that a social relationship is being stressed. Relatives and friends are

required by the Adaman society to weep and anyone who fails to weep may be accused of having caused the death through magic.

Elsewhere among the Bara of Madagascar, weeping occurs while the dead body of a man or woman is lying in the hut before the burial and just before the secondary burial of the exhumed bones (Wilson 1939). Among the Edo of Nigeria before the grave is filled with soil, the mood changes to one of shuttering violence as the children hurl in clods of earth and the gravediggers seize their spades and begin feverishly to fill up the grave. For the young, this is a period of spontaneous and uncontrollable grief and weeping (Bradsbury 1965). In many societies of Kenya, the individual does not exist autonomously, but as a unit in the collective. What happens to the individual is measured on the family clan and ethnic group (Nzioka 2000). Death in most African societies is socialized and localized and in Kenya regardless of whether death occurs in the city or in a remote village, it is always treated as a communal affair (Nzioka 1994a, 1994b; Mbiti 1975).

Durkheim (1965) notes that death is marked by different emotional outbursts, which include extreme displays of anguish, anger, aggression and wailing. In some societies like, the Luo and Abaluyia, the ceremonial shaving of their heads, removal of the central pole which is the fulcrum of the house when the male household head dies and cheating death when infants die in succession are other social responses to death (Soper 1983:118). Among the Akamba it is usually considered unbecoming for a man to show his feelings, although even men may be seen to weep. However, the women, on other hand, really mourn, and their lamentations are audible far and wide (Lindblom 1920:103). Elsewhere among the Nuer, men do not wail except soon after death and during the burial to let the neighbours know of the death and the burial while women wail uncontrollably from the time death occurs until the burial takes place (Evans-Pritchard 1956). Nyamongo (1999) notes that assisting in the burial ceremonies of a neighbour establishes good social relations among Abagusii. Among the

Nyole of Uganda, for example, death and burial marks a period in which social ties are strengthened as relatives, neighbours and friends express grief and sympathy by supporting the bereaved. Failure to mourn a dead person shows that one does not value the relationship and this might give rise to suspicion that he or she caused the death of the person (Whyte 1997).

Elsewhere among the Yoruba of Nigeria, death of an aged person is an occasion for joy particularly when he or she has lived well and has left behind good children to survive him or her and to accord him or her befitting funeral obsequies. The people rejoice because of the belief that the dead person has lived a normal course of life and is just going home (Awolalu 1978:37). However, when a young person dies, it is regarded as a tragedy, relatives and friends go into deep mourning. It becomes even worse if the deceased does not have a child to succeed him or her (Awolalu 1978:37).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted symbolism as its theoretical framework. The notable disciples of this theory include David Schneider (1968); Mary Douglas (1988); Clifford Geertz (1965,1970) and Victor Turner (1967). The basic tenet of the symbolic theory is a view of cultures as systems of shared symbols and meanings. Schneider (1968:1) defines culture as a system of symbols and their meanings. In particular culture consists of a system of units or parts which are defined in certain ways and which are differentiated according to certain criteria. These symbols and symbolic actions define the world and the nature of things within it. Thus, on the level of cultural analysis the ghost of a dead man and the dead man himself are cultural constructs that have equal cultural importance (Schneider 1968:1). Schneider concludes that culture is made up of symbols and symbolic actions that must be interpreted so as to give culture meaning (1968:1).

Elsewhere, Geertz (1965:115) views culture as a set of symbols which have to be interpreted. More recently Geertz (1972:29) has come to view the culture of a people as a text which the anthropologist must interpret as he or she would do to a literacy text. These texts however embody every day social activities of which people are engaged in symbolic actions. For example, Geertz used this theory to study the Balinese cockfights which he interpreted as expressions of the normal way of life of the Balinese people (1972:24). He found out that cockfights bring together such themes as animal savagery, male narcissism, opponent gambling, status and rivalry, which are integral to the Balinese people and culture (1972:28).

Turner views culture as a system of symbols and symbolic actions and regards these as largely instrumental, linked with human purposes and interests (1967:40). In his view these symbols and symbolic actions add to our understanding of cultural activity (1967:411). Turner studied the puberty rituals among the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia. He concluded that the symbols involved in the rituals and their relations are not only a set of cognitive classification for ordering the Ndembu universe but also, more importantly, a set of evocative devices for arousing, channelling and domesticating powerful emotions such as hate, fear, affections and grief (Turner 1967:42). This theoretical framework has recently been adopted by other scholars, among them Mbiti (1969, 1975), Nangendo (1996a 1996b, 1998), Buckley and Gottlieb (1988), as well as Awolalu (1978).

Gennep (1960) in his book "*Rites of passage*" notes that actions surrounding death are understood correctly only when they are interpreted. Accordingly the rites and rituals undertaken when deaths have occurred carry meanings which lie deeper than the superficial actions. The actions symbolise actual meanings of the actions. In the article *Heat, physiology and cosmology: Rites de passage among the Thonga*, Heusch (1987) discovered the symbolic interplay between the natural fire used in the firing of pots and gestation or development of a foetus

in the mother's womb. She concluded that a well fired pot symbolise a normal baby who has undergone full gestation. In addition, a broken pot due to overheating symbolises the birth of twins who are believed are as a result of excessive heat in the womb. Death provides a constellation of symbols which have different meanings. Turner (1967) notes that there are many symbols and symbolic actions associated with death which must be interpreted to give them meaning. Conversely, Metcalf and Huntington (1991) note that corpse symbolism is a special case of the human body as a symbol. According to Okot p'Bitek (1971), the dirges sung after death among the Acholi of Uganda have deeper and symbolic meanings. The dirges are meant to bid goodbye to the departed and at the same time to implore the spirit to be at peace with the living members of the family and it is only in the line of this symbolism that these dirges can be understood.

According to this theory, activities surrounding death have deeper meanings which ought to be interpreted, therefore, it is in this theoretical line that death, burial, ritual and rites as well as the cleansing or purification ceremonies among the Akamba were be analysed.

2.6.1 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

Symbolism is a theory applied in the study of culture. The proponents of this theoretical framework hold the view that culture is made of symbols which have to be interpreted. Members of a society share most if not all of these symbols. This theory is relevant to the study since it emphasises the symbolic or deeper meanings of activities or occurrences. Symbolism comes handy especially in trying to understand how death is perceived among the Akamba, the meanings of disposal techniques, the rites and rituals performed when death has occurred and the purification ceremonies performed after the burial. This means that these activities carried out when somebody dies have deeper meanings which should

be explained. It is in this line, therefore, that symbolism is appropriate because it emphasizes meanings beyond the superficial activity.

2.6.2 Assumptions.

In view of the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework stated, the following assumptions were advanced for the study.

1. There are various explanations and interpretations of death among the Akamba.
2. There are various social responses to different categories of death.
3. Different ways and rituals are associated with treating, disposing the dead and death is discussed under different circumstances.

2.7 Definition of Terms

(i) Death.

A state of not being alive, the end of life and also the power that destroys life.

(ii) Perception

The ability to hear, see or understand things. A deeper natural understanding and awareness of something.

(iii) Experience

The process of gaining knowledge or skill over a period of time through seeing and doing things rather than through studying.

(iv) Purification ceremonies

These are activities carried out to make somebody ritually clean after an activity deemed ritually polluting.

(v) Mortuary rituals

These are repetitive actions done after death especially on the dead body.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

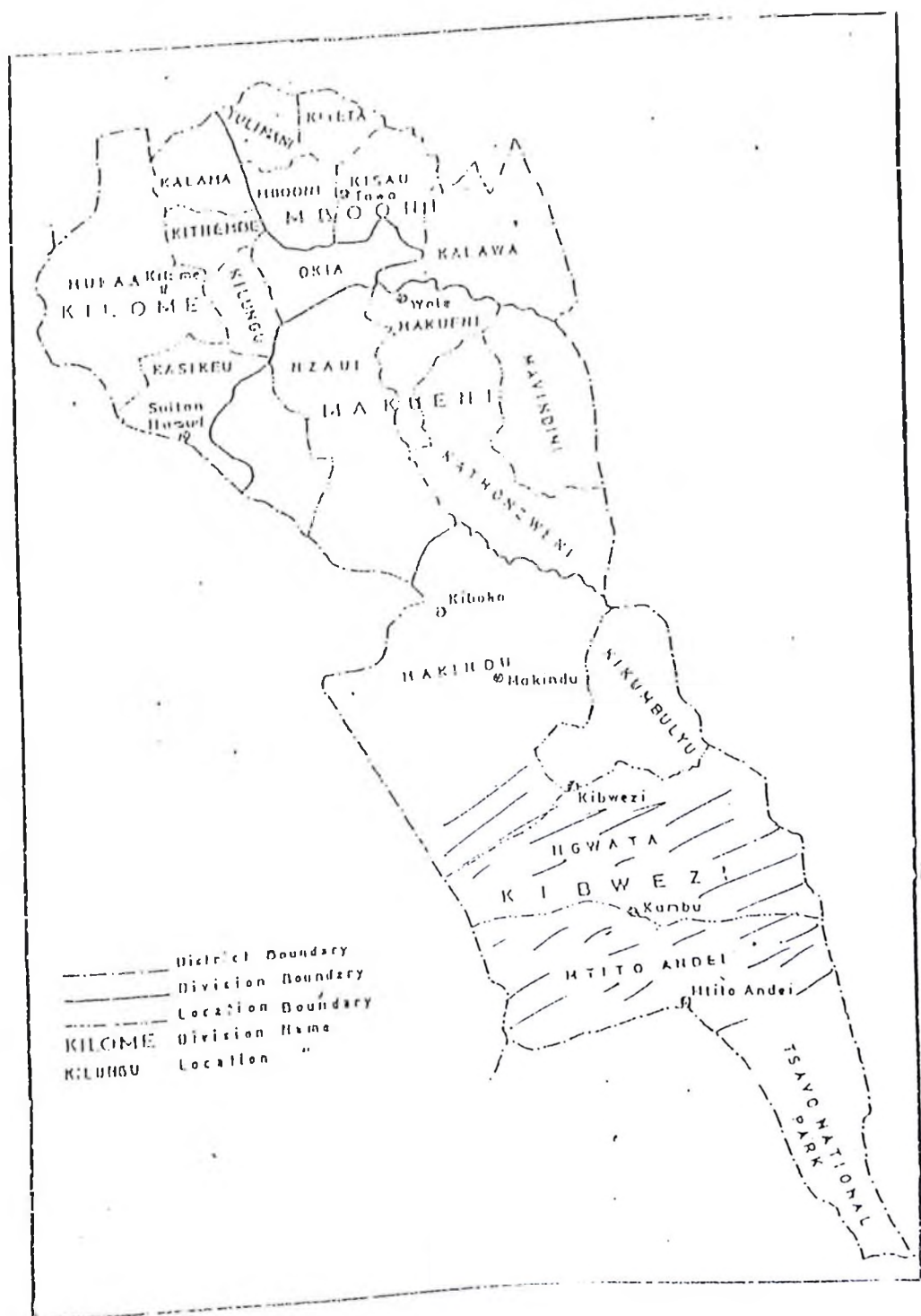
3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research site, population sample, sampling techniques and methods of data collection and analysis. The problems encountered in the field are similarly highlighted and solutions used in solving them given. The chapter also has a section on ethical issues.

3.1 Site Description

3.1.1 Location and Size

This study was carried out in Kibwezi Division (map 2), Makueni District. The study site was chosen because it was the area of focus of the WHO\World Bank (KENQOL) project which funded this research. Makueni District is one of the twelve districts that form the Eastern Province of Kenya (map 1). It borders Kajiado District to the west, Taita Taveta to the south, Kitui to the east and Machakos District to the north. The district lies between 1' degree 35' south and 38' degrees 30' east. The width of the district in some parts ranges from 100 kilometres in the north and less than 20 kilometres in the south. The district covers an area of 7,440 square kilometres. Makueni District is made up of 14 divisions, 52 locations, and 172 sub-locations (GoK 1997-2001:4).



Map 2. Makueni District administrative boundaries and the research site

3.1.2 Economic Activities

Crop farming in the district is mainly for subsistence purposes. The major food crops grown are maize, beans, pigeon peas and peas, while the main cash crops, are coffee and cotton. Coffee is grown in the highlands while cotton is grown in the lowland areas. Irrigated horticultural crop farming is also undertaken but on smallholdings on an individual basis on the banks of the Athi river. The most common horticultural crops which are planted are tomatoes, kales, onions, and beans (GoK 1997-2001:19). Lastly, livestock farming is also practiced by most of the households in the study area.

3.1.3 Demographic Characteristics

According to the 1989 Kenya Population Census, Makueni District had a population of 636,994 which rose to 771,545 people in the 1999 census (GoK 1993, GoK 2001). Out of this, 372,639 (48.3%) were males while 398,906 (51.7%) were females. The rapid increase of the district's population is partly attributed to the immigration of people from the neighbouring districts of Machakos, Kitui and Mwingi into the new settlement schemes such as Ngwata in the district (GoK 1997-2001). The population, according to the 1999 census, was growing at 3.49% per year. In 1999 the district had a population density of 97 persons per square kilometer and a majority of the population in this district were females (GoK 2001).

3.2 Population Universe

The population universe was the entire population of Kibwezi Division. The population universe was, therefore, 80,236, which is the total population of Kibwezi Division according to the 1999 census. From the population universe, the household, which was the unit of analysis, was derived.

3.3 Study Population and unit of Analysis

The study population was derived from the population universe through purposive sampling. This was because the study focused on different groups of people who are considered to be the key players in death matters. These groups include death ritual specialists, gravediggers, medicine men and women, seers, purification specialists, burial attendants, as well as old men and women. The researcher concentrated on three locations, namely Kambu, Kathekani, and Mtito-a-Dei which were the main areas of focus of the KENQOL project which funded the fieldwork. A representative sample of four villages were selected, namely, Kitengei, Kathekani, Daranjani and Kambu. Kitengei is in Mtito-A-Dei location; Kathekani is in Kathekani location while Daranjani and Kambu are both in Kambu location. In each of these villages there were interviews and observations on the selected groups of people by way of informal interviews, in-depth interviews, key informants, life histories and case studies.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

In the study, the purposive sampling technique was used and only groups of people involved in death matters were selected. However, for survey interviews random sampling was used on the purposively selected categories, for example, gravediggers, death ritual specialists, burial attendants, old men and women. The researcher chose Kibwezi Division because it was the area of interest to the KENQOL project which sponsored this research. The research site further narrowed down to three locations namely, Mtito-Adei, Kathekani and Kambu. The four villages which were selected were Kiteng'ei, Kathekani, Daranjani and Kambu. In the selected villages, respondents for the informal interviews were sampled by arbitrarily picking on any individual in the above named categories. A total of forty respondents were interviewed in the course of the study. Key informants for in-depth interviews were also sampled purposively in the course of the fieldwork. The same method was used to select life histories and case

studies. A total of four life histories and two case studies were selected for the study.

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

The following sources of data collection were used in this study: secondary data, non-standardised interviews, key informants, oral interviews, case studies, life histories as well as participant and direct observations.

3.5.1 Secondary Data

This method was used at the initial stages of the study. The method made use of ethnographic and secondary literature from libraries such as the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, Kenya National Archives, Department of Sociology Library, PSRI Library, IDS Library, Kenya National Library, Institute of African Studies Library, Macmillan Library and Kenyatta University Library. The information obtained from these libraries was used to supplement the data obtained from primary sources.

3.5.2 Primary Data

These formed the core of the study and were obtained by the use of less structured open-ended interviews, life histories, case studies as well as participant and direct observation. Interviewing was the main method and three techniques were used, namely, standardised open-ended interviews, the interview guide and key informant interviews. Participant and direct observations were used as supplementary methods to the other methods.

(i) Participant and Direct Observations

These methods were employed throughout the study and served as a pointer between knowledge and practice. The researcher lived in Kibwezi Division for a

period of not less than three months. As a participant observer, the researcher attended funerals, participated in digging up of the graves, attended memorial services and visited bereaved families with a view to making observations and listening to how families and the community at large deal with death. The researcher also attended and participated in the cleansing or purification ceremonies so as to understand the utilitarian and symbolic the meanings of these activities.

(ii) Life Histories

Life histories, or personal biographies, were collected over a series of many lengthy interviews. This information was used to cross-check the consistency of the data collected by the other methods. These life histories were of persons who had participated in burials and other related mortuary activities, those who had performed or cleansing rituals were performed for them, parents who had lost their children or any member of the family and heads of families that had deaths. Data collected through this method complemented data got through the other methods.

(iii) Case Studies

Two families were identified which served as case studies and were studied for a considerable length of time. During this time the researcher documented information relevant to the study. The information collected through this method complemented other data got through the other methods of data collection.

(iv) Interviews

Interviews with key informants identified through the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix A) were undertaken following an interview guide (Appendix B). These were people who had information relevant to the study. This method was used to

provide additional information to that obtained through other methods. Key informants provided in-depth information on the way the community perceives and experiences death. The researcher interviewed the key informants after every two weeks to check the consistency of the information they gave. Any inconsistency was explained and any alterations made.

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

The data in this study were analysed thematically through qualitative techniques of data analysis. Qualitative methods were used in discussing data collected through participant and direct observation, life histories, informal interviews, key informants and case studies. The information elicited by the above methods was arranged and categorised according to the objectives of the study. Qualitative data analysis also included presentations of quotes from different respondents.

3.7 Problems Encountered in the Field and their Solutions.

In the course of the study, the researcher encountered some problems. In the first place the area under study had a poor infrastructure network in which some areas were totally inaccessible. Lack of means of transport was quite remarkable. The researcher overcame this problem by trekking and starting his work early enough. In Kathekani village, which was far away from the main road, for instance, the researcher had to hire a bicycle to reach the area.

Another problem was that of suspicion which threatened the progress of the study. It revolved around two issues. Firstly, before the commencement of the study there was the issue of child kidnapping everywhere in the country. To make matters worse some child kidnappers were lynched at Nthongoni village, in the research site. Secondly, the presence of Mormon Church preachers accused of being devil worshippers in the area was another source of suspicion. Therefore, the presence of a stranger in that area researching on death raised

eyebrows in the community. This problem was solved through persistence assurance to the community that the research was purely an academic exercise, and that their information was to be treated with a lot of confidentiality. Also the researcher had to rely on the local administration, the chiefs and sub-chiefs, for introduction to the community. This worked very well to dispel any suspicions among the community as the researcher was introduced at public gatherings.

There were some respondents who wanted payment. However, the researcher overcame this problem by explaining to them that he was a student and that the information given to him was to the benefit of future generations as people who want to know about the Akamba will read about the findings of the research. The same explanation was given to those who sought to know how they would benefit from the research findings. However, irrespective of the above-mentioned problems, the study was successful.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Being an anthropologist, the researcher handled the respondents as per the requirements of their culture. The researcher applied participant and direct observation in data collection so that he could not seem as a child kidnapper or a devil worshipper. He gave sincere condolences to the bereaved and showed sympathy to those who lost their beloved ones. The researcher did this so as to convince the community that he did not appreciate death although it was his subject of study.

The researcher was flexible enough in every aspect so as to establish rapport with the community. In this way he was able to get information from respondents without any difficult. The researcher also treated the acquired information with confidentiality in cases where the informants requested it that way. In some cases, the informants did not wish the interview to be taped or names to be recorded down. In such situations the researcher used pseudonyms.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLANATIONS OF DEATH AND SOCIAL RESPONSES

4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research findings and an attempt is made to interpret the data and explain the findings. The chapter presents the findings in relation to the first and second objectives of the study namely, the various explanations of death and their interpretation and the social responses to death.

4.1 Sample characteristics

There were more male than female informants in the sample because the target groups were gravediggers, oath purifiers, burial attendants and traditional healers. It was found that most of the activities surrounding death and burial are undertaken by men thus more men than women were sampled for the study. It was also revealed that the Akamba tradition forbids women from actively participating in death and burial matters. This means that it was difficult to strike a gender balance, however, when it came to social response and mourning women featured prominently. The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to 102 years. Most of the gravediggers were young energetic men while those who guided burials were old men and women.

4.2 Explanations of Death among the Akamba

Attempts were made in this study to investigate the explanations of death among the Akamba. According to the responses, witchcraft, sorcery, curses, oaths, God and the living dead account for all the deaths among the Akamba. This means that the basic belief among the Akamba is that death does not just occur but it is "caused" by an agent and therefore it calls for an explanation. Even at old age where death might be accepted, it is said that God has "caused" it. Even if the

cause has been diagnosed, the belief is that someone used magic to "cause" the illness and therefore magic is used to explain it. This implies that the germ theory does not serve as a convincing explanation even where the cause of a death is diagnosed, therefore, a more convincing explanation has to be sought. The rationale here is that whether the death was due to an accident or sickness, it was "caused" by an agent. Among the Akamba death may be attributed to the following causes:

4.2.1 Witchcraft, Sorcery (*Uoi*) and Magic (*Kyama*)

The researcher inquired about the belief in witchcraft, magic and sorcery among these people. The research findings revealed that the belief in witchcraft, sorcery and magic is widespread among the Akamba. Most of those who were interviewed believed that misfortunes and deaths do not just occur but are "caused" by external agents. Such agents of death may use supernatural means, for instance, stealing a man's or woman's soul, stealing property, work of sorcery and witchcraft. Most of the respondents interviewed referred to witchcraft and sorcery generally as *uoi* while magic was referred to as *kyama* (singular) or *syama* (plural). In the Akamba language there are no separate words for witchcraft and sorcery. *Uoi* is believed to be the ideal explanation of most, if not all, deaths. It is common after a death or a funeral for people to go and consult a medicine man or woman (*mundu mue*) so as to be told the cause of death. The researcher observed several people consulting a famous medicine woman on several issues of their lives. The people had a strong belief that they had been bewitched. One man who had come to consult was told that the death of his son was as a result of witchcraft from a neighbour. Another person inquired about the drowning of her son. She was told that a jealous neighbour had used magic and that her son had been "thrown" (*kwikw'a*), thus, resulting into drowning. A father of three children, whose son died of malaria, explained that his son's sickness began after quarrelling with a neighbour over a boundary. One important issue that came out of this observation clearly was that all the purported sorcerers or

witches were either relatives or close neighbours of the victims. Also, boundary disputes contributed to suspicion among the neighbours. Jealousy seemed to be the driving force behind accusations of witchcraft or sorcery.

The researcher found that witches and sorcerers are viewed as very clever people because they can hide their actions behind natural calamities and diseases. This means that they can bewitch a person such that the symptoms of the sickness resembles a common disease such as malaria while in actual sense it is witchcraft. When most people become sick they consult medicine men or women so as to know whether they are bewitched or not. For example, someone may be "thrown" (*kwikw'a*) so that they die in an accident. This information shows that diseases and accidents are only agents of death while the true cause is witchcraft, sorcery or magic. The people also believe that accidents are made to happen and, therefore, they are not natural.

It was also stated that witchcraft, sorcery or magic works in almost similar ways. Firstly, the witch, sorcerer or magician may use materials which were initially in contact with the target person. These materials may be cloths, books or materials of the body such as hair or fingernails. These are then "treated" (*kuseuvwa*) by the witch, sorcerer or magician. The targeted person is affected because the treated materials were at some point into contact with him or her. When hair and fingernails are cut, they are kept very safely, for instance, in pit latrines where a witch, a sorcerer or a magician cannot access them. Secondly, the witch, sorcerer or magician may model a doll resembling the target person and then bewitch it. If the target person is a male, the doll resembles a male and, on the other hand, if the target person is a female, it resembles a female.

Informants stated that the Akamba differentiate between a witch and a sorcerer. It was also explained that a witch is usually a woman while a sorcerer is usually a man. A magician might be either a woman or a man. Based on this dichotomy,

therefore, the Akamba identify witchcraft of women "*Uoi wa aka*" and sorcery of men "*uoi wa aume*". Concerning this dichotomy a respondent stated:

Witchcraft of women (*uoi wa aka*) is inherited from mother to daughter or daughters. If the mother is a witch it goes without saying that the daughters will be the same. If a daughter refuses to be given the *uoi*, she can even die. It is said that a witch tries the potency of her *uoi* by bewitching one of her children. If a witch does not have a daughter to pass the witchcraft (*uoi*) to she dies with it because she cannot pass to it a son. This is because giving the *uoi* (*kunengwa uoi*) is done while someone is naked.

It was further noted that the sorcery of men (*uoi wa aume*) is bought and not inherited. This includes buying spirits (*majini*), which are "send"" to the target people. *Majini* are said to be spiritual powers believed to harm people to whom they have been send. A female respondent aged 34 years narrated the following case to the researcher:

I used not to believe in *majini* but I now had an experience. My aunt was working as a secretary at a school, and the wife of the headmaster thought that she was messing (having an affair) with her husband. One day the wife waited for her and they had a fight. My aunt knocked out a tooth of the wife and she said that she would get revenge. Sometimes later, my aunt was going home and when she reached her house, all her belongings had been collected up and were gathered outside the house. As she tried to enter the house, a human-like something beat her although she did not see the face. She ran away and brought relatives to see what was happening and they begun to be hit by stones coming from nowhere. Eventually my aunt had to move out of the home and she came to stay with us. But even here stones were being thrown. We would be sitting like we are now and a stone would land right here (she pointed next to her chair). Eventually we went to a medicine man who told us that it was *majini* which were attacking my aunt, send by a woman she had knocked a tooth during a fight. My aunt sought protection and every thing went back to normal. If it were not for that protection, my aunt would have died.

The above case shows suffering meted to a woman by *majini due* to suspicion of an affair. The suffering can in some cases lead to death and, therefore, *majini* acquired by sorcerers are believed to cause death to their victims. Men also buy what the Akamba call herbs (*miti*) for "holding" to other people (*kukwata miti*). However, there is good and bad herbs (*miti*). The good ones are the advancement of the owner either in business or other ventures. The bad ones are those which cause misfortunes or death.

Respondents stated that witches, sorcerers and magicians are well known members of the Akamba society. A 63-year-old woman who claimed to have been a victim of witchcraft argued that:

Whoever bewitches you is someone who knows you very well. In most cases he or she is a very close neighbour or just a family member. A stranger cannot bewitch you since he or she does not know whether you are treated by a medicine man or woman (*mundu mue*). A family member or a neighbour knows your movements very well and knows whether you are treated by *Mundu mue* or not (Muluu: Personal communication: 2001)

4.2.2 Oath (*kithitu*)

When the respondents were asked about an oath (*kithitu*) they strongly linked it to traditions, and it was believed to affect more than one person. It was explained that the strength of *kithitu* as an agent of affliction relies on the belief that swearing a falsehood or breaking a sworn oath will bring dire consequences to the individual and his or her family. An oath also entails reprobated acts of commission or omission such as the breaking of taboos. Such breaches may in some cases attract the visitation of death upon the culprit by some impersonal spiritual being; and such things are believed to use natural or supernatural means such as employing the power of omission or commission of departed persons, acting through spirits. The effect of an oath is continuous until a cleansing ritual is carried out. It appears that swearing of an

oath is necessary if there is a false accusation over property such as land. A respondent who witnessed the swearing of an oath explained:

If I accuse you of stealing from me and you are refusing to pay, I tell you to take this oath and say, "if I have your property, damn me" If you are guilty and you do not pay me all your people will die after seven days until you return my property and the oath is cleansed.

A refusal to swear the oath is taken as an indication of guilt since innocent people have nothing to fear. Should the accused swear innocence falsely, illness and death are believed to befall his or her family and relatives. However, during one of my visits to a traditional healer (*mundu mue*) from Kitui a man arrived worried about the death of a number of his relatives. He complained that four male family members had died after their bodies became swollen and treatment at the hospital had failed. They had died one by one each week during the previous four weeks and both he and his wife were beginning to swell. The healer (*mundu mue*) explained that it was a result of a sworn falsehood on *kithitu* and that some of the man's family members had beaten a neighbour and stolen some of his land and goats. One of them had sworn his innocence on *kithitu*. She advised the man to return the stolen animals and seek an oath specialist for the oath to be cleansed. Thus, deaths occasioned by an oath occur in a serial manner such that in a family death occur repeatedly. In most cases the deaths occurs at the same time every year and it is of related people. One oath specialist observed that:

Oath follows the same line of blood. This means that an oath will affect only those people who are related to the one to whom the oath was directed by blood. Traditionally, in a family there was *mwana wa kithitu* which literally translates to "son of an oath" who was born out of wedlock. He was very important to the family in case an oath was struck on the family. Since he was not of the blood of that particular family he could not be affected by the oath, thus, he could continue the family line and name. This tradition has not changed much among the Akamba.

Similarly another respondent who purifies oaths noted the following:

Oaths are dangerous and until purification is undertaken the deaths cannot stop. Striking or swearing an oath follows some procedures and truth. This is to say that someone cannot die because of an oath if he or she is innocent. The wronged individual can strike the oath himself or herself or can seek the services of an oath specialist. If whoever strikes does it for false accusations it reverses to him and deaths strike his family not the family of the person to which the oath was directed (Keli:Personal communication 2000).

The researcher identified different types of oaths among the Akamba, which are described below.

(i) Ngumbe (Urine Oath).

Informants stated that this kind of oath is performed when a woman urinates on her underpants and then shakes them uttering evil words. In addition, the underpants are shaken such that the urine comes out in the form of drops. Thus, it is believed that the life of the person to whom the oath is directed will be like the drops, that is, the life will be haphazard like the drops of the urine. It was further explained that one can do this secretly and the effect felt on the person it was intended. When the family of the intended person starts to experience misfortunes they consult a medicine man or woman who reveals to them what the problem is. This consultation is done three or four times and the problem is confirmed. When it is confirmed that it is an oath, they look for a cleansing specialist. This kind of oath is dangerous because it affects the whole family of the victim and may even extend to the extended family if it is not cleansed. It was further explained that during the cleansing ritual of this kind of an oath the person who occasioned the oath should be present so that she may retrieve the cursing words. A mixture of herbs and sheep's intestinal contents referred to literally as *ng'ondu* is then sprinkled onto the family members by the purification specialist (*mundu wang'ondu*).

(ii) Kithitu kya mbisu (Oath of a Pot)

Informants stated that this kind of oath involves striking a pot with a special stick, whose name was only given in kikamba as "*mukulwa*" or may just involve breaking a pot by smashing it on the ground. The implication is that the person at which the oath is directed will "die" the same way the pot broke. It was explained that breaking of the pot symbolises the death of the person. This kind of oath is effective only if the breaking of the pot is accompanied by utterances by the person who is striking the oath. The importance of these utterances was emphasized by a respondent who stated:

If there are no utterances when the pot is being broken that is not an oath. It is as if the pot broke by accident which does not constitute an oath.

It was also stated that cleansing and the herbs used are the same as in the above case. If there are some people of the family absent during the cleansing time, they are cleansed also. Sticks to symbolise the absent people are cut. As the present people are cleansed the sticks are cleansed also. The sticks commonly used are cut from *Mukengesya* tree, known botanically as *Commelina benghalensis*. If the absent person is a male the stick is held by a male person of his age in his right hand. On the other hand, if the absent person is a female the stick is held by a female of her age in her left hand. For the unmarried absentees the unmarried of any sex who is present will hold the sticks. It was explained that after cleansing the family members are supposed to stay for seven days without having sexual intercourse. In case any family member has sexual intercourse within the prohibited timeframe, the cleansing of the oath is rendered ineffective. The absentees are not included in this category and even if they have sexual intercourse there is no problem because the sticks representing them are within the home area. The remaining mixture of *ng'ondū* (a mixture of herbs and the intestinal contents of a sheep) is taken to an anthill (*kikumbau* or *kititiku*), of white Ants. It is said that within the seven-day period the ants will have mated and, thus, carried the oath.



(iii) *Uvito / Wiu (Menstruation)*

Informants stated that this oath takes effect if a burial is carried out when a female member of that family is on menstruation. It was explained that menstrual blood is believed to be polluting and, therefore, the female should first be ritually purified before burial takes place. Thus, if a burial is undertaken while a female member of the family is on menstruation this oath called *uvito/wiu* takes effect and can wipe out the whole family if not cleansed. The researcher was shown a homestead whose members had been wiped out by death resulting from this oath (*uvito*). To prevent this oath, it was explained that all the female relatives (both married and unmarried) who have reached the age of undergoing menstruation are assembled a day prior to the funeral and asked by an old woman who has reached menopause if any had her menstruation at that particular time. This is a serious matter and no one is supposed to hide. If there is one in such a condition, she is moved away from the village because the funeral cannot be carried out when she is present. When a family is faced with serial deaths they consult a medicine man or woman who tells them the reasons behind the deaths and recommends solutions.

4.3 The Living Dead (*ngai sya musyi*)

Informants defined the living dead as spirits of the dead members of the family who are believed to reside around the homestead. Generally, they were referred to as "*ngai sya musyi*" which literally translates to "gods of the family". In normal circumstances *ngai sya musyi* are not perceived to pose any threats to the living except when they become insulted by certain activities of the living members of their respective families. It was stated that the living dead are given names according to their professions when they were still alive. This follows the belief that once dead these people continue to be alive, thus, they continue with the same roles they played when they were physically living. The researcher identified six broad categories of the living dead as discussed below.

4.3.1 Guard (*Muthiani* (Singular), *Athiani* (Plural))

Informants stated that the name *muthiani* comes from the verb *kuthiana*, which literally translates to "safeguarding" and whoever does this is a guard. It was further stated that this category of the living dead guide and lead members of their respective families and they also safeguard them from any catastrophes. For instance, they can help one to get employment, have a good and **safe** journey as well as to succeed among other good things. *Athiani* were very important leaders in hunting and in war. They were also associated with luck on such occasions. When alive these people's work was to help and safeguard their kin and, therefore, when dead, they continue with their work this time as the living dead.

4.3.2 *Mumanthi* (Singular), *Amanthi* (Plural)

Informants stated that the Akamba term *amanthi* or *mumanthi* translates to the "one who looks for something" especially wealth. Therefore, this category helps family members to gather wealth. During libation this category is asked to provide wealth. When alive this category of people used to go for cattle raids and, therefore, when they become the living dead they continue to search for wealth for the family. Nowadays there are no raids, therefore, the most hardworking members of the family (men) become *amanthi* when they die. The living believe that the role of this category is very vital for the well-being of the family. It was explained that if *amanthi* are angered they can stop helping the living to acquire wealth, thus, leading to poverty and ill health. A respondent had this to say concerning this group:

These are the pillars of any family because they help the living to get daily bread. Sometimes I do not know what the family will eat but I get food through ways very hard to understand. *Amanthi* of this family cannot let me down because I do not forget them. Occasionally I brew *karubu* for them to express thankfulness for sustaining us. If the living forgets *amanthi*, they will in turn forget the living and therefore cannot sustain them. In a family there can be several *amanthi*.

4.3.3 Protector/ Herder- *Muithi* (singular), *Aithi* (plural)

Informants stated that the name *muithi* comes from the verb *kuithy'a*, which translates to "protecting". Therefore, this category helps to feed the family. They are believed to help the living to get daily food. During libation they are asked to continue feeding the family and not to let the family members go hungry. It was pointed out that the verb "*kuithya*" also means to look after cattle and, therefore, when they die they look after their family members.

It was also stated that term *kuithya*, which translates literally to "feeding", entails two aspects. First, it entails feeding which means that there is food to eat, and second, it involves "protecting" or *kusuvia*. If any danger looms to the herd, for example, the herder safeguards the flock. Therefore, the work of *aithi* involves these two roles. Furthermore, when a member of the family is going away on a journey, the *aithi* are requested to guide, feed and protect the individual from all calamities. According to a respondent:

The above three categories are the most important and work as a team towards the welfare of the living. Their roles sometimes over-lap since they are very close to one another. Even when *karubu* is brewed they are all given during libation although sometimes the *karubu* (local brew) may be made for a particular group only.

4.3.4 *Kathambi*

Informants stated that this category comprises of both women who died while married and the unmarried ones. It was also stated that these are usually remembered when a woman has problems with giving birth. They are asked to provide children to those who cannot give birth as well as help those who are pregnant to deliver safely. Concerning the *kathambi*, a respondent said:

This category of the living dead helps women to give birth safely. If giving birth is difficult an old man pours fresh milk, finger millet mixed with milk, *ugali*, butter or

goats blood or just water as libation, mentioning their names and requests this category of living dead to intervene and help. When this is done the delivery goes on safely (Kasimu Mwangangi: Personal communication).

4.3.5 Childless- *Muviti*, (Singular), *Aviti* (Plural)

Informants defined *aviti* as men who died before they had their own children and family. *Muviti* literally translates in to "*childless*". They are called *aviti* because when they died they had no families of their own to go back to. When the other categories of the living dead are remembered these are also remembered. It was noted that all the above living dead, except "*kathambi*", are men and *athiani* are the most important one because they control the rest.

4.3.6 Name sake- *Musyawa* (singular) *Asyawa* (plural)

Informants stated that *musyawa* stood for each individual in the family, thus, each individual has his or her own *musyawa*. The term *musyawa* literally translates to "name sake". This refers to that particular living dead whom one has been named after and who is supposed to safeguard the individual and make him or her prosper. For example, if a man who died had a scar and a baby is born with a scar the baby's *musyawa* will be the living dead who had a scar. The role of this category of living dead is to protect a person from sicknesses and other misfortunes. Each individual's *musyawa* is remembered during libation. It was further stated that this category of the living dead is the most powerful for an individual. If the needs of this category are not met they are the most dangerous in causing barrenness, impotency and other misfortunes and, even, death to the individual.

It was also stated that all the above categories of the living dead are collectively called "*ngai sya musyi*" which translates to "gods of the family". Family problems are in most cases attributed to the anger of these categories of the living dead.

Once there are problems in the family a medicine man or woman is consulted.

One key informant stated the following:

If in a family there are frequent sicknesses or livestock deaths, or a couple cannot get a child, a medicine man or woman (*mundu mue*) is consulted and the problem sought. Usually the family gods bring these problems if they have been wronged. Wronging the family gods may involve failure to pour libation. When what they want is accomplished the problems are solved. For example I poured libation to the family gods when a newborn persistently cried. I consulted a medicine man who told me that the child had been given the wrong name. When I poured the libation and gave him the right name, he has never cried again (Personal communication: Kithuka, 2000).

Specifically, the living dead are those departed kin who can be remembered by the living and are believed to actively participate in the daily lives of the living. These include men and women who had children before they died. The living dead appeared to the living in the past and could physically be seen. On this issue a respondent reported:

My grandmother told me that one day immediately after they had gone to bed she saw a very bright light inside the house. She saw an old woman weaving a "*kiondo*" (an Akamba basket). The light was from fire lit from firewood. The old woman did not talk to her and vanished. After the light went off, she woke up and poured milk as libation so as to appease the living dead who had appeared to her. The following day she went and consulted a medicine man who told her that the living dead wanted some family sacrifice (Personal communication: Ndimu, 2000).

It was explained that the living people, especially the old saw family gods physically. Nowadays, however, the living dead appear in dreams and make their demands known to the living. One key informant aged 102 years narrated to the researcher a case during an occasion of pouring libation and sacrifice of a goat.

My husband died two years ago. For the first year after

he died I had peace. However, he started to appear at night such that I could not get sleep. He demanded that his son, Keli, should brew *karubu* for him. He also demanded a he-goat to be slaughtered during the occasion of pouring libation. He also demanded a sheet of black colour so that when he comes at night he cannot feel cold. All the above has been done". On another occasion the key informant told the researcher: "My husband has ceased to appear because all his demands were met. I now sleep in peace.

Informants noted that when there are persistent family problems within an extended family, the Akamba have a way to separate the families such that problems of one family do not spread to the other families. This is called in Akamba language "*kutaaniw'a*" which translates to "separate". The separation is done to the living as well as to the living dead so that even the living dead cannot cause problems to other families. The ritual of separation is done by a specialist (*mundu wa ng'ondū*). When this is done even a female having menarche can attend a funeral of a kin without any problems because she is regarded as a neighbour and, therefore, she cannot cause any misfortunes in the family. The following is an account from a key informant about of how separation is carried out.

During a libation occasion whoever is pouring the libation addresses the living dead saying "I am now escorting you to join your relatives on the other side of life. I would request you not to bring problems to the rest of your family members. They are now separate families, we request wealth increases and bring any thing good you find on your way (Kamonyi Kioko: Personal communication).

The researcher was unable to get an English term that was equivalent to the term *Kathambi*.

4.4 Community gods (*Aimu*)

According to the informants, these are the living dead who stay at shrines (*mathembo*) and are referred to as *aimu*. These were men and women who were medicine men and women when they were alive. Their roles are at the level of the

community and, thus, they do not stay at any particular homestead but live in a common place. Most of the shrines where this category resides have a *mugumo* tree or just a thicket. In most cases people turn to community gods when there is a community problem, for instance, a drought or an invasion of locusts. People consult medicine men and women to find out what the community gods want to be done. Sacrifices to the community gods are done at the shrine. Local beer (*karubu*) for libation is brewed at the shrine and no fire is used in its preparation because it is believed that the gods will provide the fire. Concerning the local beer (*karubu*) and sacrifice to community gods a key informant who participates in sacrifices at the shrine explained.

There is no fire lit when beer (*karubu*) is brewed at the shrine. The "owners" of the beer who are the community gods who stay at the shrine "Prepare it without fire and it is usually the best". Secondly it is prepared at a night before the actual day of a sacrifice. An old man who has qualified to attend the occasion donates the goat for the sacrifice to those who have given out theirs. This is called in Kikamba *kukula*. Only old men are supposed to undertake sacrificial duties at the shrine. The *karubu* is poured to these community gods and some meat is left for them to eat (Kithuka Nzioki: Personal communication)

4.5 Remembering the Living Dead Through Libation

The researcher asked how the living dead are remembered by the living members. There was a universal consensus that the living dead are remembered through the pouring of libations and sacrifices. The following is a detailed description of a libation occasion, which was witnessed by the researcher. An old man called Keli Ndivo undertook the event. The event started with an order to every one to remove his or her shoes. According to Keli Ndivo, this was to show respect to the living dead and especially those who were to be remembered during this event. The local brew *karubu*, used for this purpose was put into a calabash. Keli Ndivo

swallowed the contents of this first calabash as others watched quietly. The empty calabash was filled for the second time and the libation started.

The researcher observed that calling of the names started with the one to which the local brew (*karubu*) was initially dedicated, in this case it was Ngotho, the grand father of the libator, Keli Ndivo. The communication was direct and it was as though the libator was addressing the living dead face to face. This is to say that the language used was the present tense. Libation, according to Keli Ndivo, is a form of blessing and he strongly believes that what he asks through libation is usually granted. He gives an example of some goats, which he says initially he had no goats but when he poured libation and requested for some, he got some money that he used to buy two goats.

During this particular occasion the living dead were mentioned from the one who departed recently up to the sixth generation. Each living dead was implored to guide and to safeguard the living members of the family from calamities and not to punish the living. According to Keli Ndivo, the six generations of living dead he mentioned were the ones who are "living" and thus are actively involved in the matters of the family.

Throughout the occasion the language used was that of beseeching the living dead. As he mentioned each and every name he poured some *karubu* on the ground. Apart from the patrilineal living dead, he also remembered those from where those of the in-laws where he has given daughters as well as those from where his sons have married from. The reason given for this is that they co-own the family and they can cause misfortunes.

Libation in which women are remembered must have milk, which is poured the same way as *karubu*. The names of women are mentioned in the same way as it is done when men are remembered. Children are not remembered. Also the women living dead are remembered with *mukondiu*, beer which is not sour. This is just a



mixture of sugar and water. At this stage the mixture is not beer and, therefore, the women living dead can be given through libation. Those who used to be bad during their lives before death were given at a separate spot. These included witches, wizards, those who plant bad spells (*ithangona*), those who work for others downfall were given very little. It is important to note that at this stage this is also directed at those currently living who practice the above evil things. This is shown clearly during libation. Another key informant had the following to say during libation:

My father you are watching and guiding us every day, drink this beer. I am beseeching you to continue protecting us. Before you died you had called me, your son, and informed me of your death. I cannot forget to remember you. I have also slaughtered a he-goat for you, drink also the blood and increase the herd so that in future I may have even a bull to give you. The problems you were bringing to my mother (wife to the deceased) should stop. She has come a long journey to witness this event. Give her peace until that time when she will join you there. I have named a grandson after you. You appeared to me before he was born and demanded that he be named after you. I have done according to your wish so please guide him and make him prosperous. The bad people, the sorcerers, witches, people with bad eyes drink from a separate place. Whoever sees a son or a daughter of someone and says "he is prospering against our wish" should dry like their beer (Keli: personal communication)

Informants stated that men who have already given out a goat and *karubu* to the old men are the ones who are qualified to pour libation. However, women do pour water or milk quietly without saying anything if there is no man because, according to a respondent, women are not allowed to call out the names of the dead. Also, pouring of libation is inherited from father to son although the son to inherit should have undergone all the stages so as to do the job. Not all old men pour libation and sometimes a relatively young man by age can be allowed to pour libation even when there are older men than him.

On this particular issue the key informant said that there are stages which a man ought to go through before he is allowed to pour libation.

Stage 1. Giving out a goat

This first stage is called "*kukula*". It involves the person to offer a gourd of liquor (*karubu*) and a goat to old men who pour libation. He shares these with the old men who should include some of his relatives who pour libation. This stage allows one to drink freely without any fear. After one is through this stage beer (*karubu*) cannot cause any harm to the person.

Stage 2. Giving the Head

This stage is called "giving the head" (*kunew'a mutw'e*). This stage qualifies one to be able to eat and divide the head of a goat to old men. During this stage the person gives a gourd of *karubu* and a goat whose head is shared among old men.

Stage 3. Giving the calabash

This stage is called "giving the calabash" (*kunew'a nzele*). The person is given a calabash full of *karubu* by an old man who is qualified and told to pour libation as he is guided. From this point the person is allowed to pour libation. This is how the Akamba worship by remembering their ancestors and asking them for blessings (Personal communication: Keli, 2000).

Informants also stated that pouring of libation by unqualified people can be calamitous and may result to punishment from the ancestors. The Akamba call this "*kithetha*" (means inviting something to happen). The living dead can be angered by such an activity and punish the offender with misfortunes and or even death.

4.6 Social Response to Death and mourning

Informants stated that from the time when death is announced old people gather at the homestead for wake keeping. During this time all the members of the

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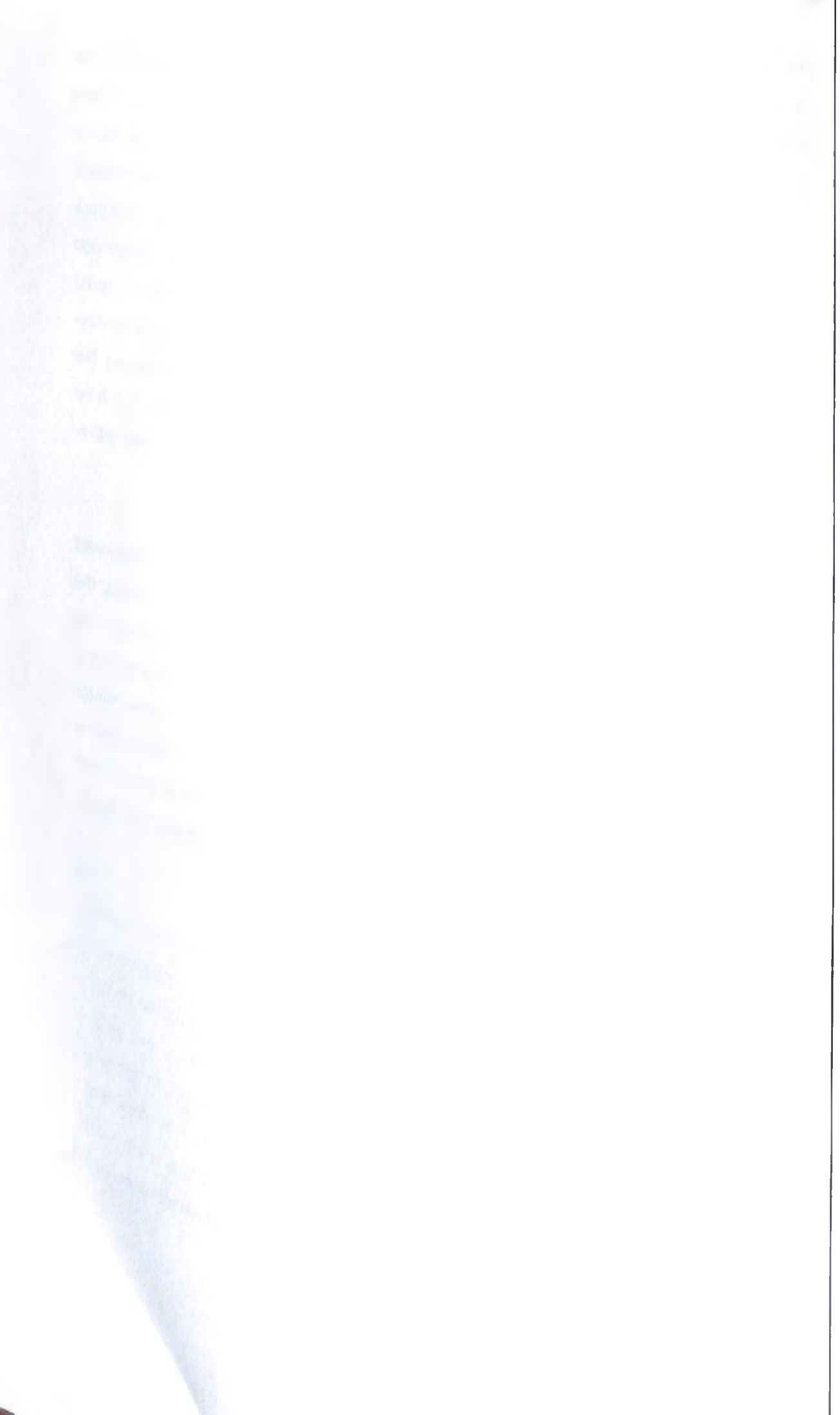
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Informants stated that from the time when death is announced old people gather at the homestead for wake keeping. During this time all the members of the

village present a certain amount of money, which vary from one village to the next. This amount ranges from Kshs 20 to Kshs 50, and is compulsory, since records of all those who pay this contribution are kept, since it is done for everybody who deserves wake keeping. It was also noted that the homestead, and especially where the wake-keepers are gathered, fire was lit as darkness instils fear into the people performing the wake keeping. Foodstuffs, water and firewood are brought by the villagers in turns from the day death has occurred until the day the burial takes place. The wake-keepers are succeeded by day-watchers who stay in the homestead to help the family members mourn the dead. The villagers make visits to console the family of the deceased. It is here noted that even where corpse is in a mortuary the day watchers and the wake-keepers continue to do so until the day of the burial.

Informants also stated that mourning among the Akamba is mostly by the relatives of the deceased and friends. Any death of an individual leaves two parties, the person who dies and the survivors who mourn. Informants referred to the desolation that follows the loss of a loved one as bereavement, and according to a respondent, it is the most severe psychological trauma most people will encounter in the course of their lives. Furthermore, death throws the entire village into a mourning state and if a member of the family or village does not show openly that he or she is mourning he or she, may be accused of having caused the death through witchcraft.

Informants noted that weeping among family members was common as they mourned the dead. However, it was also noted that among the Akamba weeping is common among women than men. Mostly weeping takes place as the body is lowered into the grave. This is the most critical point of mourning and as an informant puts it "people realize that actually the person died and before this time those close to the dead person are in a state of denial and refuse to admit that actually death occurred". The researcher observed that this is the time when most people break down and weep even when they had withstood grief since the person



died. The researcher also observed that mourning is intense if the dead played an important role in the family. For example, during the burial of a university student in Kathekani area, even unrelated villagers wept. The student was the hope of the family that hoped that after completion of studies he could help the family from the poverty it was in. To this family death had shattered the only hope it had.

4.7 Coping with Grief Among the Akamba

The researcher inquired how the members of the community overcame the loss through death. Informants stated that social networks play an important role in coping with grief among the Akamba. According to the respondents, the villagers join the bereaved family to console it. Even after the burial, some relatives and friends keep the family company for several days. The part played by these people who come to console the bereaved is vital in making the family forget the death. Men sometimes go to drink local brew (*karubu*) to keep thoughts of the death at bay. This is the reason why every member has a social responsibility of attending to burials in the neighbourhood. Informants pointed out that grief is very intense if the village abandons the family of the bereaved. Such cases usually occur if the family has been ostracized by the clan or the village. Anyone who visits that particular family is fined by his or her clan. In such cases the family does not have any association with the village and if death occurs, they dig the grave and bury their dead by themselves. No mourners are allowed to attend burials in such a family. The researcher has documented case studies on this matter. The case studies presented here describe two different cases of social response after death of a man and that of a child in two separate families.

Case study 1: Death of a man 62 years.

9th January: The man died and news of the death spread. Neighbours come to the bereaved family. Old men come and traditionally preserve the body in sand. Old men light fire as they prepare to wake keep referred locally to as *kukomya kimba* in

Kikamba language.

10th January: Women bring foodstuffs, water and firewood to the bereaved family. The local village burial help group (*kyama kya mathiko*) opens a book for contribution. Some of the women cook for the villagers who will day keep. Other old men other than those who spend the previous night come to wake keep.

11th January: Women again bring foodstuffs, water and firewood to the bereaved family. Members of the funeral group to which all the villagers belong, start their contributions of Ksh 50 for burial arrangements. Other old men other than those who spend the previous night come for wake keeping.

12th January: The funeral group (*kyama kya mathiko*) and family members arrange the date of the burial. Young men are summoned to dig the grave the following day. Women bring foodstuffs, water and firewood and some cook food. Other old men other than those who spend the previous night come for wake keeping (*kukomya kimba*).

13th January: The day of the burial. Young men start digging the grave after the oldest grandson strikes the first lump of soil. This lump of soil is kept at a safe place as it will eventually be returned to the grave. This is called *kuvulya*. Old men guide and supervise the digging of the grave. Old men dress the body and put into a casket inside the house. At 2.00pm mourners start to arrive at the home of the bereaved. Male family members carry the body to the graveyard for the burial. The whole atmosphere is gloom and people are clearly shaken by the death. The preachers talk of death being eminent to everybody. They emphasize that the person being buried is only "sleeping" and that he is not dead. After the burial the men who dug the grave refill the grave and old men place a thorny bush over the grave. The mourners disperse but close family members remain with the bereaved.



Case study 2: Death of an 8 year old.

This case study shows the situation whereby the family of the deceased had been ostracised by the village and neighbours.

21st February: The child dies and word spreads throughout the village. No one goes to the bereaved family. The funeral organization (*kyama kya mathiko*) does not respond to the death either.

22nd February: The family members are the only ones at the home and the neighbours carry out their chores normally as though there is no death in the village.

23rd February: The family members dig the grave and bury the child. The neighbours and villagers do not participate.

The above two case studies show how the Akamba society socially responds to death. Death triggers a communal response as the relatives, neighbours and friends join the bereaved family to mourn with them as shown by case study 1. When the neighbours and friends join in mourning the death with the bereaved they lessen the grief. The second case study shows the situation whereby a family has been ostracised by the village and neighbours. However, this is rare, as each family always makes sure that it is a part of the village and clan.

CHAPTER FIVE

TREATING AND DISPOSING THE DEAD

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings in relation to the third objective of the study, namely, the different ways of treating the dead and the mortuary rituals which are performed.

5.1 The Departure

Informants stated that the passing away of a person especially at home is heralded by a gloom mood and weeping by close relatives. However, as noted earlier, when an old man or woman dies there is little weeping. It was also stated that the emotional response to a death decreases with the age of the person. That is, it is highest for young people who have not married. The researcher observed that when infants die people rarely weep and when deaths occur at home, children are not told openly. The news is broken first to the closest kin. Immediately after death the corpse is wrapped into a blanket (*kulutwa*) by old men. Young men and women are not supposed to touch corpses as it is regarded as a taboo. In cases where a person is very sick, he or she may call his or her sons for the final word if he or she feels that the time to die is near. This is called "*kwiyyaa*" which literally translates to "to give final instructions". Whatever the person says at this particular time is very important since if anybody goes against it he, or she might be cursed. According to a respondent:

When a person is very sick such that his or her death is very near, he or she usually "recovers" and may even eat food and talk to those who are around. Whatever he says at this moment is very important. In most cases the person dies shortly after this abrupt "recovery". For example, before my grandmother died she recovered and ate a lot of food. She called my elder brother and told him to take care of the family when she is gone. Shortly after

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this she lied back as though to sleep and died (David Mumo 2000: Personal communication).

5.2 Rituals performed after Death

Informants noted that there rituals which are performed when death has occurred. However, most of these rituals are not directed at the corpse but rather at the people who are left so as to restore life to normality. The only ritual directed at the corpse observed was of a man who died without a wife. The corpse was "struck" with ash at the anus because the Akamba regard such a person as a bad omen. The ash is meant to cleanse the corpse and protect the death of other unmarried men. On this issue a respondent argued that:

If a man dies without a wife, he is regarded as a fool. Something has to be done to make sure that in that family no such person is born. For this reason his anus is struck with ash by someone of his age who has a wife. This is referred in kikamba language as "*kukimwa na muu*". This is not done to boys because they are not yet married (Maliku 2000: Personal communication).

It was also stated that purification or cleansing rituals are undertaken to restore a normal situation where some taboos have been contravened. Elaborate rituals of purification are performed during the cleansing of oaths (*kuusya kithitu*) and when a funeral is undertaken when a female relative is on menarche. When a burial is carried out when there is a female undergoing menstruation, the cleansing involves woman having sexual intercourse with her husband or her husband's stepbrother if the husband is far away or is dead. This is called "*kumina wiu*". For unmarried women they had sexual intercourse with any man outside the family. This sexual intercourse usually takes place outside the home of the woman so that the sins are left outside the family. Informants explained that purification rituals among the Akamba are done with "*ng'ondvu*" which is a mixture of several herbs together with intestinal contents of a sheep (*muyoo*). According to a specialist of purification, the following are the herbs used in cleansing.

<u>Local name</u>	<u>Botanical name</u>
Mutongatongu	<i>Solanum incunum</i>
Kiindiiu	<i>Cypress rotundus</i>
Muvisavisi	<i>Lantana species</i>
Mutaa	<i>Conyza banariensis</i>
Mukengesya	<i>Comelina banariensis</i>
Kalaku	
Ndau ya Kithekani	
Kitolongwe	

The researcher could not get the botanical terms of *Kalaku*, *Ndau ya kithekani* and *Kitolongwe*.

Informants also stated that for cleansing (*wiu*), the most important herbs are "*kitolongwe*" (*kiluma*), which is regarded as a symbol of the woman, "*kalaku*" used as a symbol of blood and *ndau ya kithekani* used as a symbol of a man's sperms. If all the men declined to have sexual intercourse with a corpse during cleansing, *kalaku* and *kitolongwe* were pounded together and *ndau* soaked in the mixture and then the *ndau* was inserted in to the private parts of the corpse and then removed. This action stood for sexual intercourse. It was further stated that during this kind of cleansing (*wiu*), blood was highly discouraged because blood cannot cleanse blood. After cleansing the family members are not supposed to have sexual intercourse for seven days. This also applies to the person who was purifying the family.

5.3 Digging the Grave and Time of Burial

Informants noted that determining who is to dig the grave among the Akamba is an important ethical matter. The first lump of soil must be by the oldest grandchild of the deceased if he or she had grandchildren. In case the deceased is unmarried this first lump of soil is dug by the father or the father's brother.

Once this first lump of soil is dug, young energetic men start digging the grave. The gravediggers may or may not be married and are drawn mostly from the village. Digging the grave is a collective responsibility and no bereaved family member is allowed to dig the grave. Likewise women are not allowed to dig graves. This is because among these people, women are not supposed to bury the dead. The alignment of the grave is usually in the east to west direction. The body is laid with the head facing the west and the legs facing the east. The reason, according to one respondent is, so that the setting sun may escort the soul of the dead person to the place of the ancestors, which the Akamba believe is to the west. The grave alignment is an important burial ritual and shows respect to the dead. The researcher observed that the time of burial among the Akamba is almost always in the afternoon. However, this rule relating to burial time might not be followed in cases where there are two funerals in the same village. If the funerals are two, one is carried out in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Most funerals are carried out between 2pm and 4pm. In some cases the funeral of unmarried men who have attained marrying age, which is determined if the age mates have already married, are buried in the morning. This is usually a brief and unemotional burial ceremony. The researcher sought to know why the time of burial was always in the afternoons. According to Kamuyu, a key informant:

Burials are undertaken in the afternoon so that the setting sun could transport the soul to the place of the dead which is believed to be in the west. Those who are buried in the morning are not "normal" members of the community and thus their souls are not entitled to reach the place of the dead.

5.4 The Burial

Informants stated that the Akamba use the term burial to mean deep entombment of up to five to six feet or deeper. Also, the positioning of the body in the grave is an important aspect of the Akamba. The side on which the body is laid depends on the sex of the dead person, which is reminiscent of the sexual position of either

gender. For instance, men are laid on their right-hand side while women are laid on their left-hand side as though sleeping. According to one respondent:

The way the body is laid in the grave among the Akamba is very important because it determines the relationship between the dead and the living members of the family. Since the Akamba believe that the living dead play important roles among the living, the dead are accorded respect during the burial. This includes the way the body is laid in the grave. If a man is laid on his left, he may cause misfortunes among the living because this shows disrespect by implying that he is female. Also, by laying the body on the right hand, according to Akamba tradition, it ensures that the dead joins the ancestors the same way he was during earthly life (Mukeyu, 2000:Personal communication).

It was also stated that Akamba have a way of preserving a corpse which entails "burying" it into the sand which is then watered. Preserved this way the body can stay for about five to six days before burial. This is done by old men and the sand used is put into the grave as the soil is returned. A day before the burial, young energetic men dig the grave. Digging the grave is recent phenomena among the Akamba and young energetic men are the ones who undertake the task. In the past disposal of the dead was by throwing into the bush and this was done by the old men. The first lump of soil is dug by the oldest grandchild of the deceased. In cases where the deceased had no grand- children his or her oldest son does this. It should be noted that females do not do this act of *kuvuly'a*. Accordingly, one key informant said:

Among the Akamba women are not allowed to dig the grave. This is because women are not supposed to bury the dead. Therefore, women are passive actors whose work is to provide the gravediggers with food and water. Also women or girls are not supposed to undertake the act of *"kuvuly'a"* because among the Akamba women do not bury the dead and, therefore, the act of *kuvuly'a* means burying the person. Whoever does this is usually the oldest grandchild of the deceased and is entitled to a cow. This grandchild should not be a girl because among the Akamba

women do not perform this task (Personal communication: Kivai Mbindyo, 2000).

5.5 Talking About Death

The findings of this research revealed that talking about death is not an easy one because it is a topic not readily spoken about in free and relaxed conversations. In many ways death is a taboo subject that may be both frightening and of deep interest at the same time. People typically avoid thinking about death and dying, yet death is obviously inevitable and people will undoubtedly experience the death of persons close to them during the course of their lives. Death talk among the Akamba is not an open issue. This means that talk about death is limited to particular times especially when death has occurred. As a story of a death of a person is spread from one person to another, people talk about death. The Kikamba word for death is *kikw'u* (singular), *ikw'u* (plural). However, this word is rarely used because it is regarded as unsympathetic and in its place the commonly used word is *kwitwa* which translates to "to be called". This is regarded as a sympathetic way to say that someone has died. According to Kavatha:

Talking about death of someone is dangerous because if by any chance death occurs to that person one might be suspected of having worked some magic towards that person. For this reason, therefore, it is highly discouraged to talk of death of a person when he or she is alive. On the other hand, talking about one's death is equally dangerous because it is seen as a way of inviting the death to occur. The Akamba translate talking about one's death as "*kithetha*" and this may actually cause the death to occur (Personal communication: Kavatha, 2000)

According to another respondent, Kilonzo Ndolo (67),

Talking about death of someone may cause it. He says that if there is a rumour that someone has died, he or she will eventually die due to "bad mouths" of those who spread the rumour (Kilonzo Ndolo 2000, personal communication).

This is complimented by researcher's personal observation during the burial of Kiluku. During the burial people were talking about death especially when young men were digging the grave. However, even when he was seriously sick nobody was talking about his death although the seriousness of his sickness symbolised eminent death. The link between talking about the death of someone and the actual event is not clear and should be further investigated. People become conscious of death especially when death has occurred. What the researcher means here is that during the burial of someone the mourners look apparently worried about death. Although everyone is aware that one day they will die, they keep the thoughts in their subconscious mind and these only comes to the conscious when they have witnessed a death. During a funeral the mourners exhibit awe of death, their fear of death is evident as speaker after speaker talk about the death of the person they are burying. Since most of those who talk during a funeral are religious people they preach about the future and the necessity of preparedness since death is eminent to everyone. During one funeral, one speaker talked of "coffins being as many as the mourners themselves", meaning that at a point all will one time die.

5.6 Compensation of a Dead Person

The researcher inquired what happens when a member of one family kills another. Informants stated that Akamba words that translate into compensation are *kuiva maambo* or *kuiva mbanga*. It was also stated that compensation of a dead person is undertaken by the clan of the person who caused the death. Therefore, all the clan members contribute towards the compensation of the dead man. The reason why all members partake to pay is because there is an oath taken by all the members of each clan to the effect that an individual who compensates a dead person alone will die. The following is a translation of a compensation message collected by the researcher in the research site:

Every member of Ndune Muoini clan should know that there will be a clan meeting for the compensation (*maambo*) of Mutunzi Mue/ Kimeu Kyengo on 4-12-2000

at the home (*iko*) - where a clan meets of Kalata branch at exactly 2 pm. The meeting will take place at the home of the secretary Tom Nzoka. Every male member of the clan should bring a compensation contribution of Ksh 100, food contribution Ksh 50 and the women 2 Kgs of flour or Ksh 20. Do not delay because if you delay the clan soldiers will come for you and you will pay a goat and soldiers fee of Ksh 50. Yours secretary, Ngwata Location.

The above message of compensation is directed at all the members of that particular clan. This shows that the compensation of a dead person is not an individual affair but a collective responsibility of the whole clan. Secondly, it is a must for any member to contribute whether willingly or through force. This is because as a member of the clan one can kill another person by accident. Clans are well organised with appointed soldiers to enforce clan rules and regulations.

Informant noted that a dead male is compensated with twelve cattle and in other cases fourteen cattle while a female is seven cattle. The age of a person to be compensated does not matter. It was also noted that the compensation of a man is higher than that of a female because a man is senior to a woman. On the number of cattle given as compensation a respondent said:

There is no number of cattle, which is worth a human being. Fourteen cattle is very little. Even money is not worth a human being. Another one says that currently because of poverty the number of cattle given is enough (Kivai Mbindyo and Mutule Ngolanie: Personal Communication).

It was also noted that the Akamba do not compensate people with money. However, the cattle can be exchanged for goats. Initially one cow was equivalent to 11 or 12 goats but nowadays it is 4 or 5 goats. Clans are made of men because there is a saying among the Akamba that a woman has no clan but adopts the clan of her husband. Women do not contribute any money towards compensation whether married or unmarried. This is clearly shown by the message given above of the *Muoini* clan. Unmarried girls and married women do not attend the clan meetings of their parents because they do not belong to the clans. All male

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom.

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom.

3. The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom.

4. The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom.

5. The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the atom.

members of a clan who are above 18 years are entitled to pay compensations contribution because at that age one is regarded as a grown up and capable of causing death. Compensation is done across clan as well as within the same clan. In cases where an animal of a member of a clan kills a member of another clan, the compensation is also done as though a person did the killing. In cases where one is only hurt and does not die the kind of compensation is called "*nthinziwa*". This involves the slaughtering of a goat or a sheep for the injured person to eat.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the study according to the stated objectives and assumptions. Conclusions are then drawn basing on the summary and, lastly, recommendations are made.

6.1 Summary

From the findings presented in the previous chapters, it came out clearly that among the Akamba death does not just occur, but usually has an explanation, even where there is a medical diagnosis. The main explanations of death among the Akamba include witchcraft and sorcery, contravention of oaths as well as the role of the living dead. Witchcraft is usually attributed to a person and, therefore, it is not uncommon to find reports such as "a jealous neighbour had worked magic and as a result my child was thrown in to the water and drowned". Those who practice witchcraft and sorcery can be identified by a witchdoctor and, therefore, punished. Most of the accusations of witchcraft are levelled against family members and/or neighbours. There is a strong belief that someone who does not know another cannot direct witchcraft to him or her.

Other than witchcraft and sorcery, another explanation of death is oaths. The Akamba hold oaths very seriously because they cause death. There are different types of oaths which include breaking a pot, menstruation (*uvito*) which takes effect if a burial took place when a female of the family was having her menstruation and *ngumbe* which is taken by women by urinating on their underpants and sprinkling locally known as *kuvuunza*. Among the three oaths, *uvito* is the most dangerous and it can cause successive deaths in the family until the oath is lifted through cleansing. The Akamba consult medicine men or women



to establish whether deaths are occasioned by oaths. The Akamba believe that the dead continue to live after the physical death and that they influence the events of the living in their respective families. The dead members of the family which the living can remember are the living dead which the Akamba call *ngai sya musyi* which literally translates to family gods. These family gods (*ngai sya musyi*) are other death causing agents. The Akamba believe that the living dead play important roles among the physically living people. This is evident when there is a calamity in the home, libation is poured and the protection of the living dead sought. The perceived role of the living dead ensures that all mortuary rituals are carried out lest the dead haunt the living. The living ensure that the relationships between them and the living dead are good so as to get blessings.

The Akamba response to death is a societal affair in the sense that when death has occurred people gather at the bereaved family to mourn. In the home of the bereaved family until the dead is buried, it is a place of activity as women bring firewood, water and foodstuffs. Men, on the other hand, stay day and night at the bereaved family. This act by men is called by the Akamba *kukomya kimba* which translates to wake keeping. In every village there is a funeral association (*kyama kya mathiko*), which takes over the funeral arrangements including transport and other issues. Each member both male and female contributes an amount that ranges from ksh 20 to 50 to cater for the funeral expenses. To emphasize the social response the Akamba have a saying that stresses communal participation when there is death in the society. The Akamba say "somebody gathers the people to bury him or her when he or she is alive by attending to funerals". It is in very rare cases when the society does not collectively respond to death in the society. This occurs if the family has abandoned the clan or the village. This means that the family does not participate in clan or village matters. If death occurs in that family, the village, clan or the larger society does not help. The members of the village do not participate in either the funeral arrangements or the burial. The family members of the bereaved family are supposed to bury their dead by themselves. However, this is a rare case in society as each family struggles to



maintain good relations with the clan and the village as well as the wider society. The society, therefore, helps the bereaved family to absorb the shock of death as the grief is shared between the family and the villagers who come to mourn. This shows that the response to death is not an individual or family affair but a collective societal response.

Mortuary rituals among the Akamba serve to return life to normal after it is disrupted by death. Death causes ritual impurity and, therefore, cleansing rituals are carried out to rectify the situation. In the Akamba community there are specialists whose work is undertaking these rituals. The Akamba have very few rituals directed to the corpse, since most of these rituals are directed at the family members of the dead.

6.2 Conclusions

From the forgoing, it is evident that the Akamba do not recognize death as an accident but something that is caused by an agent. Most of the deaths are therefore attributed to different causal agents. The belief in witchcraft among the Akamba is very strong and as the findings have shown, every failure or misfortune is attributed to witchcraft. Johnson (1999) sums the way the Akamba view witchcraft and sorcery by noting that it is the recourse to everything that goes wrong. With regard to causes of death, therefore, witchcraft and sorcery, among other causes, account for the deaths regardless of whether they have a medical diagnosis or not. This is because the Akamba must attach a causal agent to all the deaths as it is construed that no death ever occurs by accident.

Physical death does not mark the end of life but it is just a bridge to the afterlife. Those who have died are regarded as the living dead. The Akamba regard the living dead as part of their former families and, therefore, they have important roles to play in the lives of the living. The roles of the living dead range from provision of wealth to protection of the living. The relationship between the physically living and

the living dead must, therefore, be maintained so that the latter can continue to protect and provide for the former. If the living dead are wronged they can bring misfortunes as well as death. When problems arise in the family, the members consult medicine men or women to find out the wishes of the living dead who are then appeased through the pouring of libation. The living dead are active so long as there are living people who can remember them. When those who could remember the living dead also die they cease to be living dead as they are no longer living in the memories of the physically living. They then become spirits.

Mortuary rituals are very important among the Akamba as they are used as a way of returning life to normal after death has disrupted it. The Akamba do not have elaborate rituals directed at the corpse but rather most of the rituals are of cleansing of death associated impurities and oaths. The belief in the effectiveness of the oaths among the Akamba is very strong. Oaths are, therefore, explanations of death and until they are lifted through cleansing rituals deaths will continue to occur. There are ritual specialists whose work is cleansing. The common way of the disposal of the dead is by burying them under the ground. There are customs associated with the grave and the way the body is supposed to be laid on the grave. Although death is individualized, its occurrence triggers social response as the members of the society mourn the dead. Villagers join the bereaved family as a show of sympathy and concern. It is only when death has occurred that people become conscious of it and the fact of facing death at a point in time is evident. Among the Akamba a person attends funerals as a way of gathering those who will bury him or her later on. When death has occurred the social relations are strengthened since people come together to mourn the dead. Mourning the dead is, thus, a societal expectation and any one who does not mourn might be accused of having caused the death through witchcraft.

Death is not an openly discussed subject prior to its occurring. Although physical death is a known inevitability, it is a subject of both fear and fascination. Thus, discussions of death are limited to particular times such as when death has

occurred and especially amongst the young men who dig the grave. Talking about the death of a very sick person is seen as a wish for the person to die. This means that the talk of death is prohibited even when it is eminent. Talking of ones' own death is also regarded as inviting death to occur. The Akamba translate talking about one's death as "*kithetha*" which translates to "self wishing" and is believed to hasten the death.

6.3 Recommendations

Among the Akamba, death does not just occur but it must have an explanation, even if it has a medical diagnosis such as malaria. The main causal agent is witchcraft and sorcery. Since the Akamba view death as having been caused even when a diagnosis is done it means, therefore, that authorities and non-governmental organizations carrying out interventions about diseases should understand the community's view of death. For example, to this community malaria does not cause death, but witchcraft whose causal mechanisms are not scientifically known.

Undertaking research on the Akamba community, Johnson (1999) found that AIDS is regarded as a sin whose cause is incest, literally translated as *thavu*. Thus, this study recommended that any intervention aimed at the eradication of the diseases causing death among the Akamba should take into consideration the perceived causes of such deaths.

The belief in witchcraft was found to be rife among the Akamba. Most of the failures in business, school by pupils and the general community failures are attributed to it. The role of the living dead among the living was found to be also immense. Wealth and good health is supposed to be provided by the living dead.

This study further recommended research on the mechanisms by which the causal agents of death like witchcraft works as this was beyond the scope of this study. When death has occurred in the society, normal life is suspended and rituals are performed which cannot be performed in normal circumstances. Some aspects of life become taboo during this time while others are permitted by tradition. As some cultural issues can only be revealed when death has occurred, this study also recommended that research about death among other societies should be undertaken as a way of unearthing these cultural aspects.

Finally, this study recommended for more social science research on death as many researchers have opted to shy away from the subject. Most of the literature on death is outdated and does not reflect the way societies view death. As the society changes, so does its culture. Therefore, researchers should carry out studies among societies to correct this situation.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE.

1.Name of the respondent

(Optional)

2. Date of the interview

INFORMATION ON DEATH

1. Can you explain to me the general beliefs on death and burial among the Akamba

2. How has modern burial customs influenced traditional burial customs?
.....

3. How is the dead buried according to:

(a) Sex

(b) Age

(c) Social status.

(d) Cause of death

4. How are the following determined?

(a) Burial position.

(b) Burial location.

(c) Grave structure

(d) Grave diggers

(e) Corpse carriers.

5.Can you explain the reasons for these differential types of mortuary rituals

(i)

- (ii)
- (iii)
- (iv)

6. Have you attended or witnessed a traditional or a modern burial?

7. Who are supposed to attend a burial ceremony and why?

8. How is the body laid out in the grave depending on?

- (i) Age.
- (ii) Cause of death.
- (iii) Social status

9. Who organizes for the:

- (a) Burial ceremony.
- (b) Body treatment.....
- c) Dressing the dead
- (d) Purification ceremonies.



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do people in this area talk about immediate and future death of (a) self (b) others?
2. What are all the reasons why people would not talk about death?
3. Is talking about death linked to causing it? If yes or no explain.
4. Do individual believe they can influence when they will die in the future?
5. Can an individual consider his or her own death when they are (a) healthy?
(b) Unhealthy?
6. Are there conditions that can be considered better than living?
7. Does death occur by chance?
8. When can an individual talk about his or her own death?
9. When can individuals talk about death of others and why?
10. What are the rules governing land inheritance?
11. Supposing all the members of the family die, who inherits the land?
12. Who are the living dead and for how long do they live?

13. Who becomes a living dead and who does not and why?

14. How are the living dead remembered and by who?

15. If an individual does not have children at the point of death who remembers him or her?

16. Why do people attend funerals?

17. How are women remembered? (Probe)

18. Do people talk about the risk of death? If yes which language do they use?

19. Are there rituals and rites undertaken after death, and if so, who participates and when/where they performed?

20. Which purification/cleansing ceremonies are carried out after death?

21. Who are purified and how is the purification done?

22. Are there words used in connection with future death?

23. How does one feel when he or she loses a member of the family?

24. How does one cope with this feeling?

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