

**INCULTURATION OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE
TRADITIONAL RELIGION OF THE ABAGUSII OF WESTERN
KENYA**

BY

NYABWARI BERNARD GECHIKO

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS OF KENYATTA
UNIVERSITY**

NOVEMBER 2010

DEDICATION

To my dearly loved wife Naomi Nyanchama Gechiko and our sons
Timothy Onkendi Gechiko and Cleopas Nyabwari Gechiko

DECLARATION

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

Signature_____Date_____

Nyabwari Bernard Gechiko

This thesis has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors:-

Signature _____Date_____

Prof. Rev. Sr. Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Signature _____Date_____

Dr. Michael T. Katola.

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I recognize the valuable assistance many people accorded me during the preparation of this thesis. I thank my informants for finding time to inform this study.

I consider myself vastly privileged to have worked under the indefatigable and dedicated supervision of Prof. Rev. Sr. Anne Nasimiyu Wasike whose kind approach and meticulous criticism have been great incentives in the compilation and completion of this work. Dr. Michael T. Katola's ardent supervision too has been of incomparable academic stimulation, admiration and motivation. I acknowledge Dr. Miriam Nwoye whose rich academic contribution helped to form pillars of this study.

I am equally thankful to Dr. Zacharia Samita, Dr. Philomena Mwaura, Dr. Margaret Gechaga, Dr. Josephine Gitome, Ms Lydia Kahindi, Prof. Mary Getui, Dr. Ruth Muthei, Dr. Francis Wokabi, Dr. Stephen Nyaga, Dr. Newton Kahumbi, Prof. Watson Omulokoli, Dr. Pacifica Okemwa, Mrs Pauline Otieno, Prof. J.J Ong'ong'a, Dr. Gimode and Pastor James Ouma for their constant interest in my work. They referred me to relevant sources that enriched this study. I immensely appreciate their helpful suggestions and constructive criticisms.

This work would never have been a reality without the steadfast love, support, cooperation and care from my beloved wife Naomi Nyanchama Gechiko and our sons Timothy Gechiko and Cleopas Gechiko.

To my family members especially my father Samson Nyabwari and mother Jerusha Bangweso, brothers and sisters; Nevency, Joash, Norah, Abel, Gideon, Rebecca, Grace, Ruth, Ellen and Elijah, I highly recognize your love, support and dedication towards my academic achievements. To my father and mother in-laws; Onkendi and Nyatuka, and my in-laws; Joyce, Moses, Peter, Douglas, Ogake and Oroni, your love and attitude to me has been my strength.

I thank Mr A. D. Bojana for proofreading the final copy of this thesis. I would also like to thank Margaret Mulwa, Fridah Kagemi and the Librarians from Kenyatta University, Hekima College Library, the University of Nairobi Library and the University of Eastern Africa Baraton for allowing me to use their facilities. To my colleagues and friends Eudita Wamboi, Enock Omayio, Elijah Giteya and Dinah Nyaitondi Ombuna I acknowledge the support you gave while doing this study. Shem Ngoko, Zablon Ayiera and Lameck Anyona of Nyamira Conference of SDA

Church will not go unmentioned for influencing my decision for furthering my education, and I will do so.

Finally, I am thankful to God for granting me an opportunity of coming to Kenyatta University for this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Declaration.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	xiv
Operational Definitions.....	xvi
Abbreviations	xix

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background to the Study.....	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem.....	9
1.3	Objectives of the Study.....	11
1.4	Research Premises	12
1.5	Significance of the Study.....	12
1.6	Scope and Limitation	13
1.7	Literature Review	14
1.7.1	The African Concept of God	14
1.7.2	Gusii Traditional Concept of God.....	20
1.7.3	The Concepts of Inculturation.....	23
1.8	Conceptual Framework.....	27

1.8.1	The Christian God against Culture.....	29
1.8.2	The Christian God of Culture.....	30
1.8.3	The Christian God above Culture	32
1.8.4	The Christian God and Culture in Paradox.....	33
1.8.5	The Christian God the Transformer of Culture.....	34
1.9	Methodology	35
1.10	Research Design	35
1.11	Geographical Location of the Study	35
1.12	Data collection.....	36
1.12.1	Respondent Questionnaire	36
1.12.2	Oral Interviews	37
1.12.3	Participant Observation	37
1.13	Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	38
1.13.1	The Youth	38
1.13.2	Parents	38
1.13.3	Church Leaders.....	39
1.13.4	Cultural Leaders.....	39
1.14	Data Analysis	39
1.15	Problems Related to the Study.....	40

CHAPTER TWO

GUSII TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

2.1	Introduction.....	42
2.2	God in Gusii world view.	44
2.2.1	Abagusii Limitations.	46
2.2.2	God in the Forces of Nature	47
2.3	The Basis for Gusii Belief in God	48
2.3.1	God as the Creator, Sustainer and Protector of Creation	49
2.3.2	God as a Leader of the Universe	51
2.4	Abagusii Concept of the Nature of God	52
2.4.1	The Intrinsic Attributes of God	52
2.4.2	The Extrinsic Attributes of God	59
2.4.3	Gusii Anthropomorphic, Animal and Bird Images of God	60
2.5	Conclusion	72

CHAPTER THREE

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON GUSII TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

3.1	Introduction	75
3.2	History of the Coming and the Establishment of the Christian Missionaries in Gusii (1909- 1963)	77
3.2.1	History of the Catholic Church in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	78

3.2.2	History of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	81
3.2.3	History of the Salvation Army in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	90
3.2.4	History of the Africa Inland Mission(AIM) in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	92
3.2.5	History of the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	93
3.2.6	History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	95
3.2.7	History of the Church of God (COG) In Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	96
3.2.8	History of the Friends African Mission (FAM) in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	97
3.3	The Missionary Collective Assessment and influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	99
3.4	The Christian Concept of God and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God.....	102

3.5	The Christian Teaching on the Trinity and Influence on Gusii traditional Concept of God.....	105
3.6	The Biblical Names of God and Their Influence on Gusii References for God	109
3.7	The Christian Teachings on the Attributes of God And Their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	111
3.7.1	The Christian Teaching on the Non-Sharable Attributes of God and Their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God.....	112
3.7.2	The Christian Teaching on the Sharable Attributes of God and Their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God	123
3.7.3	The Biblical Images of God and Their Influence on Gusii References to God	127
3.8	Similarities between Gusii Traditional Concept of God and The Christian Concept of God	141
3.9	Differences between Gusii Traditional Concept of God and the Christian Concept of God	146
3.10	Conclusion	150

CHAPTER FOUR

INCULTURATION OF GUSII TRADITIONAL

CONCEPT OF GOD

4.1	Introduction	153
4.2	Meaning and Purpose of Inculturation.....	154
4.3	Gusii Religiosity as a Seedbed for Inculturation	157
4.4	Application of the Inculturation of Gusii	
	Concept of <i>Engoro</i>	160
4.4.1	Inculturation of God as a Father	162
4.4.2	Inculturation of God as a Gusii Community Elder	167
4.4.3	Inculturation of God as a Healer	173
4.4.4	Inculturation of God as a Friend	179
4.4.5	Inculturation of God as a Blacksmith	184
4.4.6	Inculturation of God as a Farmer	188
4.4.7	Inculturation of God as a Shepherd	194
4.4.8	Inculturation of God as an Ox	199
4.4.9	Inculturation of God as an Eagle	202
4.5	Conclusion.....	206

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	209
5.2	Summary and Conclusions of the Study.	209

5.3 Recommendations of the Study214

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study217

Bibliography218

Appendices

Appendix 1	List of Respondents	226
Appendix 2	Map I: Nyamira in the Map of Kenyan	229
Appendix 3	Map II: Nyamira District Map: Study Site	230
Appendix 4	Questionnaire to Cultural Leaders	231
Appendix 5	Interview for the Youth	233
Appendix 6	Interview for Parents	234
Appendix 7	Interview for Church Leaders	236
Appendix 8	Focus Group Interviews	238
Appendix 9	Official Letters	240

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to inculturate the concept of God in the traditional religion of Abagusii of Western Kenya. Further, the study had three specific objectives. First, to examine Gusii traditional concept of God (*Engoro*) in their religiosity. Second, to investigate the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept and to provide a balanced, holistic and integral way of life.

This study employed a descriptive research design. Through purposive sampling method, data collected constitute the Ekerenyo, Nyamira, Manga, Rigoma and Borabu zones which form the Nyamira District where the study was carried out. A total sample of 52 respondents was interviewed. Questionnaires were used to collect data vis-à-vis participant observation, oral interviews and analysis of documents from library sources. The overall data were collected, analyzed, interpreted and discussed using Neibuhr's (1951) Christological model of God and Culture in the God above Culture, God against Culture, God of Culture, God and Culture in Paradox and God the Transformer of Culture paradigms. This conceptual framework shows that there are some Gusii socio-religio-cultural practices which need to be either eliminated, retained or refined.

The research findings reveal that Abagusii believe in the existence of God (*Engoro*) in their traditional religion. In spite of their traditional concept of God, Christianity assumed this reality, influenced the people's concept of God and did not see the need to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. This condition has influenced people's decline of their inclination to God and that has predisposed them to socio-moral evils in the society.

Inculturation of Gusii anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God makes Abagusii perceive God as real, near and present with them in their daily lives. The study recommends Christianity should inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. The laity, the clergy and the ordinary church members need to participate in the inculturation process.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Acculturation	Adaptation of new cultural elements and mannerisms as a result of being in contact with other cultures.
Adventist	Member of the Seventh day Adventist Church.
Catholic	Adherent of the Roman Catholic Church.

Church	Believers in Jesus Christ who belong to the Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic and Pentecostal Assemblies of God Church.
Church leader	Person in charge of the Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, The Salvation Army, The Africa Inland Mission, The Swedish Lutheran Mission, The Pentecostal Assemblies of God, The Church of God and The Friends Africa Mission church. They include pastors, Bishops, catechists, priests, and religious men and women who are assigned special duties in the church.
Cultural leader	Guardians of <i>Gusii</i> traditional concepts of God and educators of <i>Gusii</i> norms, values and ethics. They include <i>Gusii</i> clan leaders, Cultural ritual ministers and elderly men and women.
Denominize	Enslaving to a religious dogma.

Enculturation	Socialization process where <i>Abagusii</i> children from birth to about 12 years of age are taught their people's culture.
Euro-American Christianity	Christianity brought to Gusii land by missionaries from Europe and America.
Gusii	A territory in western Kenya where <i>Abagusii</i> settle
Inculturation	Integration of positive cultural values or incarnating Christian values into the <i>Gusii</i> traditional concept of God.
Social-religio-cultural	<i>Gusii</i> social, religious and cultural mannerisms as retained by <i>Gusii</i> traditionalists.
The church	Believers in Jesus Christ who belong to Seventh Day Adventist, Catholic, Salvation Army, Africa Inland Mission, Swedish Lutheran Mission, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Church of God and Friends Africa Mission Mission denominations
Traditional	Inherent practices of the people transmitted through the oral religiosity

Trans-culture	The elements of Jesus fitting in all human cultures
Young parents	Parents between 25-40 years.
Youth group	Gusii young unmarried people between 15-19 years.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	Africa Inland Church.
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficient Syndrome.
AIM	Africa Inland Mission.
ATR	African Traditional Religion.
COG	Church of God.
FAM	Friends Africa Mission.
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation.
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus.
Ms	Microsoft.

NT	New Testament.
OT	Old Testament.
PAC	Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.
PAG	Pentecostal Assemblies of God.
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist.
SLM	Swedish Lutheran Mission.
SMA	Society for Mission to Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Gospel according to Jesus' great commission to the disciples in Matthew 28:19-21 is to be preached to all people in the world in their socio-religio-cultural backgrounds. This implies the relevance of inculturation. In Christian evangelization, inculturation is central in multicultural communities in the world.

Inculturation as Waliggo (1986:12) explains is the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and His message of salvation understood by people of every culture, locality and time. It also means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-pattern of each people.

It also entails dialogue and assimilation which will help the people to be truly Christians and authentically local (John Paul II, 1980:222). Dube (2002:57) adds that inculturation is the conviction that Christ and His Good News are ever dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. Further, Urbukle (1988:511) states that it is a continuous endeavor to make Christianity truly 'feel at home' in the cultures of each people.

Missiologists need elaborate incarnation and inculturation orientations (Lunzbetaks, 1998: 69). This will help them in the propagation of Christianity in the midst of cultures, religions, socioeconomic systems and political institutions. In Africa for instance Mbiti (1969: 23) observes that there are more than 1000 communities and each with unique socio-religio-cultural practices. The traditional concept of God which this study addressed varies from one community to another depending on the indigenous images which are ascribed to God to help the local people understand the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of God. This study investigated possible ways through which Gusii traditional concept of God can be inculturated.

Abagusii are a Bantu community found in the western part of Kenya. In their oral religiosity, they believe in the existence of a Supreme Being

called *Engoro*. Their traditional belief in *Engoro* embraces the spiritual, moral, economic, political and the social aspects of human life. Ochieng' (1974: 58) argues that Abagusii believe that their traditional concept of God has been there from time immemorial.

Abagusii accept *Engoro* in their traditional religion as the one who holds everything in existence and is responsible for any good which happens in the universe. They also have various organized systems of belief and worship in relation to the divine and supernatural powers. The belief in the divine or supernatural powers tends to be a universal concept among Abagusii. The knowledge of the existence of *Engoro* as argued by Akama and Kadenyi (2006:9) and Were (1967:14) was transmitted from one generation to another through the informal education, songs, dirges, dances, religious performances, story-telling, riddles, idiomatic expressions and nature.

Gusii traditional religion according to Ochieng' (1974:184) has a variety of ideas in relation to the normal object of religious worship and the idea of the Supreme Being. Abagusii believe that *Engoro* controls the world and the spectacular aspects of nature. They believe that it is *Engoro* who created the universe and all forces operative in it. They also believe that *Engoro* is the original progenitor and source of prosperity and life and is

the one who controls and governs the destiny of humanity. Ochieng' (1974: 67) further argues that Abagusii believe that *Engoro* is responsible in sending rain or storm, plenty of food or famine and peace or war.

In Gusii traditional religion, people believe that punishment from *Engoro* to those who break the socio-moral laws or values is instantaneous. They also believe that the socio-moral offense does not only affect the offender but the whole welfare of Gusii community. In case of reconciliation and pleading for pardon by the offender, in the traditional days sacrifices were made and the community members, religious leaders and cultural guardians of the community welfare were all involved. Various sacrifices and cleansing rituals were performed depending on the nature of the moral offence. Christianity censured this traditional belief and is seldom in practice.

The inception of Euro-American Christianity taught that punishment is in the future. They also taught that forgiveness and reconciliation between humanity and God is at individual level and does not involve anybody besides the law breaker. These differences between Gusii traditional concept of God and the Christian concept of God pose solemn socio-moral challenges to the contemporary Gusii community. As noted by Ochieng' (1974: 54), few of those who have been faithful to Gusii traditional religion

point out the gross misconceptions that Euro-American Christianity had of Abagusii traditional concept of God. Through these misconceptions Christianity interfered with the traditional moral uprightness of the people. The Christian teachings about God and how God deals with evil and evil doers has interfered with the morality of the people. People no longer fear doing evil because Christianity teaches that God will forgive the sinners and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. This Christian teaching has made people to persist in doing evil because they know that God will forgive and cleanse them anytime they approach him. The Christian teaching is different from Gusii traditional teaching. Abagusii believe that *Engoro* instantly punishes the evil doers. Gusii traditional teaching about how *Engoro* deals with evil upheld the social-moral order in Gusii traditional community.

Abagusii believe that *Engoro* has intrinsic attributes. They perceive *Engoro* as self-existent, first and last, invisible, incomprehensible, mysterious, and immutable. These are the non-sharable or non-communicable attributes of *Engoro*. They also believe that *Engoro* has intrinsic attributes like compassionate, kind, loving, comforting and faithful. These are the sharable or the communicable attributes of *Engoro*. Lang (1991: 44), Gitome (2003:67) and Katola (1995:51) state that it is the notion of the moral attributes of God that strengthens the African (Abagusii included)

traditional ethical sanctions and this in turn upholds the community's solidarity. Abagusii further had the anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God. They addressed *Engoro* as a father (*tata*), community elder (*omokumi*), healer (*omogwenia*), friend (*omosani*), blacksmith (*omoturi*), farmer (*omoremi*), shepherd (*omorisia*) an ox (*entang'ana*) and an Eagle (*ekeongo*). Some of the images of God like as a blacksmith, an eagle and an ox only exist in the memory of the older generation. They only strengthen the contemporary images of God developed as people keep interacting with God in the changing times. The images of God keep changing with times and with the rise of new technologies. Inculturation of these images of God makes Abagusii perceive God as closer, care giver, provider, protector, sustainer, maker, guider, judge, healer, molder and concerned (Maryer, 1974: 23, 24).

The Euro-American missionaries who first came to Gusii were of Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), Salvation Army (SA), Africa Inland Mission (AIM), Swedish Lutheran Mission, (SLM) Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC), Church of God (CoG) and Friends Africa Mission (F A M) denominations. These missionaries commonly thought that Abagusii had not fully developed their brains and therefore had neither religion nor a concept of God. They considered everything that Abagusii were doing as irreligious and in the event of teaching people the new religion they

crept in their socio-religio-culture within inculturated concepts of Christianity. Abagusii dropped their traditional concept of God. Evil became tolerable because Christianity taught that punishment from God is in the future. The people's morality declined because the informal education of young people by the elders on issues of morality was displaced by the Western formal education which lacked Gusii elements of religiosity.

Euro-American Christianity which was not holistic was transplanted and planted among Abagusii by missionaries without modifications. The missionaries along with introduction of Christianity sneaked in their social, economic, moral, political and religious practices which have negatively influenced Abagusii. They further introduced their way of life, manner of dressing, art, music, dance, language, foods and eating habits. They replaced Gusii religio-cultural practices with the Western socio-religio-cultural practices leaving Abagusii in a dilemma and without originality.

Abagusii value life and believe that *Engoro* creates and sustains human life. They remember the long and recently dead relatives through the re-naming. They further believe that the dead links the living to *Engoro* and have a direct influence on the living. Abagusii in their traditional religion named their children according to places of birth, events during birth,

natural objects, departed relatives, heroes and heroines as a way of accepting, appreciating and thanking *Engoro* who was known as the creator and sustainer of life. Through the transplantation process, the missionaries changed this aspect of child naming and accompanied it with baptism and giving children and even adult's foreign names. The missionaries changed names of places, trees and mountains making them lose their Gusii traditional religious and moral implications.

Abagusii value life and give gifts to *Engoro* who sustains it. In the traditional days every morning at sunrise, the mother brought children especially recently born ones and faced the rising sun (*erioba*) and uttered the immortalized words "*rioba ndorere*" (sky watch over them on my behalf) (Akama & Kadenyi, 2006:7). Abagusii believe that the sun is *Engoro's* 'big eye' which watches over humanity.

Lack of inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God created a religious vacuum in the minds of Abagusii. This vacuum has secretly been filled by Abagusii through visiting surreptitiously the diviners, medicine persons and the seers. Euro-American Christianity rejected, criminalized and underrated Abagusii's socio-religio-cultural practices. Shorter (1985: 34) posits that some confessing Christians still furtively visit the local medicine people and diviners more than they do visit the clergy for spiritual edification and entreaties.

This study investigates Gusii traditional understating of God, the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept of God and inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God.

1. 2 Statement of the Problem

Highlighting on the need of inculturation as the best way of making Christianity relevant to people's socio-religio-culture, Bujo (1976:34-52), Magesa (1975: 12, 2004:123-125), Ndegwah (2007:14-16) and Ryan (2002:110) assert that inculturation process refine cultures by challenging elements which have outlived their usefulness. Schineller (1990: 11-13) describes inculturation as the incarnation of Christian message in a particular context. Discussing the role of inculturation in transforming cultures, Nasimiyu (1985: 121) adds that Christianity has a duty to take all people's cultures seriously by taking Christ as the model who took a human identity, borne in the human form and grew as a human being on the face of the earth. She further argues that inculturation and inspiration of the Gospel aid missiologists in the cross-cultural evangelization.

Before the inception of the Christian concept of God taught by the Christian missionaries in Gusii, Abagusii had an inherent concept of God (*Engoro*) which was transmitted from one generation to another through oral tradition. The belief in *Engoro* permeated the people's day-to-day life. It was the responsibility of everyone in Gusii community to uphold the religious, moral, ethical and social sanctions of the community. People highly valued to embrace the community's solidarity and the belief in *Engoro* who strengthened the people's interpersonal relationships. Regarding God's relationship with humanity, Gusii traditional religion perceived *Engoro* in pragmatic terms, that is, one who is more concerned with practical results than with theories and principles. Because of the concept of God in pragmatic terms, evil was not tolerable among Abagusii because they believed it angered *Engoro* and led to afflictions like calamities, death or diseases.

The founder of Christianity is Jesus Christ. Before His ascension to heaven Jesus gave the great commission to the disciples that, "...All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth. Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the world" (Matthew, 28: 19-20). Jesus intended that the Gospel be preached to all

people in the world in their socio-religio-cultural backgrounds. It is on this claim that the missionaries came to Gusii. In spite of this, the Christian missionaries who first came to Gusii seemed to have had little knowledge of the importance of inculturation. They considered Gusii traditional concept of God as irrelevant and backward. They did not see anything that could be inculturated in Gusii traditional religion. They rejected the Gusii traditional anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God and did not appreciate the fact that those images made the notion of God clear in the people's minds. They further presented God in absolute terms, that is, one who is used to give strong emphasis to what is being said especially in the Bible. As such, the people were left in dilemma because all that was precious to them became questionable. Along with the introduction of the new religion, the missionaries planted their socio-religio-cultural practices among the people. This alienated Abagusii who feared to belong to themselves because of what was said about them, causing them to doubt their traditional concept of God.

In view of the above, this study investigates how Gusii traditional concept of God can be used to enrich the Christian concept of God giving it an integrated balanced and holistic approach.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate Gusii traditional concept of God and establish which elements are compatible with Christianity which need purification before adaptation and which elements are incompatible.

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Examine Gusii traditional concept of God.
- ii. Investigate the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept of God.
- iii. Identify the similarities and differences between the Christian concept of God and Gusii traditional concept of God.
- iv. Inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God as a way of providing a balanced, holistic and an integral way of life.

1.4 Research Premises

- i. Abagusii believe in the existence of *Engoro* in their traditional religion.
- ii. The Christian missionaries did not see the need to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God.
- iii. There are similarities and differences between the Christian teachings on the concept of God and Gusii traditional teachings on the concept of God.

- iv. Inculturating Gusii traditional concept of God provides Abagusii with a balanced, holistic and an integral way of life.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is anticipated to help Abagusii develop a healthy and positive attitude towards their traditional, religious and cultural values especially Gusii traditional concept of God. Second, it is to awaken the young and the old to the importance of retaining the traditional religio-moral values and Gusii traditional concept of God which strengthens the moral and Christian values as illustrated in the Bible. Third, it will help the church workers to realize the need to integrate the traditional teachings of Gusii traditional concept of God in their church programmes as well as the importance of inculturating some Gusii traditional religio-cultural values as an effective way of propagating the Gospel. Further, the study will help policy makers and curriculum developers to include inculturation theology in religious studies in all institutions of learning. Finally, the study will contribute to knowledge locally, nationally and internationally in theology and inculturation.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

The study restricted itself to the inculturation of the concept of God in Gusii traditional religion with restricted focus to Abagusii of Western

Kenya in the five Nyamira District zones. Gusii Traditional concept of God is so broad that it could not be discussed sufficiently. The study restricted itself to Abagusii traditional concept of God, the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept of God and the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God. The study was done among Abagusii of Nyamira district who so far has tried to uphold Gusii traditional concept of God. The study focused the first Christian missionary churches in Gusii which are Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), Salvation Army (SA), Africa Inland Mission (AIM), Swedish Lutheran Mission, (SLM) Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC), Church of God (CoG) and Friends Africa Mission (FAM) denominations.

1.7 Literature Review

Scores of authors have written on African traditional religion, culture, Christianity and the concept of God. None to the best of our knowledge has written on the inculturation of the concept of God in the traditional religion of Abagusii of Western Kenya. The literature was reviewed under the following themes: African concept of God, Gusii traditional concept of God and the concept of inculturation.

1.7.1 The African Concept of God

Unveiling the concept of God in Africa, Mbiti (1970:23-78) gives the attributes of the African God as omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. These terms he uses show how he was influenced by the Western Systematic Theology taught by Euro-American theologians. They also reveal the system of education that Mbiti had gone through. Mbiti discusses the Concept of God in Africa at the time when explorers and early missionaries had already portrayed a negative image about Africa to the incoming missionaries in the Western countries. The words used like animism, which became of their knowledge of Darwin evolution ideas would evolve from animism to spirits and evolve further to supreme beings. The teaching portrayed African people to be at the lowest level referred to as 'animism'. While Mbiti provides the African attributes of God as omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, this study provides Gusii traditional attributes of Engoro. The study mainly provides Gusii indigenous concept of God and names of God emerging from the people's day-to-day experiences with Engoro.

To correct the earlier anthropologists' misconceptions about the African traditional religions, Magesa (2004:6-34) wrote that the African traditional religions which addressed the issues of animism where he advised that such diminishing terms should be extinct. Magesa here was right in dismissing the early writers' explanations about the African traditional

religions. Magesa addresses earlier anthropologists on African religion in general but this study focuses on the misconceptions of Gusii traditional concept of God.

Mbiti (1969:9-16) and (1975:67-74) provides an argument which is popular among African anthropologists that the Africans were monotheists, a concept that the rest of the world borrowed from Africa. He discusses the attributes of the African God where he highlights in his introduction that Africans are notoriously religious and each people had their own religious systems with a set of beliefs and practices. This study examines Gusii worldview and identifies Abagusii as monotheists and examines Gusii anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God.

It is one thing to admire the way in which Africans have enriched Christianity from their own cultural and spiritual heritage (Mbiti, 1981:20-28). Mbiti asserts that the African religion has a "heritage". He says it is our inheritance and so it is unfair to lose it at the expense of others. He further comments that African heritage is very rich, old and diverse. It has similarities and differences when one takes a comparative analysis on two or more African communities. He comments, "Some studies of the origin and development of humanity suggested that the earliest people may have lived in East Africa" although he lacks substantiation to

conclude that Africa can be the parent continent of origin of all the people in the world (Mbiti, 1981: 2). In this study, the similarities and differences in the concept of God between Christianity and Gusii indigenous religion are identified. It also investigates Gusii oral tradition on how the concept of God was transmitted from one generation to another.

p' Biteck (1970:28) emphasizes that African Religion and Deities have been Hellenized. He as well discourages the terminologies used to describe the natural attributes of the African God as omnipresent, immanent, omnipotent and omniscient to describe the intrinsic attribute terms of the African God. He further uses terms like strong, wise, old and great to describe the nature of the African God. He finally asserts that the Greek metaphysical terms are meaningless in African thinking accusing missionaries as intellectual smugglers by Hellenizing the African Deities. In this study, the images of God which describe Engoro as strong, wise, old and great are discussed.

Describing the Kikuyu concept of God, its continuity into the Christian era and the question it raises for the Christian idea of revelation, Kibicho (1972:125-129) confirms the monotheism in the Kikuyu traditional religion and in the African communities. He argues that the Kikuyu Supreme Being is related to humanity through prophets, seers, diviners and

medicine persons. He further contends that humanity in African had special reverence to their supreme being in expression of individual worship, family worship, public worship, socio-political life and institutions that transmitted the people's traditional religion from one generation to the other. Referring to the Euro-American missionary impressions, he insists that the missionaries had a negative evaluation of the African traditional concept of God as opposed to the African general positive view to the Christian God. While Kibicho examines God of the Agikuyu, this study will discuss Gusii God Engoro and how people relate to God in expression of individual worship, family worship, public worship and in their socio-political life.

Idowu (1962:89) and Gehmann (1990:241-254) redefines the African religion to those who did not know it properly especially the Christian missionaries. He confirms that over the years African traditional religion has not been understood in the outside world. He tries to continue from where Mbiti and others left showing that in Africa there was a religion and not animism and polytheism. He adds that the whole world still has to be convinced that there is an indigenous religion of Africa and that by right "it deserves the name of religion" (Idowu 1973: ix). Similarly, he shows that it is important educating Africans about their religious heritage. He also gives the structure of the African traditional religion as

belief in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, magic and medicine. Idowu and Gehmann have given his study a wider African perspective. He informs the world of the presence of the African God and how the Christian missionaries assumed its presence. Idowu and Mbiti give the concept of God a wider African perspective. This study will specify areas of conflict between the Christian concept of God and Gusii indigenous concept of God. It refines Gusii concept of God to be companionable with the Gospel; it enhances the concept of God which does not contradict Gusii traditional concept of God which has been overcome by events.

Magesa (1975:90-91) and Hastings (1988:21-45) brings into an organic whole, the moral traditions of African religions forming a rich variety of case studies from black Africa. He argues convincingly why we should talk of African religion in the singular rather than African religions in the plural. He adds that a black African is ultimately linked in the ethos of culture, religion and morality. He develops a scholarly workbook which gives a superb criticism to those scholars who do not recognize religion in Africa. He argues that the religion we see in any given ethnic group in Africa relates to another group and in fact it has influenced the rest of the world over the years. It should be termed not as African religions but African Religion and more than that, a World Religion. He further challenges both African and non-African students of religion to desist from undervaluing the African religion. Magesa also argues that the

teachings of the Bible should undergo inculturation process to fit the African socio-religio-culture. While Magesa and Hastings deal with the general of the concept of God and religion in the black Africa, this study focuses only on Gusii traditional concept of God.

These scholars have addressed the concept of God in a broad African view. This study addresses the concept of God in the context of Gusii traditional religion. It discusses the eternal and moral attributes of Gusii Supreme Being in their traditional knowledge, exposes religious values upheld out of their traditional belief in *Engoro*, appreciates Abagusii's traditional concept of *Engoro*, confirms Abagusii's monotheism, and suggests how the two religions can accommodate each other through inculturation. This study fills that gap.

1.7.2 Gusii Traditional Concept of God

Ochieng' (1974:12-34) gives an account of the origin and an introduction about Gusii traditional concept of God. He unveils the origins and migrations of Abagusii and other related communities, their settlement and resettlements from highlands to lowlands, their occupational activities, organizations and development of their traditional society and establishment of the British administration. Ochieng' covers Abagusii's history up to the year 1914. He only indicates that Abagusii have a

Supreme Being *Engoro* but does not clearly say how they used to relate with *Engoro* which this study examines.

Nyarangi (2003:4-7) discusses Abagusii's traditional way of life in relation to their Supreme Being. He illustrates Gusii proverbs and sayings which were used to refer to the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of *Engoro* giving them the Christian biblical parallels to confirm that Gusii traditional teachings about God are similar to the Christian teachings. The study records the oral information from the people who participated in Gusii indigenous worship of God. It also investigates the other means through which Gusii traditional concept of God was transmitted from one generation to another besides the proverbs and sayings which Nyarangi discusses.

Nyaundi (1997:90-96) argues about Abagusii's religious, moral and social mannerisms before the coming of Euro-American missionaries. He tries to examine the rationale behind the changes in the religious life of Abagusii and accuses the Euro-American missionaries for failing to adopt Gusii way of religious life to Christianity. He argues that Abagusii invoked God in every aspect of their living and God instantly identified himself with them. He further explores through History of Adventism in Gusii, its challenges and contributions to the livelihood of Abagusii. The

study examines the social and moral impact Christianity's concept of God in absolute terms. It elevates the pragmatic Gusii concept of God which perceives God as one who deals with evil and evildoers instantly.

Describing the ethnography of Gusii, Akama and Maxon (2006:112-113) discuss the origin and evolution of Abagusii, their socio-political institutions, their initiation and marriage ceremonies with other cultural rituals and ceremonies and how *Engoro* was central in all those celebrations, land tenure system and how Gusii cultural values were treasured. These authors attribute every success attainable by Abagusii to their God whom they considered the sole provider and sustainer of life on the face of the universe. They further argue that the changes noticeable in Gusii culture are related to the globalizing effects in the contemporary society which they describe as "rapid erosion and/ or transformation of Gusii indigenous culture as the people adopt new ways of life and models of production that are predominantly based on Western model" (Akama & Maxon 2006:iv). Akama and Maxon deal with the whole content of Gusii religion where they briefly discuss the role of *Engoro*. This study will identify the images of God, discuss the people's relationship with God and how that solidifies Abagusii in their social, economic and political living

The foregoing scholars, however, do not show the origin of the concept of God and the religious ceremonies and rituals that invoked God, performed by Abagusii. This study, therefore, addresses the traditional Gusii and how they used to relate to *Engoro*. It also unveils the influences of the Christian missionaries upon Gusii traditional concept of God and how the interaction between Abagusii and Euro-American Christianity has influenced Gusii religio-cultural practices.

1.7.3 The Concept of Inculturation

Focusing on Christianity and Culture, Kraft (1996:213-234) and Mugambi (1990:34-65) attempts to develop a biblically grounded theological model that will enable the learner to be more effective in communicating the Christian message in the multicultural world. Kraft targets the Western missiologists to develop a cultural diversity although he does not create awareness of the presence of African religion with their supernatural beings based on different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. He further proposes to the Western missiologists not to add to the absolutes of God and judgments within the Western cultural context. He further argues that the cross-cultural approach to theologizing helps to protect the missionaries and Africans' unconscious ethnocentrism in theological matters. While Kraft and Mugambi focuses on the missiologists and

inculturation of the Gospel in the entire African context, this study focuses the Christian evangelists in Gusii background. It suggests to the evangelists to present the message regarding the concept of God in a manner which is companionable with Abagusii. It investigates Gusii images of God and suggests how the people in the contemporary Gusii society can be evangelized using Gusii indigenous concept of God without compromising the authenticity of the Gospel.

Emphasizing on the need for inculturation as the best way of making Christianity relevant to culture, Bujo (1976:34-52), Magesa (1975:12-19; 2004:123-125), Ndegwah (2007:14-16), Mutiso-Mbinda (1986:239-250) and Ryan (2002:110) argue that inculturation process refine cultures by removing elements which have outlived their usefulness. Schineller (1990:34) describes inculturation as the incarnation of Christian message in a particular context. The aforementioned scholars suggest inculturation in a wider African perspective. This study specifically deals with the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God. It seeks to modify Gusii indigenous concept of God to fit the contemporary times. Further, it enhances Gusii concept of God which does not contradict the Christian concept of God and eliminates any concept of God which defies or contradicts the human rights.

Discussing the role of inculturation in transforming cultures Nasimiyyu (1985:6) argues that Christianity has a duty to take all people's cultures seriously by taking Christ as a model who took a human form, born as a human being and grew as a human being on the face of the earth. She further argues that incarnation and inspiration of the gospel aid us in our cross cultural communication. Basing her study on the problem of inculturation after the Vatican II, she exhausts the historical development of inculturation and unveils the historical root of the term inculturation. Nasimiyyu (*ibid*: 96) discusses conceptual terms in use like accommodation, adaptation and indigenization. These terms show the evolution that was happening within a church's theological development of mission. She makes recommendations on how inculturation of Abaluyia initiation rites can make Christianity relevant to the Luyia Christians. While Nasimiyyu suggests inculturation of Abaluyia initiation rites, this study suggests inculturation of Gusii indigenous concept of God.

Illuminating on the theology of inculturation, Shorter (1988:239-248) tries to elaborate successfully the evolution of the church's knowledge of diversity of culture by employing a classist and modern view. He attempts to solve the problem of cultural relativism by emphasizing religion and relativization of cultural religious beliefs, unveils cultural beliefs and religious practices, discusses culture as a social phenomenon

stratified in various levels and systems and gives the theology of inculturation under Christology and salvation. He further gives the inculturation theme a worldwide view which does not apply to all socio-religio-cultural backgrounds. While shorter discusses impact of popularization of the church culture which originates in the west, this study unveils the history of the coming and establishment of the Euro-American missionaries and the influence they brought about in Gusii traditional concept of God. Precisely it examines the coming of Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), Salvation Army (SA), Africa Inland Mission (AIM), Swedish Lutheran Mission, (SLM) Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC), Church of God (CoG) and Friends Africa Mission (F A M) missionaries and how they influenced Gusii concept of God.

Sanneh (1989:6-25) and Drago (1980:34-56) asserts that missionaries who take the gospel message outside their cultures should employ careful hermeneutical principles in translating the message to fit and become meaningful to the cultural backgrounds of the gospel recipients. He further argues that there is great missionary impact on culture in the sense that if cultural values are not taken into account, missionaries will fail to penetrate the gospel to benefit the target people in their socio-religio-cultural backgrounds. While Sanneh and Drago warns the missionaries who takes gospel to outside cultures in a general perspective, this study

warns the evangelists in Gusii against copying foreign concept of God and undermining Gusii traditional concept of God which does not contradict the scriptures. It emphasizes on interpretation of scriptures in a manner that fits Abagusii in their local context.

The above authors except Nasimiya (1985:231) discuss inculturation in a broad worldview. It is hard to inculturate the entire world for we do not have common religio-cultural values. This study suggests guidelines to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. It also shows the need to bridge the gap that resulted when the missionaries tried to undermine Gusii Traditional concept of God in the process of introducing the Christian concept of God. It further proposes ways in which the gospel can be meaningful to Abagusii by not abandoning what is good and of value in their traditional concept of God by transforming and integrating into Christianity their best religious values as well as inserting Christian values into Gusii culture.

As it has been illustrated in the literature review, the above scholars have not covered inculturation of the concept of God in Abagusii traditional religion. Therefore, this study has broken the ground in this area. The following is the conceptual framework that guides this study.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

There are several theoretical and conceptual frameworks which have been written about inculturation, for example Arbuckle (1991:344-356) tries to elucidate how cultural transformation takes place through foreign cultural invasion, climate changes or political attack. The local culture in the process adopts selected elements in the foreign culture so as to acquire a more fulfilling cultural practice. This theory authored by Arbuckle (1991:43-52) confines itself to culture and is deficient in theological support.

The most appropriate conceptual framework which serves this study's objectives is the one developed by Richard Neibuhr (1951:69-92). Neibuhr proposes five theoretical paradigms which are centered on Christ but in this study's application the Africans perceive Christ as God and therefore we will use Neibuhr's five paradigms of Christ against Culture, Christ in Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ the Transformer of Culture but adapt the Christological model to center it on God. This is because Africans perceive Christ as God and this model will be adapted to suit that reality. We found this study fitting this Christological model developed by Neibuhr(1951:69-92). This is because Abagusii perceive Christ as God. Neibuhr focuses at Christ as God who meets people in their cultures and saves them. Supporting this argument,

Nasimiyyu (1991: 77- 79) asserts that Christ is God who was born as a human being, grew as a human being and interacted with cultures of human beings. Christ rejected some cultural mannerisms, lived and practiced the people's cultures with higher ministry than that of humanity, was against cultures which dehumanized fellow humanity and transformed cultures without changing the people's identities. Niebuhr's Christological model likewise affects Gusii traditional concept of God.

1.8.1 The Christian God against Culture

According to Tolstoy (1984: 211), the Lordship of The Christian God is not dependent on the highest of many authorities, but that The Christian God is the sole authority over the Christian. It thus presents God and Culture as a radical either-or choice: if we follow Christ, we must reject any loyalty to misleading cultures. Apparently, the view has the scriptural support. (1 John 2:15). In a similar vein, some would argue that the prince of this world is the devil, and therefore, that loyalty to worldly authority is ultimately loyalty to the devil (Arrupe, 1978:34).

According to Niebuhr, historical proponents of this sort of view have included Tertullian, Tolstoy, and the Mennonites. Tolstoy (1984: 211) went so far as to claim that the Christians are self-governing and regard the divine law of love, implanted in the soul of every human being, and brought before their consciousness by Christ, as the sole guide of one's life

and other human beings also. On the basis of this radical view, Tolstoy consistently argues that all state obligations are against the conscience of a Christian—the oath of allegiance, taxes, legal proceedings, and military service. The view encourages the separation of Christians from misleading cultures, either individually, as in Tolstoy's case, or collectively, as in the effortlessness of monasticism.

Applied to this study, the cultural elements of Abagusii contrary to Christian teachings like killing or lynching of persons suspected to be witches, female genital mutilation (FGM), widow inheritance and ghost marriages are eliminated without any purification.

1.8.2 The Christian God of Culture

Niebuhr maintains that The Christian God is to be understood as the uppermost aspiration and fulfillment of culture. In this way, it is possible to affirm both God and Culture and to deny any necessary opposition between the two. Niebuhr and his supporters on the one hand interpret culture through Christ, regarding those elements in it as most important in Christianity. On the other hand, they understand The Christian God through culture, selecting from the Christian doctrine about Jesus and this seems to agree with what is best in civilization. The approach inevitably leads to accommodationism, the attempt to reconcile Christianity with

what appear to be the greatest achievements of a culture. Supporting this view, Benne (1995: 26-44) comments that the early church had its Hellenizers and Judaizers of the Gospel and Gnostics who reconciled Christianity with their mystical philosophy.

Contributing to this view, Lewis (1982:115) asserts that the inevitable result is a theology in humanity's image, a danger which will always arise from the apparently innocent attempt to connect Christianity with some cultural movement one wishes to endorse, to create what C. S. Lewis called "Christianity And": "You know-Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform" (Benne ,1995:23).

The inevitable dilution of Christian orthodoxy and tendency to use a highly selective Christianity as a means to an independently conceived political end amounts to a denial that Christianity is anything more than true by occasional coincidence. This calls to mind the worst excesses of mainline Protestantism which have, as Benne (1995: 39) says, looked for the world to set the agenda for the church.

Applying this paradigm to this study strengthens the belief that before Christianity was introduced to Abagusii, God was at work in Gusii culture guiding Abagusii to the belief of the existence of a Supreme Being. Abagusii in their traditional religion practice symbiotic relationship among the living and to the whole environment and practice giving and the receipt of philanthropy. Abagusii value human life as originating from God and is sacred. They likewise have a belief in offering first fruits and animals to God. It is by failure of the Euro- American missionaries to accept this fact that makes them undervalue Gusii traditional concept of God.

1.8.3 The Christian God above Culture

According to Niebuhr (1951: 122) what is needed is not blank affirmation or rejection of culture for the Christian God but a synthesis of the Christian God and culture. It is pointed out that culture cannot be all bad because it is founded on the nature created by God, and that although nature and culture are fallen, they are still subject to God. This view emphasizes that good works are carried out in culture, yet are only made possible by grace, so that the kingdom of grace impinges on the kingdom of the world from above.

The greatest exponent of this view, Thomas Aquinas, held that the Church must be viewed as simultaneously in and beyond the world, leading people to salvation in heaven yet encouraging all that is best in this world's culture. From this vision came the great ideas of general education and protective legislation for all citizens. In his Christian Aristotelianism, Aquinas held that the church must promote both people's temporal and eternal goals. He distinguished the natural law and cardinal virtues (Prudence, Temperance, Justice & Fortitude) available to all humankind from the divine law, which includes the natural law but adds the superior motivation of the theological virtues (Faith, Hope & Charity), which are available only to Christians through grace. We chose not to employ this paradigm to this study due to time and scope of the study. Applying it would have employed a comparative analysis of other cultural traditional religious beliefs outside Abagusii to see how they related to God to conclude that Jesus is trans-cultural.

1.8.4 The Christian God and Culture in Paradox

The paradox view differs from the preceding one by maintaining that while both the Christian God and culture claim our loyalty, the tension between them cannot be reconciled by any lasting synthesis. The most important version of this view is Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms or realms. Sin is universal and remains inside the Christian throughout his

earthly life, thereby perverting any attempt to set up a holy society on earth. There is a stark contrast between two realms: the left-hand realm of the world governed by law and the right-hand realm of God governed by grace. These two realms exist side by side in a paradoxical relation, never to be resolved in this life.

Applied to this study, both Christianity and Gusii traditional religion teach the value and the dignity of the human person, yet gender biases are present in both, sometimes the violation of the woman rights which are human. This paradigm is used to see the underlying philosophical presupposition that creates or leads to this paradox.

1.8.5 The Christian God the Transformer of Culture

This last option is similar to the preceding paradox except that it is more optimistic about the ability of Christians to improve culture. It still affirms the universality of sin, but maintains that cultures can be converted (Tutu,1975). One of the fundamental theological reasons for this optimism is the view that the fall only perverted things which were created good, that these things remain inherently good and capable of reform, even though they have been misdirected (Niebuhr 1951: 194).

Applied to this study, the paradigm shows how The Christian God who is understood as God among Abagusii can enrich, transform and give their concept of God a new insight. This leads to a creation of Abagusii Christian community which is truly Christian and truly rooted within Abagusii religious and cultural heritage.

1.9 Methodology

This study was carried in two phases. The first phase involved field research while the second one was library study. The libraries that were used included Kenyatta University, The Hekima College Library, Tangaza College Library, University of Nairobi Library, Kisii Public Library, Kamagambo Teachers College Library, University of Eastern Africa Baraton Library and Nyamira SDA Conference Resource Centre.

1.10 Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design to obtain information concerning inculturation of the concept of God in the traditional religion of Abagusii of western Kenya. Purposive sampling method was used to collect data. This fitted well because the study selected respondents with the needed information. In addition, structured and unstructured

questionnaires were used as well as focus group discussions from primary data collections.

1.12 The Geographical Location of the Study

The study was carried out among Abagusii of Nyamira District. Nyamira District covers Ekerenyo, Nyamira, Manga, Rigoma, and Borabu zones. The district is in Western region of Kenya. Abagusii are settled on the Highlands and their major economic activity is subsistence farming. Their major cash crops are tea, coffee and previously pyrethrum. Their land falls in the altitude of 1850 above the seal level and the temperature is between 13⁰ and 27⁰ C (55⁰ and 80⁰F) (Ms Encarta 2006) most of the year. Their rich land experiences well distributed rainfall and is ever green with the source of River Gucha which is the main feeder of Lake Victoria. Abagusii are bordered by the Luo to the South, to the South East are the Maasai, and to the North are the Kipsigs communities.

1.12 Data collection

Three instruments of data collection were used to gather information for the research. These included respondent questionnaire, oral interviews and participant observation.

1.12.1 Respondent Questionnaire

The questionnaires were structured in simple language so that all respondents would have no difficulties in concept what was required. Special questionnaires were designed to the standard of information required from specific respondents. Structured questionnaires were given to the youth, priests, and young literate parents with the ability of responding to the questionnaires in writing. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires themselves. Most of the questionnaires were filled and sent back to the researcher with data which were integrated with secondary data to form this study.

1.12.2 Oral Interviews

Interviews were held to source information about Gusii traditional concept of God, Christianity influence on Gusii traditional concept of God and the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God. Oral interviews were also done with the church leaders who included the youth, the parents and elderly members from town and local churches. Traditional religious leaders who were interviewed included Gusii cultural elders and traditionalists.

1.12.3 Participant Observation

The researcher got involved in the church programmes to observe and note how religious programmes were conducted and how Gusii

traditional concept of God has been inculturated if at all. The researcher also visited places where traditional Gusii functions took place to note the influence brought about by interaction with Christianity in regard to Gusii traditional concept of God.

1.13 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The searcher selected respondents through both purposeful and random sampling techniques. The target groups for this study were the youth, parents, cultural leaders and church leaders. Churches selected were the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) and the Catholic Church which are dominant in the area.

1.13.1 The Youth

Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the youth in Ekerenyo, Nyamira, Manga, Rigoma and Borabu Zones. Through in-depth interview sessions, the researcher got views on the contemporary presentations of the concept of God. A representative number of five youth was taken where three were boys and two were girls.

1.13.2 Parents

Purposive sampling was used to select parents from the catholic SDA and PAG churches. Young (25-40 years) and old (41- years) parents were interviewed. Both groups included men and women. They were visited in their homes and some at their workplaces. The parents' representative respondents was twenty people.

1.13.3 Church Leaders

The purposive selection of church leaders included the clergy, the church elders and the laity. Twenty religious leaders from the three dominant denominations in the region were sampled. These dominant denominations are SDA, Catholic and PAG. Ten of the religious leaders were those who ministered in the local setup and the remaining ten were from town churches.

1.13.4 Cultural Leaders/ Custodians of Gusii Traditional Religion

The ethics, morals and cultural norms are preserved and propagated by cultural leaders. These leaders were interviewed to find out if they were actively involved in their religious roles. Through purposive sampling, seven cultural leaders who include the clan elder (*Abatureti*), diviners, traditional herbalists and the ritual priests were interviewed from Ekerenyo, Namira, Manga, Rigoma and Borabu Zones.

1.14 Data Analysis

The study employed a qualitative method of data analysis. Data analysis critically looked at the information gathered. The cumulative data from secondary and primary sources was synthesized and the resultant data categorized in accordance to the objectives of the study. The categorization formed the chapters of this study. The recorded data was transcribed before compilation.

Analysis and examination of data in comparison with the objectives of the study was carried out after the analysis of the data. Data was discussed thematically and coded. The highlights formed chapters according to themes and codes. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations for the study were made.

1.15 Problems Related to the Study

We encountered a variety of problems at the start of this study but with time, the researchers were able to overcome them. First, some of the questionnaires were not responded to because they were written in English but the researcher had later to translate them to *ekigusii* to those who couldn't understand the English and redistributed them. This delayed the data collection procedure but the researcher finally got the

required data. Second, some respondents were so conservative feeling that revealing some information meant betraying their church policies and doctrines. This forced the researchers to interview them as a group which later yielded good results. The researcher took time to inform them the importance of the study. Finally, some respondents were busy in their work places which forced the researcher to visit them after their working hours.

CHAPTER TWO

GUSII TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

2.1 Introduction

The first chapter laid down the tools and methods used in attaining the objectives the study set out to accomplish. This chapter focuses on Gusii concept of God (*Engoro*). The research into Gusii traditional concept of God revealed how Abagusii were inherently monotheistic in their oral religiosity. It further revealed that God was feared for instant punishment of evil deeds. This concept of God in dealing with evil maintained the socio-moral order among the people. The research further highlighted how the coming of the Euro-American Christianity contradicted Gusii Traditional concept of God in dealing with evil. For Christians punishment for evil is in the future, forgiveness is abundant and an evil doer may go free having been forgiven in secret. It further revealed how the Christian tolerance of evil has weakened the moral, ethical, religious and social fibre of the people.

This chapter investigates Gusii traditional concept of God. It affirms the premise that Abagusii believe in the existence of God (*Engoro*) in their traditional religion. The chapter explores three main sections. In the first place, it discusses Abagusii worldview where it unveils how Abagusii gained their knowledge of God through their human limitations, the forces of nature and their relationship with nature. Second, the study identifies the basis for Gusii belief in God. Abagusii recognize God as the creator, sustainer, provider and leader of the universe. Finally, the study investigates Gusii concept of the nature of *Engoro*, the anthropomorphic images of *Engoro*, father (*tata*), community elder (*omokumi*), healer (*omogwenia*), friend (*omosani*), blacksmith (*omoturi*), farmer (*omoremi*), shepherd (*omorisia*) and animal and bird images of *Engoro* such as an ox (*entang'ana*) and an eagle (*ekeongo*). This chapter shows the sharable and non-sharable attributes of God. The sharable attributes of God are like good, merciful, generous, loving, and giving. The non-sharable attributes of God are for instance that God is holy, powerful, all-knowing, everywhere, self-existent and never changes.

The chapter shows how some Gusii traditional concept of God are either refined, retained or eliminated through God the transformer of Culture, God above Culture, God against Culture, God of Culture and God and

Culture in Paradox paradigms in Neibuhr's Christological model. Abagusii were inherently religious and their concept of God dominates their worldview as discussed below.

2.2 God in Gusii Worldview

A worldview is a framework that ties everything together, that allows people to understand the society, the world and their place in it, and what could help them to make the critical decisions which shape their future. It synthesizes the wisdom gathered in the different scientific disciplines, philosophies and religions. Rather than focusing on small sections of reality, it provides them with a whole picture. In particular, it helps them to understand and therefore cope with complexity and change. Such a conceptual framework may be called a worldview. Understanding Abagusii worldview helps to understand how people perceived and related to God in their religiosity.

Abagusii believe in the existence of God called *Engoro*. This belief as Ochieng' (1974: 183-187) observes is at the centre of Gusii traditional religion and it dominates all other beliefs. Abagusii according to Osoro (O.I. 17:07:2009) do not have a clear written explanation of how belief in God originated but it is in the oral tradition passed down from generation

to generation. What is clear is that their belief in God is very ancient in their oral traditional religion. Abagusii base their knowledge on the belief and origin of God on three possible explanations discussed below.

First, Abagusii in their myth of creation believe that the first Gusii man called Mogusii and his wife Nyakomogendi were created by *Engoro* who lives in the sky (*erioba*). *Engoro* created this first couple and placed them in *Misri*, a land they say is in the North of Congo where the first Gusii family lived until they moved under the direction of *Engoro* to their current Gusii land. Since the creation of Mogusii and Nyakomogendi his wife at *Misri*, *Engoro* has been creating and sustaining life of Abagusii. It is for this reason that Gusii mothers presented to *Engoro* their young children every morning facing the rising sun uttering the immortalized phrase "*Engoro ndorere*" meaning, *Engoro* take care of my children on my behalf (Moraya, OI. 10:06:2009).

Second, Abagusii belief in God came as a result of their internalized reflection about the universe. It can be successfully argued that Abagusii's belief in God was created. This presupposes as Parrinder (1963:33) puts it in reference to the Igbo community of Nigeria that there was a creator of the universe because the people believe that behind anything that exists, there is a maker and that maker is God.

Third, Abagusii as Guto (O.I. 09:07:2009) observes reflect on the enormity and continuity of the earth and the heaven in their day-to-day lives. This indicates to them that the enormity and continuity has someone who looks after it, keeps it, sustains it and orders it. This made them to conclude that the creator of the universe is the one who looks after it, keeps it, sustains and orders it. Without God, they believe the universe could have fallen apart and could not retain continuity and the order that it possesses.

2.2.1 Abagusii Limitations.

Abagusii realize that as human beings they have limitations and weaknesses. Kinaro (O.I, 12:08:2009) observes that people discover that in their daily lives, activities, power and knowledge, they are limited. They realize that their powers are limited in phenomena like death, calamity, thunderstorms, earthquakes, mighty rivers and great forests. These phenomena are not under control of the people. The presence of these phenomena makes Abagusii to believe that there is someone greater than these phenomena. The presence of someone powerful than these natural phenomena becomes a logical basis on the dependence for the one they considered more powerful than people and the universe.

Abagusii realizing their limitations and powerlessness enable them to rely on God who is powerful, over the entire universe. It is thought that there are different powers which are governing the universe and in all these powers, there is one supreme power who is God. They imagine that just as in their families are hierarchies of status and power, starting from babies, children, older brothers, older sisters, parents and grand parents exist, they also believe that such hierarchy may exist in the universe and at the apex is God (Nyaribari, O.I.24:06:2009). The forces of nature also make Abagusii belief in the existence of a supreme being as discussed below.

2.2.2 God in the Forces of Nature

The powers in nature communicate a lot to Abagusii about the existence of God who created/creates and controls powers which control rain, sun, moon and stars. Kemuma (O.I. 02:06:2009) observes that the weather, storms, thunders, lightening, day, night, sky, moon and the stars are all bodies which are awesome to Abagusii. From the beginning, these heavenly forces, and bodies were convincing realities that there was God. People depended on these powers like the light, warmth and rain. They believed that God lived in the sky from where God was ordering the heavenly forces and powers for the good of humanity.

From the observation of the sky Abagusii are convinced that so many things happen in and beyond sky which their human eyes are not able to see. They associate the heaven with the one whom they call *Engoro*. This is because the people believe that God is responsible in providing things that come or operate from the sky like the sun, rain and light which support their livelihood (Masese, 2006:234).

Abagusii as Nyakerario (O.I. 12:07:2009) puts it, believe in God's existence through such links between heaven and earth. Humanity according to Akama (2006:61) live on earth and entirely depend on what God provides from heaven for their survival. The belief in the powers holding the sky makes Abagusii think of how to relate with God so that they can always get favour. They develop a strong belief that there exists a visible and the invisible universe which are both sustained and controlled by God. Nyaundi (1997:46) asserts that Abagusii believe that they are the centre of the World and heaven.

2.3 The Basis for Gusii Belief in God

Abagusii believe in the existence of God as Bikondo (O.I. 09:06:2009) observes is based on both the observable and the non-observable phenomenon whose origin they believe is in God. This as Akama (2006:23-25) indicates includes the creation of all things, sustenance of creation,

provision to the creation and dominion over the universe. All these explains what God does as will be discussed below.

2.3.1 God as the Creator, Sustainer and Protector of Creation

Abagusii according to Okeri (O.I, 12:07:2009) believe that God is the creator (*Omotongi*) of the visible and the invisible things in heaven, the earth and in the waters. They have various names which together describe God as the sole creator of all that there is. Abagusii believe that God is the creator of all things in the universe (Oigo, O.I. 12:07:2009). God created when there was nothing and did not stop creating. God continues creating new things, shaping and re-shaping what has already been created. They also believe that God was responsible for making everything without a helper and without an assistant. After creating the universe as Abagusii believe, God established the laws of nature which govern the universe and gave people laws, customs and gifts by means of which they would live in relation to the creation.

Abagusii have a strong belief that God is the one who sustains, keeps and upholds all created things in the universe (Obiri, O.I. 13:07:2009). This shows that God is concerned with the universe by caring and keeping it together so that there can be harmony in it without it falling apart.

God sustains the universe and the entire creation in it. Abagusii in this aspect refer to God as to the keeper, upholder, protector, preserver, guardian and caretaker. Because of God's concern over the created things in the world, Abagusii believe that the universe has no end because God keeps and sustains both the visible and the non-visible creation. They also believe that people are born and re-born making the human circle to continue. This concept of life after death is symbolized by the re-naming of children after the death of a family member or relative. This as Obiri (O.I. 13:07:2009) observes makes people to believe that in God there is no end since God is a protector and preserver of life.

God in Gusii traditional religion is known as the sole provider (*omorwa*) of basic needs to the created things (Bikondo, O.I. 14:09:2009). They trust in God's providence in their daily needs. The providence reveals God's goodness towards the whole universe. God provides life, sunshine, rain, water, good health, fertility and food. On basis of their perception of God as a provider, they refer to God as the giver of all things, healer, helper, guardian and source. They also know that since God provides for their needs, they have to pray and believe that their prayer will be answered in due time.

Abagusii believe that God created the forests with the medicinal plants, animals and the birds in them for their good. They believe that it is God who sustains the animals in the forests. They also believe that God is the one who leads them into their traps whenever they needed them for food. Gusii elders discouraged people from indiscriminate cutting of trees and they also controlled hunting in the forests. Only mature animals were hunted so as to preserve the continuity of the life of animals in the forests.

2.3.2 God as a Leader of the Universe

Abagusii believe that God leads and guides over the universe. Because of their belief that God is the supreme leader, they call God the leader, judge and distributor. This is the reason why in their prayers they addressed God with honour (Ochieng', 1974:12). The distributors (*ababagi*) were persons who were the overseers of the equal sharing of property. Kemoko (O.I. 14:07:2009) observes that they call God the leader at the same time to show that in the universe God leads and everyone follows.

God is believed to be a sincere leader in the universe and is also a righteous judge. Abagusii say as a leader, God judges all things justly, confers justice to the marginalized and the disadvantaged people in the society, rescues the oppressed and gives punishment to those who defy human justice by wrongdoing. Nyaundi (1997:33) argues that God was

believed to punish wickedness through sickness (*endwari*), diseases, accidents (*emebasokano*), famine (*egeku*), drought, storm, war (*okonontwa*), calamity or even death. Besides, God is also known to be full of mercy and pity to those who leave their evil ways.

2.4 Abagusii Concept of the Nature of God

Abagusii in their traditional religion know that God exists and has a describable nature though no one can exhaust describing the nature of God. Abagusii agree that nobody has encountered with God, therefore, nobody can give a comprehensive description of God. Nyabera (O.I, 10:06:2009) argues that through Abagusii's religious insights, they have worked out a pattern of certain concepts concerning God's real being to differentiate God from other created things. God among Abagusii has the intrinsic and extrinsic attributes as discussed below.

2.4.1 The Intrinsic Attributes of God

Abagusii believe that God has a character which is eternal and not sharable by humanity. The nature of God is learnt by people through their day-to-day experiences. The discussion below reveals the intrinsic attributes of God as holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere, self-existent, and beyond human comprehension.

God is Holy

Abagusii know God as holy (*Omochenu*) and pure (*otari 'kemoa*) in whom there is no error or wrong, fault or failure. They refer to God as a leader without blemish and a non-compromised elder. Nyaundi (1997:12) asserts that God's holiness is beyond humanity's holiness. Because of this Abagusii are careful while making sacrifices to God. As Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) observes the people are obliged to conduct themselves with reverence, fear, respect and honour towards God. They say, that even the animals which are to be offered as sacrifices to God who is holy are to be without blemish or spot. God's holiness requires sacrifices from clean and without blemish animals. Oigo (O.I, 12:07:2009) said that men and women who officiate in the sacrificial ceremonies are to be holy men and women of high moral integrity. They have to be people who have not been involved in murder, theft, adultery or anything evil in the community.

God is All-Powerful and All-Knowing

Abagusii believe that God is all-powerful (*omonyanguru*) and almighty. Sani (O.I, 14:07:2009) adds that the people say that God can do all things. They say God is All-Powerful and can do a number of things which none of Abagusii is able to do. God causes earthquake, he sun to move, rain to fall, controls the day and the night, creates life and holds the universe together.

Masese (2006:21) insists that God's power is demonstrated by the way God causes the sunshine, sunset, thunderstorm, rainfall and other phenomena which are beyond human comprehension. What Abagusii cannot do, God can do. On this knowledge nobody dares oppose God's power. Because God created all things which exist, Nyatichi (O.I, 02:06:2009) observes that God is all-powerful than all creation. The people say that God is not only all-powerful but all-knowing also.

The common belief among Abagusii as Nyakemari (IO: 17:07:2009) opines is that God knows all things (*omomanyi onsi*) and that nothing is hidden from God. They describe God as wise and with high plane of wisdom and knowledge. They say that there is none on earth who possesses the wisdom of God.

To emphasize the all-knowing nature of God, Abagusii affirm that God is all seeing, all-hearing, a watcher of everywhere and discerner of people's hearts. Abagusii believe that there is nothing hidden from God and all are within the reach and concept of God almighty. Ontiri (O.I. 26:08:2009) illuminates that God sees and knows the things of the past, present and future. This aspect of God's nature as understood by Abagusii makes them also say that God has "the big eye, and long ears (Timothy, OI.

15:06:2009). Nyambegeera (O.I. 21:07:2009) observes that God has all-knowing and penetrative wisdom and knowledge at all times and ages.

God is Everywhere

Abagusii believe that God is present and everywhere at the same time in the entire universe. This concept of God helps them to feel the presence of God in every place, time and event. It also helps them to feel protected by God whom they believe attends to their specific needs.

This aspect of God's nature is likened to the wind. They say that just like no one can manage running away from air or wind, so can no one manage to run away from God. The presence of God everywhere as Barongo (O.I. 17:08:2009) adds helps the people also to pray and offer sacrifices from anywhere because they know that their prayer can be heard and answered from wherever they are and whichever time they do it. Kenyatta (1972:54) similarly argues for the Agikuyu traditional belief is that God is everywhere at the same time. The belief of the all-presence of God helps to strengthen the moral order of the community. People know that if you do evil like stealing, there is no where you can hide or keep the stolen items

without the presence of God. God will see him/her and bring punishment or allow death to happen to that individual.

The all-presence of God does not ignore the sanctity of the shrines and other religious sites where Abagusii pray and offer their sacrifices. People worship in shrines but that does not mean that God is more abundant in the shrines than in other places. People feel more of the powers of God in thunderstorm with lightning but that also does not mean that God's power and presence in that phenomenon is more than in others.

The other aspect of the concept of God's nature among Abagusii is that God is limitless. They say that God is both very far and very near. The people believe that there is neither time, nor space that God is not present. God according to Abagusii knowledge cannot be limited by anybody, circumstance or event. God's influence can be felt anywhere, any place and any time. God is both far and near to people. This nature of God as explained by Nyabwari (O.I, 10:06:2009), gives them a chance of addressing God anytime and as many times as possible because God cannot be tired with them however much they pray.

God is Self-Existent

God is self-existent as Abagusii maintain. God creates but is not created. Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) adds that beyond God, no one existed and all that exist are God's creation. God has no origin but everything in the universe was designed and created by God. God's self-existence among Abagusii is understood by a saying that "God has no father and mother" (*Engoro otari na'se na ng'ina*). This is one of the reasons why Abagusii do not entertain a discussion on "How did God originate?" They dismiss such questions as meaningless because they will lead to no answers. They simply maintain that God is not born and is not made. It is on God's self-existence that all things find basis of their existence in the universe.

Abagusii refer to God as the first and the last cause. God is referred to as the original source and the beginning of all things existing on earth. They refer to God as *oyorenge'o, oyore'o na oyorachekoba'o* (the one who was there, who is there and who will be there) the beginner and the first and the last cause. Onchonga' (O.I. 15:06:2009) illuminates that God is also considered "the one who was, the one who is and the one who will be". The people also refer to God as to a rock meaning that He was there from the beginning, is there and will be there from the next second and to an infinite future.

God is a Spirit who never Changes

Abagusii refer to *Engoro* as *omoika* (the spirit). God is a spirit, invisible, everlasting and does not change. Based on this knowledge of the nature of God, Omwando (O.I. 23:07:2009) illuminates that Abagusii call God 'the great spirit', 'the fathomless spirit' and 'the breath'. They describe God in this manner because of their inability to see God physically but His influence in their lives and in others. They liken God's effects as those of the blowing wind which causes trees and objects moving towards the direction of blow.

God according to Abagusii does not change because they say the same way God was yesterday is the same today and forever more. God's time as Akama (2006) reveals is beyond reckoning. God does not change, does not grow, does not age, decay or die. That is why they say God is beyond comprehension as discussed below.

God Is Beyond Human Comprehension

Abagusii in their daily experiences with *Engoro* conclude that no one is able to understand God completely. Mogaka (O.I, 23:06:2009) observes that Abagusii maintain that the nature and personality of God is beyond human comprehension. They say that if human beings know everything about God, He will cease to be God and that will be dangerous. Nyaundi (1997:67) argues that people know very little about God because He is a

spirit. The rest of His nature is a great mystery upon which humanity marvels. God is more than what humanity can struggle to explain.

2.4.2 The Extrinsic Attributes of God

The extrinsic attributes of God are sharable attributes of God with humanity. By Him sharing some of the attributes with humanity does not mean that He can be reduced to the level of humanity. Humanity shares these attributes with God because of the relationship they develop with Him in their day-to-day life. God is Good, merciful, gentle, kind, loving, and patient. In this study, we will only discuss God as good and merciful.

God Is Good

The striking description of the nature of God among Abagusii as Nyaanga (O.I. 15:06:2009) observes is that God is good (*Engoro no'muya*). God loves the creation which includes human beings and others. Ochieng' (1974) says that Abagusii are able to describe God's nature as good based on what God has done to them and how they reach God without any difficulty. They believe that God causes rain to fall on their fields which give them foods and the sun to shine. Abagusii also declare God as good

because God has never withdrawn good things from them. They have many sayings which depict God as good, whose goodness never ends.

God is believed to be good because Abagusii are provided with life, food, rainfall, sunshine, animals and protection against all sorts of dangers. It is also believed that God does all these not for selfish good but also full of mercy and grace (*omonge bwa'mabera no'buya*) (Bangueso, O.I. 10:07:2009).

God is Merciful

God is merciful (*Engoro no'monyamabera*) and kind to all people. It is for this reason that Abagusii refer God as God of pity, mercy and kindness. Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) says that the people know that everything provided to them is by God's pitifulness, mercifulness and kindness towards them. When one escapes danger and misfortunes, it is said that it is God's mercifulness which did that. Akama (2006:34,35) states that the people emphasize that it is humanity's responsibility to show mercifulness and kindness to one another just as God shows that to the entire creation.

2.4.3 Gusii Anthropomorphic, Animal and Bird Images of God

Abagusii believe that most of the things or activities done by God are similar to some extent to those that human beings are able to do although

with human limitations. Investigating the similarities of activities which God does with those human beings, animals and birds are able to do, Abagusii perceive God as having human, animal and bird characteristics (Mbaka, O.I 17:07:2009). These images reveal that Abagusii know God as an immediate helper who accompanies them in every situation of their daily lives.

The human images as Nyabwari (O.I, 10:06:2009) indicates do not reduce God to human level but help people understand some of the human sharable attributes with God. These images further assist the people to feel closer to God. They help in approaching God with confidence as they pray for their daily human needs. This is because they understand God as part of them and as one who is very close and intimate with the people.

Abagusii is a patriarchal community which gives almost everything a male interpretation. The human, animal and bird images of God are given a male interpretation. They refer to God as a father (*tata*), community elder (*Omokumi*), healer (*omogwenia*), friend (*omosani*), blacksmith (*omoturi*), as a farmer (*omoremia*), as a shepherd (*Omorisia*) as an ox (*entang'ana*) and eagle (*ekeongo*), rock (*egetare*) dove (*riruma*), counselor (*omosemia*), mother (*baba*), grandfather (*sokoro*) and as reconciler

(*omogayani*). Below is a discussion of the human, animal and bird images of God which were pointed out by most informants.

God as Father

Abagusii perceive God as a Father (*Tata*) and themselves as children. Nyarabi (O.I. 13:01:2009) states that this image provides them with the concept of a family. It also shows the bond that exists between them and God. As a parent provides to the children and gives them the care they need, this image portrays God as the one responsible for protection, provision and care that humanity so desperately need (Nyaundi, 1997:123).

The image of God as a father shows that all people originate from God. Nyaribari (O.I, 24:06:2009) adds that when they offer any prayer, Abagusii start by referring to God as *tata oito* meaning our father. They address God in a similar manner in which children ask anything from their loved father. They humble themselves in a similar way in which a child does when stating a list of things he/she needs of to be provided for by the loving parent. Phrases commonly used in Gusii prayer are like 'Oh Father' or "My Father" or "Our Father" (Masese, 2006:124).

God as a Community Elder

Abagusii perceive God as a community elder (*omokumi*) and themselves as the subjects. Nyabera (O.I, 10:06:2009) states that God as *omokumi* is the highest authority among Abagusii. This provides them with the concept of Gusii traditional government which had the council of elders which was being headed by the *Omokumi*. *Omokumi* was the supreme authority over the entire Gusii community as God is the supreme authority of the entire human populace.

Abagusii respected and obeyed the authority of *omokumi*. God as the *Omokumi* deserves respect and honour from the people. God among Abagusii was referred to as *omokumi* because his authority was final to the people of all social classes. Nyabwari (O.I, 10:06:2009) adds that as the *Omokumi* was the head of the council of clan elders in the entire Gusii community, God is considered as the leader of the entire universe. The authority of God as Abagusii believe is never contended contested or contradicted by anyone.

God as the *omokumi* in Gusii concept is the agent of moral uprightness. God punishes the evil doers and commands order in the society. God as noted earlier is considered the big eye and ear of the community. As the

Omokumi, God gives justice to those who deserve it and protects the rights of everyone in Gusii community. As the *Omokumi*, God is perceived as the big hand of the community for disciplining those who wronged others. God as the *Omokumi* is the agent of peace and tranquility in the community. His orders are hearkened as an element which helped in solidifying Gusii interpersonal relationships (Nyabera, O.I, 10:06:2009).

The perception of God as the *omokumi* makes Abagusii feel closer and intimate with God. It further makes them to perceive God as nearer and part of them in their daily experiences. This helped them to maintain their social moral order and made them to fear doing evil against each other.

God as a Healer

Abagusii perceive God as a healer (*omogwenia*) of all the diseases. As a healer, God protects life and cares for the good health of people. Abagusii healers as Bangueso (O.I, 10:07:2009) states include the medicine persons, seers, diviners, priests, and prophets. God is the one who appoints these Gusii traditional healers and himself is the divine healer. Abagusii believe that Gusii traditional healers receive their healing powers from God and they refer to them as the mediators of God the divine healer.

God as a healer intervenes when someone is given physical medicines and causes both physical and spiritual healing. God as a healer prevents the people from becoming sick and prevents them from future sicknesses. As a divine healer, God leads Gusii traditional healers to herbal medicines which they use in healing the people (Ombui, O.I. 25:06:2009). Gusii traditional healers invoked the healing powers from God in their administration of medicines to the patients. They also perceived their profession as God-given to whom they were agents.

God as a divine healer provides the natural plants, powders and liquids as medicines to the people. These natural plants are not limited to specific areas in Gusii but are abundant everywhere in the land. This as Guto (O.I, 09:07:2009) puts it shows clearly that God is concerned about the good health of everyone in Gusii community. The image of God as a healer makes Abagusii feel highly protected by God who is concerned about their fine health. It further makes them appreciate and care for the natural vegetation because it is through which God provides medicines to cure them of any sickness.

God as a Friend

Among Abagusii God is referred to as a constant friend (*omosani*) and the greatest of all friends. This image as Momanyi (O.I. 26:06:2009) asserts

among them shows the great confidence the people have upon God. They consider God as a friend who is friendly to all people, trustworthy, faithful, close and ready to help them just as a good friend can be able to do. Perceiving God as a friend, people approach Him as a friend without any fear, talk freely as they would wish. They also consider God as a friend because they know that He is entirely concerned about them.

God as Blacksmith

God in Gusii traditional society is addressed as a blacksmith (*omoturi*). The image of God as a blacksmith helps Abagusii to perceive God as one who is patient. A blacksmith in Gusii community was one who had a high level of patience, determination and a strong desire to come up with iron tools or items. The iron tools which the blacksmiths made were produced through a high heating process. They had a locally invented oven where the heating process was done (Mogaka O.I, 23:06:2009). Blacksmiths were industrious, innovative and zealous in their art.

God as a blacksmith is perceived as one who is innovative, active, industrious and determined. As a blacksmith, God is perceived as a molder and a refiner of human character. Momanyi (O.I. 26:06:2009) observes that humanity in God's management ends up forming a desirable character which benefits the individual and the entire

community. When iron is put into the oven with the careful and skillful attention of a blacksmith, it develops into a desirable tool used for the good of humanity.

God as a Farmer

Abagusii perceive God as a farmer (*Omoremi*) and themselves as either crops or livestock. As a farmer, God is concerned with humanity in their social, religious, economic and political situations. Gusii being a subsistence farming community, farmers are highly concerned about the wellbeing of their crops and livestock because they basically supported their livelihood (Kinanga, O.I. 09:07:2009).

The image of God as a farmer is drawn from the people's daily experiences of a Gusii traditional farmer of crops and livestock. A farmer in Gusii traditional community is a very patient and loving person to crops and livestock. Farmers as Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) observes spent all the time they had on their livestock and crops and sought for all ways possible to make them realize good results out of their farming activities. To achieve good results, Gusii farmer must not be discouraged by the farming challenges and the natural catastrophes which sometimes affect and despirit the farmers. God as a farmer is highly determined to enhance a good destination for humanity.

As a farmer, God knows what Abagusii need at specific times. The image of God as a farmer portrays God as one who is neither late nor too early to address the human needs. God provides in due time whatever is of value to Abagusii just like what a farmer does to the crops and livestock. Asuga (O.I, 26:06:2009) observes that as a farmer God is a good manager of time and whatever good happens to the people is influenced or caused by God who loves and cares for them. They further believe that as a farmer does to the crop dressing, so God does in allowing elimination through death those who defy inclination and submission to himself. The concept of crop dressing by a farmer shows that God also refines and purifies the human character by molding them into a desired character which gives good social-moral results which benefit the individuals and the society (Mariamu Nyamoki, O.I, 10.05:2009).

Gusii farmers protect their crops and livestock from harmful sources like the birds, dogs, monkeys, pests and insects. These harmful sources attack the crops and livestock some when they are young and others when they are fully grown ready for harvest. God as a farmer protected Abagusii in history from any of the external attacks from the opponent communities which surrounded them (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009).

The image of God as a farmer makes the people see God in their daily experiences. It makes the people to relate to God as one who is near and closer to them, who cares and protects anything likely to affect their social, economic, moral and political wellbeing.

God as a Shepherd

Abagusii perceive God as a shepherded (*Omorisia*) and themselves as sheep, goats and cattle. It was the duty of a shepherd in Gusii traditional community to provide care, protection and guidance to the livestock (Maruko O.I. 12:06:2009). Like the Pokot community of Kenya as Ndegwah (2007:31) writes, Gusii shepherds literally slept in the houses where sheep and goats stayed in order to protect them from being attacked by wild dogs or from being stolen by thieves from Maasai and Kipsigis communities who are Gusii neighbouring communities.

As a shepherd, God protects and stays closer to humanity. God is concerned about the wellbeing of the people and provides them with the protection they deserve. Momanyi (O.I. 26:06: 2009) adds that as a good shepherd, God knows all people by names, socio-economic backgrounds, their needs and wants. God also as a good shepherd provides human needs indiscriminately. He meets the needs of the weak, the strong, the rich, poor with impartiality similarly to a good shepherd. As a good shepherd provides care to the weak and the young flock, God gives a

closer and concerned attention to those who are weak in their social, economic and religious lives without discrimination. The image of God as a shepherd makes the people perceive God as one who protects, cares, provides and guides them in their spiritual, social, economic and political situations.

God as an Ox

An ox (*Entang'ana*) in Gusii community is considered as an animal of incomparable strength. An ox in *ekegusii* language is called *entang'ana*, meaning "a leader" (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009). An ox leads the flock to water and graze-fields while other flock follows.

Abagusii perceive God as possessing incomparable strength. Kegwaro (O.I. 23:06:2009) observes that an ox ploughs, pulls heavy loads, turns the sugarcane grinders and used as a symbol of strength among Abagusii. God as an ox pulls Abagusii out of their socio-economic messes. As an ox, God leads while humanity follows to the avenues of success and opportunities. The image of God as an ox helps Abagusii to perceive God as powerful, able to pull them out of problems and difficult situations, lead them to greater opportunities and one who never complains while working for their good.

This image of God as an ox has been overcome by events. Oxen were used in pulling ploughs and heavy loads in the traditional days. Addressing God as an ox in the contemporary society would be unclear to the people especially the young. God the transformer of culture paradigm in Neibuhr's Christological model eliminate this image of God in Gusii traditional religion but enhance the attributes of God in the image.

God as an Eagle

God in Gusii traditional religion is perceived as an eagle (*ekeongo*). An eagle among Abagusii is known to be the most powerful bird that exists. It lives and operates from the sky, is swift, careful, has keen eyesight, sees outstandingly from far, and detects its prey from far. An eagle further teaches painstakingly its young ones on how to fly high and in long hours in the sky and how to catch its prey (Nyabwari, O.I, 10:06:2009).

An eagle is a sacred bird which is associated with many rituals and sacrifices in Gusii traditional religion. Nyaribari (O.I, 24:06:2009) states that the sacredness of an eagle is not clearly explained by most people in Gusii community. This is perhaps the reason why they refer to God as an eagle because no one in Gusii community similarly is able to explain exhaustively about the Divinity or the Sacredness of God.

God as an eagle is powerful, lives and operates from the sky where he causes the rainfall, sunshine, movement of the sun and the moon, and controls seasons. As an eagle, God is swift in saving or protecting humanity in case of any emergence or in any situation that requires the critical intervention of God. God as an eagle sees from far everything done on the face of the universe whether in public or in private. God as an eagle patiently teaches human beings on how to detect problems in time, how to be careful with life, how to be dependable and how to relate to each other (Mogaka, O.I, 23:06:2009). The image of God as an eagle helps Abagusii to perceive God as one who is able to see them from far, one who lives and operates from the sky, as one who is a good teacher to the people and as one who is patient with humanity in teaching them the important life skills.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter affirms the premise and the objective that Abagusii believe in the existence of *Engoro* (God) in their traditional religion. They base their knowledge of the existence of God through their inherent reflection of the universe, their human limitations and the forces of nature. The people relate well with God's creation in the belief that everything which God has created is for their good.

The reflection and evaluation of the universe makes Abagusii to conclude that God is the creator, sustainer, provider and leader of the universe. They further understand God as possessing the human attributes. They maintain that God has images which according to their knowledge make God closer to them as a father, mother and a friend. Describing the nature of God, Abagusii believe that God has the eternal and moral attributes. God also bears the human, animal and bird images. In his moral and eternal attributes they say God is, good, merciful, holy, all-powerful, all-knowing everywhere, without limit, self-existent, never changes and beyond human comprehension. In Gusii Traditional concept of God they perceive God as a father (*tata*), community elder (*omokumi*), healer (*omogwenia*), friend (*omosani*), blacksmith (*omoturi*), farmer (*omoremi*), shepherd (*omorisia*) ox (*entang'ana*) and an eagle (*ekeongo*). The chapter has further revealed that some Gusii traditional concept of God have been overcome by events because the society is dynamic. In the light of Neibuhr (1951:69-92) conceptual framework or Christ the transformer of culture, God against culture and God and culture in paradox, the chapter has shown how Gusii traditional concepts of God which are challenged by the changing times are refined so as to make God current and relevant to the people in the present generation.

The foregoing chapter clearly shows that Abagusii are monotheistic in their oral religiosity. However the concept of God was changed by the Euro-American missionaries who started coming to Gusii in 1913. Christianity is equally a monotheistic religion which persuaded Abagusii to accept the missionaries with their religion. Christians belief in one God found its acceptance in Gusii. The Euro-American missionaries did not respect Gusii religious concept of God. They considered Gusii traditional concept of God empty and irreligious. Their religion slowly started taking root in Gusii and influenced Gusii traditional concept of God. This will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE
THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON GUSII
TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two examined Abagusii religio-cultural beliefs and how these beliefs are centred in *Engoro* (God). As Mbiti (1969:6) states, Africans are notoriously religious, Abagusii have embodied and lived this reality. In Abagusii worldview, God is known to exist through their daily reflections on the universe, their human limitations and forces of nature. These confirmations of the existence of God led them to approach God in various ways. They believed in the ancestral spirits as intermediaries between them and God. The belief in *Engoro* helped Abagusii find answers to the mysterious happenings in the universe.

This chapter investigates the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept of God. It also establishes the premise that the Christian missionaries did not see the need to inculturate Gusii traditional concept and that they did not take time to learn and accept the reality that there

were similarities and differences between the Christian concept of God and that of Gusii traditional religion. The chapter examines history of the coming and the settlement of the Christian missionaries in Gusii between 1909 and 1963. The Christian missionaries under investigation are the Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Salvation Army, Africa Inland Mission, Swedish Lutheran Mission, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Church of God and Friends Africa Mission. The chapter further explores the Christian missionary evaluation of Gusii traditional concept of God and how that influenced their coming and settlement in Gusii with the hope of teaching Abagusii the concept of a 'true God'.

The chapter also examines the Christian concept of God with a specific highlight on the trinity. It further highlights on the attributes of God which reveal how the Christian God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, pre-existent, eternal, immutable, infinite, sovereign, holy, wise and faithful. The chapter at the same time examines the Christian names of God and how Christianity believes in the human representation of God through pastors, priests, Bishops through leadership. Finally, it explores the similarities and differences of Gusii traditional and the Christian concept of God.

Using Neibuhr's Christological model of God and Culture, the chapter identifies the Christian concept of God which are not meaningful to Abagusii to refine, eliminate or retain them through God the transformer of culture, God above culture, God and culture in paradox and God of Culture paradigms. This makes God to be perceived as closer and current with the people in all aspects of their daily lives.

3.2 History of the Coming and Establishment of Christian Missionaries in Gusii (1909- 1963)

The first Christian missionaries started coming to Gusii in 1909 (Bogonko, 1977:54). This was immediately after Abagusii were overwhelmed and colonized by the British. These Christian missionaries were mainly from the Catholic and Protestant denominations. The missionaries as Bogonko (1977:314) asserts came to Gusii in two major waves. The first wave was from 1909-1936 and the second wave was from 1936-1963.

The first wave involved the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) missionaries from America (Nyaundi, 1997:23, Getui, 1985:12, Okemwa,1993:34,35) and the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Missionaries society from England (Baur, 1994:341). These missionaries were categorically scrambling with zeal for converts and settlement in the area. As a result, most of Abagusii became SDA and Catholic followers. The second wave was from 1936-1963. This

wave included missionaries from Salvation Army, Africa Inland Mission (AIM), Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM), Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, who later changed to be called Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), Church of God (CoG), and Friends Africa Mission (FAM) commonly known as the Quakers. Below is a brief historical discussion of the coming and settlement of these Catholic and protestant missionaries in Gusii and their influence on Gusii traditional concept of God.

3.2.1 History of the Catholic Church in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The Roman Catholic Mill Hill Missionaries arrived in Gusii from England in 1911 (Bogonko, 1977:98). Discussing the Catholic foundations in Kenya, Baur (1994: 258) reveals that the Mill Hill fathers first arrived in Western Kenya in 1903. In 1906, they moved to Ojola in Luo land and opened a station in Gusii at a place called Nyabururu near Kisii Town and Asumbi among the Jo'luo in 1913. The Catholic Church in Gusii was led by Father Mathew who became popular with the British colonizers (Bogonko, 1977:90).

Baur (1994:57-58) states that the Mill Hill fathers did not have a clearly defined method of evangelism in Gusii. They employed the school method of evangelism which was started by Fr. Bouma. The missionaries

could identify one bright and obedient boy from a home or village, convert him and teach him the catechism for three years. Then he was sent out as a catechist to evangelize the people. The method was also used by the Anglicans but not as successful as it was for the Catholics.

Describing the early missionary situation in Gusii, Baur notes:-

The early situation was different for the Abagusii (Kisii). They offered the Kings Africans Rifles heroic resistance in 1905 and 1908 and were excessively punished by the British. For some reasons they also resisted the missionaries (Baur, 1994:259).

Abagusii resisted the British administration but they did not manage to stop their socio-political influence. The people's efforts were overwhelmed by the British governors who had weakened Gusii traditional government by dividing up and colonizing the minds of the councils of elders. With the British rulers' success in taking over the administration of Abagusii, they recalled the Euro-American missionaries who had gone back to their countries of origin during World War I. In the post-war period, Abagusii were as eager to respond to the Christian message as the Luo and the Luyia communities.

In spite of conflicts and altercations between Catholics and Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries and early converts to Christianity, the Catholics were able to open many stations and churches in Gusii (Osindi, O.I,

10:06:2009). They built many church sponsored and self-maintained schools, dispensaries and colleges in Gusii. These institutions made the Catholic Church to maintain its influence in Gusii. The Catholic Church has the second largest number of converts to SDA in Gusii (Bogonko, 1977:218).

When the Catholic missionaries came to Gusii, they found Abagusii already a united and peaceful people and inherently religious in their belief in *Engoro*. Based on their misinformed understanding and superiority complex of their religion, they considered all Gusii traditional religious practices irreligious and backward. They considered the education system the people gave to their children as primordial and irrelevant. They took Gusii bright boys to their seminaries, taught them the catechist and separated them completely from Gusii traditional priests who could have taught them Gusii traditional concept of God (Kiraro, O.I, 13.07:2009). This weakened family bonds between children and their parents and blocked the transmission of Gusii traditional concept of God in their oral tradition. They targeted the young generation so that they could teach them a 'new' God and the 'correct' manner of relating to God.

The Catholic missionaries as Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) notes were very harsh to the converts. "They could physically discipline or slap those who

came to the mass late" (Nyabera, O.I, 10:06:2009). These missionaries claimed that they were God's representatives of the new religion in Gusii. Their brutality made Abagusii perceive God as hostile and cruel. Most of Abagusii returned to their former belief in *Engoro* and Gusii traditional representatives of *Engoro* who were tolerant and humane in their dealings with people.

3.2 .2 History of the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The Catholic missionaries were followed by the Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries (SDA) in Gusii whose influence on Gusii traditional concept of God was not in any way positive. Below is a history of the Seventh-Day Adventist church from how it was started in America, how it came to Kenya, how it entered in Gusii and how it influenced Gusii traditional concept of God.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church traces its origin back to the early 1800's to William Miller (1782-1849) of Low Hampton, New York. Miller had converted from deism to Christianity in 1816 and became a Baptist. He was an avid reader, dedicated to God's word, and sought to reconcile apparent biblical difficulties raised by deists. He relied heavily on the Cruden's Concordance in his studies and developed a focus on the

imminent return of Jesus. He began preaching at the age of 50 (Jordan, 1988:45).

The time was right. America was hot with discussions on the return of Christ. As a result, thousands (called Millerites) accepted his idea that Jesus would return in the year covering 1843-1844. He had arrived at this date based upon a study of Daniel 8:14 which says, "And he said to me, for 2,300 evenings and mornings then the holy place will be properly restored." He interpreted the 2300 evenings and mornings to be years and counted forward from 457 BC when the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem was given (Dan. 9:24-25). When his initial predictions failed, he adjusted his findings to conclude that Jesus would return on March 21, 1844 and then later on October 22, 1844. After these too failed, Miller quit promoting his ideas on Jesus' return and the "Millerites" broke up. William Miller died in 1849 still with a hope of seeing the eminent second return of Jesus Christ. Although disappointed in October 22 1844 when Jesus failed to come as he calculated, shortly before he died he told those who attended him on his sick-bed, "I championed the preaching of Jesus return on October 22 1844, but He did not come, the truth is, the second coming of my Jesus is a reality. I will see him when he comes". William miller died with a living hope meeting Jesus face to face one day (Martin, 1977: 439).

Mayer (1961:350) states that on the morning following the "Great Disappointment" of October 22, 1844, Hiram Edson had a vision. He saw Jesus standing at the altar of heaven and concluded that Miller had been right about the time, but wrong about the place. In other words, Jesus' return was not to earth, but a move into the heavenly sanctuary as is referenced in Heb. 8:1-2.

Joseph Bates (1792-1872), a retired sea captain and a convert to "Millerism" then began to promote the idea of Jesus moving into the heavenly sanctuary. He published a pamphlet which greatly influenced James White (1821-1881) and Ellen White (1827-1915). It is these three who were the driving force behind the SDA movement. Ellen G. White (1827-1915) saw visions from an early age. Such was the case shortly after the Great Disappointment. Ellen G. White had a vision of a narrow path where an angel was guiding Adventists. Subsequent visions resulted in interpretations of the three angels in Rev. 14:6-11 as being 1843-1844 as the hour of God's judgment; the fall of Babylon signified by Adventists leaving various churches, and admonitions against Sunday observance. The name Seventh-day Adventist adopted by the church in 1860 and its first General Conference and formation was launched on May 21, 1863. After its formal organization in 1863, the church started sending its missionaries to other parts of the world (Mayer 1961:439).

The Seventh-Day Adventist church was first brought to Kenya by Carscallen, Arthur Asa Grandville 1879–1964, a Canadian-born missionary, administrator and linguist. He was baptized in North Dakota in 1899 and attended Union College in 1900 and 1901. In 1902 he was sent to work as a colporteur in Scotland, Wales, and England. He also assisted in evangelistic meetings and in 1904 entered Duncombe Hall Training College (now Newbold College) where he completed his course in September 1906. In 1906 he accepted a call to open up Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Kenya, East Africa, with the arrangement that his fiancée, Helen Thomson, be sent out the following year. After his ordination, late in 1906, he sailed for Mombasa with Peter Nyambo, an African teacher from Nyasaland who had been attending school in England. Carscallen spent the next thirteen years pioneering in Kenya as superintendent of the British East Africa Mission (BEAM). Under his direction a string of mission stations was established along the eastern shore of Lake Victoria (Jordan, 1988:45).

The Seventh-Day Adventists according to Getui (1985:54), Bogonko (1977:112) and Nyaundi (1997:32), first arrived in Gusii in 1913 and their first station was in Nyanchwa near Kisii Town. The other stations prior to Nyanchwa were in Were in Gendia and Wire Hill among the Luo

community which were opened in 1906 and 1907 respectively. Before the World War I these missionaries had opened the SDA stations at Karungu 1912, Rusinga 1912, Kanyadoto 1913 and Kamagambo 1913. All these stations were in South Kavirondo District which comprise of Rongo, Migori and Kisumu districts these days.

Bogonko (1977:113) and Nyaundi (1997: 27-28) assert that the outbreak of World War I prevented missionary work from taking root in Gusii as was intended. The battle in Kisii Town between the British and the Germans (*esegi ya' nyamirioro*) in 1914 made the missionaries to flee to the Friends Mission at Kaimosi and Kisumu for refuge. For more than five years missionary work stopped in Gusii. The missionary work had not taken root before the World War I and Abagusii had not learnt the new religion fully enough to work on their own.

The first Adventist Euro-American missionary to Gusii was Iran R. Evanson who did not come back to Nyanchwa after the World War I. In 1918 another missionary was sent whose name was Leonard Lane. He was sent to Nyanchwa to start the work which had stalled for five years since the end of the World War I. Lane was accompanied by Yakobo Olwa and Barnaba Okumu who both came from the Jo'luo community who are Gusii neighbours. Lane left Gusii in 1920 and was replaced by Eric B.

Beavon a young unmarried missionary who later married in 1921 in Gendia to Miss Myrna Campell, a daughter of M.M. Campell who was a director of the British Union for many years (Nyaundi, 1997:23). Adventism spread very expeditiously in Gusii and its influence was felt in every part of Gusii. More stations were opened with more local people becoming pastors and leaders of the local churches as elders, deacons and others taking the lay leadership positions in the church. The SDA church has the largest number of converts in Gusii (Moronya, O.I. 01:06:2009).

After the World War I, the SDA and the Catholics returned to Nyanchwa and Nyabururu stations respectively in 1919. Zealous work started to radiate to all parts of Gusii from these two stations. The SDA and Catholic missionaries began determined campaigns to gain more converts to their denominations. Both the missionaries and their first converts developed a spirit of competition and hatred against each other which led to dividing people along Adventist and Catholic denominational lines (Bogonko, 1977:221).

The scramble for converts attracted hatred and even physical fights between the two denominations. These outright conflicts caused Gusii traditionalist and the government to dislike and therefore disturb the work of the missionaries. To stop further conflicts, Nyaundi (1997:87)

adds that the government under the Native Authority of Ordinance designed to stop the aggression by making and giving orders to churches to build their schools and church structures at least two miles apart although this order was later withdrawn.

The missionaries and elderly converts from these two by then conflicting denominations tried to iron out their altercations in peace negotiations to no avail because after agreements of maintaining peace, they went out to attract converts and the enmity could be revived. Hatred was kindled especially in their methods of evangelism to increase the church membership. Bogonko (1977:116) writes, "Whereas the Catholics believed that mass preaching and singing should be done in the church, the Adventists followed church services with singing on their way home".

The SDA converts and missionaries employed several evangelization methods which according to Nyaundi (1997:89) influenced many converts to their denomination. These methods included singing competitions, door to door evangelism, camp meetings, public evangelisms, *amasaga* (working together) and promotion of herbal medicine (Moronya, O.I.10:06:2009). This angered the Catholic converts who in many occasions attacked them physically and destroyed their church structures at night. The marching and singing all the way home after the SDA

church services bothered members of the other denominations and even the traditionalists.

Other causes of open conflicts were that the SDA members called the Catholic converts people of Satan because their missionaries allowed them to continue drinking local beer and smoking. The Catholic missionaries bitterly responded to the SDA's accusations against them publicly in their masses. This war of words divided these converts more and Gusii community's unity was at stake. The SDAs called the Catholics their persecutors and vice versa. With this kind of hatred and rivalry, the missionaries and early converts did not portray the ideal standards of Christian living and morality which are clearly illustrated in the Bible they so claimed to embrace.

The Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries and early converts were forceful and highly skilled in evangelism. They conducted many public evangelistic campaigns, employed door to door evangelism, ordained the local people as elders and deacons and employed the local people as pastors on permanent employment. They opened churches almost in every village, started schools, dispensaries and colleges in the area. They targeted the young people by creating a strong youth department in the church and encouraged the youth to join Adventist schools where they

could be taught Adventist doctrines and strict observance of Saturday as the day of worship (Omote, O.I.08:06:2009). These are the reasons why the SDA church is the dominant denomination in Gusii.

Abagusii believe that *Engoro* created some animals, plants, insects and birds as food to the people. It is for this reason that we saw in chapter two that Abagusii related well with God's creation because they are stewards of God's creation. The SDA missionaries introduced strict dietary rules without proper explanations to the people. They taught the people that the eating of meat, drinking of tea, coffee and cocoa was evil. They were not patient in teaching people to understand the health concepts behind these noble health precautions that excessive eating of flesh and foods rich in caffeine is a health hazard. Those who asserted on eating or drinking the 'forbidden' foods were considered evil and untransformed (Mogaka, O.I, 23:06:2009). This made people to doubt their former dietary behavior they inherited from their parents and *Engoro* who provided them with these foods from as long as their memory could recall.

Abagusii had specific places where they went to worship God from. Places like on the hills and under some trees like *omotembe*, *omosasa* and *omogumo*. These places and trees were considered sacred and God was believed to stay in or on those trees and places. Most ceremonies, vows,

reconciliations and covenants were made under these trees and hills. These trees were never fetched as firewood and nobody aimlessly went to these sites. The SDA missionaries taught the people that the only place where God dwells is in the church. They also taught the people that all birds, animals, hills and valleys are equal and ordinary. Bangueso (O.I, 10:07:2009) observes that the SDA missionaries encouraged people to cut the sacred trees and built churches on every hill where people were formerly worshipping *Engoro* from. This was deliberately done so that people may divert their understanding of the sanctity of the hills as places of worship to points of convergence for worship of the Christian God. This disoriented the people's concept of God and sacred places of worship.

3.2.3 History of the Salvation Army in Gusii and its

Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The squabbles between the SDA and the Catholics which almost broke Gusii community apart did not continue for long. The inflow of more missionaries of other denominational faiths set these original religious faiths into task lest they lost their members to these more focused and neutral incoming missionaries. The coming of the Salvation Army, the Swedish Lutheran Mission, the Friends African Mission, and the Church

of God Missions diluted the wrangles which existed between Catholic and SDA churches (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009).

The Salvation Army missionaries came to Gusii in 1936 and obtained a plot in Kisii Township which they did not develop and it was later withdrawn from them afterwards. The Salvation Army missionaries did not have a well-worked out system of missionary approach. Their missionary work did not have a dynamic start because of the resistance from the Catholics and the SDAs who felt challenged by more missionary inflow to Gusii (Bogonko, 1977:33). The Salvation Army missionaries tried to start a centre in Bobasi but the local chief who had been in constant conflict with the Catholic and SDA missionaries did not want any more trouble brought by the missionaries and their converts. He could not give them accommodation and the social support they required. These missionaries were young and that made Abagusii to disrespect their missionary work. They later proceeded to South Kavirondo (Kisumu) leaving a few converts in Gusii (Nyaundi, 1997:67).

The Salvation Army missionaries who came to Gusii were youthful. They as Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) says did not see the need to reach the elderly people to explain to them the concept of the Christian God. These missionaries were in hurry and discriminated the people and were heard

talking ill of the traditional practices of the people. They discriminated the people's food, art, dress, and social life. They condemned *Engoro* in public and called those who worshiped *Engoro* as worshipers of idols. They taught their followers not to share anything with anyone who worshiped *Engoro* because doing so would anger God who would allow misery and punishment to them. The Salvation Army missionaries divided the people who were originally united in their traditional religion. Their teachings and individual perception of *Engoro* also weakened the people's interpersonal relationship and inclinations to *Engoro* whom they had believed in.

3.2.4 History of the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) in Gusii

and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

In 1937, the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) missionaries came to Gusii and were granted permission to start their evangelism in Bogirango and Bogetutu at Isecha. With zeal and determination, these missionaries started two schools, one at Isecha and another in Masosa as a way of attracting more converts in places surrounding these schools. The villages around Isecha were populated with SDAs who challenged the progression of the AIM in the region. This led to the closure of the AIM school at Isecha but the one at Masosa was able to persist. The AIM continued in Gusii but with minimum influence (Bogonko, 1977:231).

The Africa Inland Mission missionaries openly called Abagusii adherents of *Engoro* as animists, savages and irreligious. They made their converts to doubt *Engoro* and hate how they had formerly related to *Engoro*. They targeted to convert the religious functionaries and persuaded them to eradicate the religious sites where people used to meet to worship *Engoro* (Onchong'a, O.I. 24:08:2009). They ordered the cutting down of sacred trees and digging and planting crops at former sites of worship of *Engoro*. They subjected people to a religious dilemma since those who had not been converted to Christianity did not have anywhere to go to pray to *Engoro* because their worship sites were already destroyed.

3.2.5 History of the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) in Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

In 1939, the Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM) came to Gusii. These missionaries were allocated land by the local authority at Bonchari Location in 1939. They put their station at a place called Itierio and from there they spread their influence to other parts of Bonchari like Bogitaa which currently has the largest concentration of the SLM converts. Extending their scope of influence, they further moved to North Bogirango and started another station at Matongo.

Bogonko (1977:126) states that the SLM had a greater impact and had the vigor to penetrate to many centers like Bonchari, Bogetutu and South

Bogirango but their efforts were undermined by their denominational competitors the SDAs and the Catholics. To stop their further spread in Gusii, Bogonko adds that their competitors manipulated a scandal which ill accused the SLM evangelists that they were murderers “who slaughtered humans like animals” (Bogonko, 1977:127). This accusation scared Abagusii from joining this denominational group. With this unfair disturbance, the SLM kept to their former stations which are Matongo and Itierio. At these stations they built schools and hospitals which do exist to this day.

Abagusii believed that God healed through the medicine persons and the natural herbs. Before Abagusii gave medicines to the patients, they invoked *Engoro* whom they believed healed the sick. The SLM missionaries discouraged people from taking local herbs prescribed to them by the medicine persons. They dismissed the medicine persons as ‘witch doctors’ which was an insult and a demeaning reference in order to make people not to esteem them (Nyatichi, O.I, 02:06:2009).

3.2.6 History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) in

Gusii and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) missionaries came to Gusii in 1944 and started their mission station on a five acre land in Itibo in Bogetutu. This was a more influential protestant group whose dynamic evangelistic approach threatened the Catholic and SDA converts. These missionaries started a dispensary at Itibo, which picked up well at its initial stages but later collapsed because the local SDA and Catholic converts never visited the dispensary for medical services to enable it to progress as they did to Tabaka and Kendu Mission Hospitals (Onchari, 1975:23). Despite the opposition PAG missionaries faced from the old and established churches in Gusii, their missionaries remained focused and persistent.

From Itibo mission centre they extended outwards to all directions in Gusii and their impact was felt in almost all parts of Gusii. They planted dynamic churches at Masakwe, Kenyoro, Eramba in Bogetutu and Gianchore in North Bogirango. In Bobasi they opened stations at Borangi, Sameta and Naikuro. In 1946, they further moved to Nyaribari where they started a station at Irungu. The PAG church is the third largest church in Gusii (Bogonko, 1977:33).

Gusii traditional concept of God has anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God. The PAG missionaries discouraged people from using Gusii traditional images of God in reference to God. They insisted on the use of the biblical images of God like king, lord, husbandman and vinedresser without considering that some biblical images and names of God were not understood by the local people. The PAG missionaries were using the biblical names of God which were very hard for Abagusii to grasp without translating them to *ekegusii* language. They used terms like *Elohim, Adonai, El Elyon, El Roi, El Shaddai, El Olam* and *Yahweh*. These terms made Abagusii to conclude that the Christian God is too hard and complicated to understand and that made some who were already converted to Christianity to drop their new religion and resort to their former belief in *Engoro*.

3.2.7 History of the Church of God (CoG) In Gusii and its influence of Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The Church of God (CoG) arrived in Gusii from their headquarters at Kima in Bunyore North Kavirondo District in 1944. The CoG started their Mission station at Ibeno in 1944 and tried to spread its influence through Gusii but did not succeed to get further from Ibeno in Nyaribari. They managed to get new converts with whom they started new churches in Tambacha and Ngokoro in Bogetutu (Nyaundi, 1997:121).

The Church of God did not penetrate to most parts of Gusii because of the already the SDA, Catholic and PAG churches had already taken root and resisted new coming denominations. Where they managed to enter and start churches, they had influences on Gusii traditional concept of God. For instance, the missionaries of the Church of God restricted their members from socially interacting with members of other denominations. They taught their members that whoever mentioned the name *Engoro* had to ask for forgiveness from God because *Engoro* was not God according to them. They also told the people that God does not have a Gusii name because God does not only belong to Abagusii community (Guto, O.I, 09:07:2009). They presented God to Abagusii as one who is distant and withdrawn from the welfare of the people. They also discouraged people from praying in the morning facing the sun and argued that God is not found in the sun and that the sun is a natural object which has nothing to do with God. The missionaries tried to teach the members on basics of science which even confused Abagusii more.

3.2.8 History of the Friends African Mission (FAM) in Gusii

and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The last but not the least missionary group to Gusii was the Friends African Mission (FAM) whose headquarters was in Kaimosi in North Kavirondo District (Western Province of Kenya) since 1902. They were

allocated land by the local authority at Gianchere and did not make even the slightest move out of Giachere where they were first allocated. The FAM church was highly resisted by the SDA and the Catholics. They were exceedingly segregated because the local people called it the church of the foreigners (*ekanisa ya'bako*) because some Luyia people came along with the missionaries and stayed permanently in the region. They were given settlement land by Musa Nyandusi who was by then Gusii Senior Chief (Bogonko, 1977:23-24).

The Friends African Mission church was brought to Gusii by missionaries who were accompanied by the Luyia converts to Christianity. The Luyia people came with their traditional concept of God and wanted to plant it wholesome among Abagusii. In spite of the land they were given to plant their churches and settle permanently, they did not respect Gusii traditional concept of God. Some were heard condemning Gusii religio-cultural practices saying that the manner of worship of Abagusii was backward and irreligious. This created enmity between the local people and the FAM. It hindered the church's further penetration to other parts of Gusii. They were determined to plant the Luyia inculturated Christianity but they did not have the local support and that is how they ended up settling only in Gianchere near Kisii town.

The success of all Protestant and Catholic missions depended on how focused and ambitious the early converts and missionaries were in their missionary strategies (Getui, 1985:13). Their successes also depended on how much the mission was financially supported. The missionaries to Gusii in the second wave (protestant missionaries who came to Gusii between the years 1936-1963) did not have enough financial support so they did not make much progress and further penetration to other parts of Gusii. The SDA and Catholic missionaries took advantage of penetration since they did not have strong denominational faith challengers for almost fifty years (Osindi & Moronya, O.I. 23:06:2009). The missionaries had a common assessment of Gusii traditional concept of *Engoro* as discussed below.

3.3 The Collective Missionary Assessment and Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

The Protestant and Catholic missionaries who came to Gusii came from England at different times. What is unique is that the missionaries in their diversities of origin and denominational background had some similarities in their negative perception of *Engoro*. The Christian missionaries who first came to Gusii believed that Abagusii did not have a concept of God. They accused them of worshiping the ancestors and not the true God. They claimed that the idea of God is a philosophical one

and beyond the understanding of a black backward people like Abagusii (Nyaundi, 1997:43). They also did not recognize Gusii anthropomorphic, animal and bird images. Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) observes that the missionaries taught Abagusii new images of God like the king, lord and lion which Abagusii had no idea about.

The missionaries came with a misinformed mind about the local people in their traditional concept of God. The European Explorers misinformed the Christian missionaries who first came to Gusii. p'Bitek (1970: 43) writes from an African perspective that during the eighteenth century men like Tuunberg J., Sparman K., Levalliant J., Bruce M., Mugongo P. and Park K. came to Africa primarily to explore and observe. These explorers' presupposed evolutionist and imperialist thinking came with their minds pre-informed of what to see and discover in Africa. They thought that Africans had no concept of God and the only thing they might have was just the basics of monotheism. p'Bitek noticed that the religious stage was subdivided into three periods: Fetishism, polytheism and monotheism. The supposed traditional religion of African peoples that is Fetishism came at the bottom of the ladder.

As a result, the explorers misinformed the West about African religious backgrounds and considered Africans irreligious and without a belief in

God. Some reported that Africans were primitive and underdeveloped. With this misinformed understanding, the missionaries who first came to Gusii came to bring new faith and its concept of God to Abagusii.

Nyaundi reveals how the SDA missionaries who came to Gusii negatively assessed Gusii traditional concept of God. He writes

Beavon recognized the role of the local deity. But like many missionaries he had a low opinion of *Engoro* (God of Abagusii). God of the missionaries and God of the local people were contrasted sharply Nyaundi (1997: 30).

The Christian missionaries who came to Gusii did not expect monotheism among the local people. That is why they used barbaric terms to refer to Abagusii. Such terms as primitive, savage, animism, (belief in spirits) demeaned Abagusii. The other terms they employed to describe Gusii religion included dynamism, totemism, fetishism, and naturism (Nyaundi 1997). These religious terms show clearly how little the missionaries understood Gusii Traditional concept of God which they subjected to a great deal of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Gusii traditional concept of God was mocked and dismissed as primitive and underdeveloped without justifiable reasons by the missionaries.

Although the missionaries who came to Gusii were from the Catholic and different Protestant groups, they had a similar perception of Gusii

Traditional concept of God. They became determined to teach Abagusii the new concept of God making them to disown their inherent belief in *Engoro* they had embraced over the years. The missionaries did not see the need to identify the similarities and differences between their concept of God and that of Abagusii.

3.4.1 The Christian Concept of God and its Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

Christians have two major sources of their knowledge of God that is, the evidence from creation and the scriptures. The Christians know God as the creator and the sustainer of the universe. The reality about God is assumed in the Christian Holy Book called the Bible. The Bible affirms God's existence in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Stagg (1962:98) states that the Bible never speaks of God in an impersonal sense. Instead, it refers to God in personal terms. It portrays God as one who, speaks, sees, hears, acts, and loves. God in Christianity is known to have a will and a personality. Stagg (1962:87) further reflects that God is presented in the Bible as a being primarily concerned with people.

Christians believe that God is the eternal father who is the creator, source, sustainer, and sovereign of all creation. Christianity teaches that God is just, holy, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast

love and faithfulness. God as Ombui (O.I, 25:06:2009) opines, is worth of worship, admiration, adoration and service by all creation. The Christians hold a belief that God is revealed through the physical universe. They argue that, by observing the universe, one can find a positive indication of God's existence. White (1956:iv) is of the view that creation reveals the results of the universal mind that devised a master plan and executed it. It makes more sense to accept the idea of God as a creator of the universe than to assume that the universe came into existence through other foreign forces except through God.

God according to Machner (1998:67) is believed to be both immanent and transcendent. Explaining the immanence and transcendence of God, he further highlights that God is with and within all things in the universe - both the visible and the invisible things. He further asserts that God is outside space and time, therefore, eternal and unable to be changed by forces within the universe.

Christianity illuminates that God is holy and separate from sin and is not corruptible. God's justice is expressed as fairness, righteousness, and truthfulness in all judgments conferred upon humanity. p'Bitek (1970:87) argues that the Christians portray God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and immortal. These terms are refined by Neibuhr's (1951)

God the Transformer of Culture paradigm so that God is understood as all-knowing, everywhere at the same time, lives forever, and all-present.

Abagusii's concept of God is inherent and transmitted from one generation to another through Gusii oral tradition. They have the knowledge of God through their reflection of the universe, their human limitations and the forces of nature. The missionaries introduced the Bible as the book of faith read and interpreted to the people by trained theologians. Reading and understanding the Bible was highly emphasized by the missionaries as the principal way of knowing the mind of God. This made the people to believe that to know the mind of God one has to rely on the theologians. It also disadvantaged those who did not have a chance of getting the formal education to help them to read and understand the Bible on their own.

The Christian missionaries used the Greek metaphysical terms to refer to God. They used the Greek metaphysical expressions not meant to refer to the Christian God like God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and immanent. These terms displaced Gusii terms like giver (*omorwa*), helper (*omokonyi*), powerful (*omonyanguru*), maker (*omoroisia*) creator (*omotongi*) savior (*omoboria*) and protector (*omorendi*) to refer to God with meanings which help people to know and understand God better. The use of these

terms, the interpretation of the biblical concepts by only theologians made Abagusii to perceive God as one who is far and withdrawn from the daily human reality of life. It also made God to appear as one who can not be understood by local people who are without the systematic theology concepts.

3.5 The Christian Teaching on the Trinity and Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

Christianity maintains that the doctrine of the Trinity is encapsulated in Matthew 28:19, where Jesus instructs the apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Wendell (1991:76) states that the parallelism of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is not unique to Matthew's Gospel, but appears elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 13:14, Hebrews. 9:14), as well as in the writings of the earliest Christians.

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity teaches the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as three persons in Godhead. Cantelon (1980:143) states that, Christianity points out that God is a Triune God existing as three persons. Each of the persons is understood to have one identical essence or nature, not merely natures. Stagg (1962:289) illuminates that

the belief in the existence of the three God-head has been there since the 4th Century. The concept of the Trinity has had varied explanations, controversies and heresies in both the Catholic and protestant denominations but the idea and the sanctity of the Trinity has not been devalued.

White (1954 a: 234) states that, in the New Testament God the Father has the special role in the relationship with the Son. Jesus in the New Testament is referred to as the son or the heir of God the Father. According to the Nicene Creed, Jesus is declared or confirmed as the eternally begotten of the Father indicating that their divine father-son relationship is not tied to an event, time or history. Christianity refers to Christ as the word present at God's creation and all was created through the Word who is Jesus the Son. Omwando (O.I, 23:07:2009) indicates that during creation Jesus the word was not alone creating but was equal with the personhood of the Trinity.

Monro (1961:132) states that God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus all things are/were created, the character of God was/is revealed, the salvation of humanity is/was accomplished, and the world is/was judged. Forever truly God, became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin

Mary. Davison (O.I. 23:03:2009) observes that Jesus lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and the love of God. By Jesus' miracles, God's power was attested. Oira (O.I, 26:08:2009) adds that Jesus suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for humanity's sins and in their place, was raised from the dead and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary on humanity's behalf. Christians believe that Jesus will come again in glory for the final deliverance of the people and the restoration of all things.

Christianity as Lindivas (1973:98) argues holds that God is called the Father, the Creator and the Provider of all things. God has an eternal relationship with the son Jesus which implies an exclusive and intimate familiarity that is of the very nature. God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. Wilson (1968:133) highlights that the qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

God the eternal Spirit as believed by Christians was active with the Father and the Son in creation, incarnation, and redemption. Lindivas (1973:241) further contends that God the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Scriptures, filled Christ's life with power, draws and convicts human beings and renews and transforms people into the image of God. God the

Holy Spirit is further believed to be sent by the Father and the Son to be always with God's children, extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.

The Christian missionaries did not believe that Abagusii believed in the same God that they did. They felt that their religion was superior and purposed to fulfill the Great commission in Matthew 28:19 that "Go ye therefore..." They claimed, to observe the New Testament theology of discipleship and considered themselves as the chosen few to tutor the black Africans, Abagusii included the concept of the 'New' God. They began to teach the new concept of God without clearly defining the operational terms to the understanding of the local people. For instance, the concept of the Trinity- God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit, was not clearly elaborated to the understanding of Abagusii. It remained a question to Abagusii on how God who is the Father can be the Son and the Holy Spirit at the same time. It was not elaborately explained to the understanding of Abagusii on how God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of equal authority and of identical essence.

Christianity introduced God the father as the judge, God the Son as the advocate and God the Holy Spirit as the teacher. These theologies were

not clearly taught to the people so that they could understand how the Trinity can be the judge, advocate and teacher at the same time. Failure of the missionaries to teach Abagusii to clearly understand these concepts has influenced evil among Abagusii because they believe that God the Father is the judge and God the Son who also addressed in Christianity as the first born brother is the advocate.

3.6 The Biblical Names of God and Their Influence on Gusii Reference for God

The Christians have various names for God. These names have original meanings which describe God. Many of these words have meanings which when studied, highlight how Christians know or think about God. Mbiti (1970:41) has similar view that some Christian names are personal and refer only to God while others are descriptive in nature since they describe the character of God.

Christianity borrowed the biblical Jewish, Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek references to God. The Christian missionaries especially the PAG and CoG used the terms in prayers, songs and sermons. They did not translate them to the *ekegusii* language in which the people could understand. Abagusii were influenced and started using them without modifications. Some of these biblical names which Abagusii were influenced by

Christianity to use are, *Elohim* (Strong One, Divine, Genesis 1:1), *Adonai* (Lord, Master-to-servant Exodus 4:10, 13), *El Elyon* (Most High, the strongest one, Genesis 14:20), *El Roi* (the Strong One Who Sees, Genesis 16:13), *El Shaddai* (Almighty God, Genesis 17:1), *El Olam* (Everlasting God, Isaiah 40:28) and *Yahweh* (LORD "I Am," self-existent Exodus 3:13, 14) (Mervyn, 1981:121). Most of these names are of Hebrew origin and are commonly used in the Old Testament.

The biblical references to God have/had specific meaning(s) to the people of a particular community. Some of these names shown in the foregoing paragraph are of Jewish, Aramaic and Hebrew origin and some are no longer in use today. Christianity introduced these references to God wholesome and it made the people not to understand who clearly God is. The Christian missionaries however insisted on the use of these names in addressing God. Abagusii as Nyabera (O.I, 10:06:2009) adds were influenced by Christianity which made them to drop or ignore their local names for God like *omochikare* (eterna) *omorwa* (giver), *omorendi* (protector), *omokoreki* (founder), *omokonyi* (helper), *omonguru* (strong) and *omoboria* (saviour).

3.7 The Christian Teachings on the Attributes of God and Their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

Christianity portrays God as a unique being. The nature and attributes of this unique God cannot be sufficiently explained in human language. Bruce (1972:56) contends that any explanation about God is a mere attempt that gives a glimpse of what Christians know about this God. Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) adds that the divine and moral attributes of God help Christians to know who God is. The attributes of God is what comes to mind when Christians think about God in reference to what God has done. The attributes of God are based on what the Bible describes about God and what is observed in the day-to-day life. The Bible records various instances which were used by various personalities to highlight on the character of God.

The Christian missionaries taught Abagusii as noted above that there was no religion in the world but Christianity which had been able to successfully define the attributes and nature of God. They emphasized that anyone who desired to know more about God has to read and understand the Bible. It was unfortunate that even during that time almost all Abagusii were illiterate Mbaka (O.I, 17:07:2009). This made them to rely on the missionaries and a few Gusii converts to Christianity who were taught how to read the Bible. To understand the nature and

attributes of God became difficult for the people because the missionaries and the first Gusii Bible readers did not explain the cultures in the Bible, the biblical names of God and the biblical images of God. This situation influenced others to withdraw from Christianity to Gusii traditional religion. Below is a discussion of the Christian teachings of the divine and moral attributes of the Christian God. It further shows how the teachings on God's attributes influenced Abagusii and how the Christian teachings of the attributes of God are refined by God the Transformer of Culture and God above Culture paradigms in Neibuhr's (1951) Christological model to fit Gusii context.

3.7.1 The Christian Teaching on the Non-Sharable Attributes of God and their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

God has attributes which are exclusively divine and are not found in any human being or any creature in the universe. This belief is both in Christianity and in Gusii traditional religion. The coming of missionaries did not recognize Gusii concept of the non-sharable attributes of God. In Christianity God is Holy, Sovereign, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Pre-Existent, Eternal, Immutable and Infinite.

God is Holy and Sovereign

Christianity teaches that the holiness of God distinguishes God from other created beings. This attribute refers to God's majesty and perfect moral purity. There is absolutely no sin or evil thought in God. Brook (1950:11-12) says that God's holiness is the definition of that which is pure and righteous in the entire universe. God's holiness in Christianity is exemplified in numerous instances in the Bible such as in Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The Christians believe that God rules over the entire creation. Mervyn (1981:251) emphasizes that this attribute of God incorporates God's all-knowing and all-powerful attributes. The sovereignty of God, controls everything that happens in the universe.

God is holy in a transcendent and infinitely perfect manner (Isaiah 1:4; 6:3). The Messiah is called "the Holy One," (Psalms 16:10; Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14) and Holy is the common description given to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. God is the fountain of holiness, innocence, and the sanctification. Christianity as Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) observes does not clearly show the difference between the holiness of God (*obochenu bwa'Nyasae*) and the holiness of humanity (*obochenu bwa'mwanyabanto*) which was lost after sin in the Garden of Eden. It does not illuminate how a holy being can sin.

The Bible applies the appellation holy in a secondary sense to whatever pertains especially to God-to heaven, to the temple, its parts, utensils, and services; today, ministers, priests, prophets, and apostles. The Jews were called a holy people, because they were separated unto God, to be a religious and consecrated people. Christians, as a body, are also called holy, because they are in like manner separated unto Christ. But a holy person in the ordinary Christian sense is one who exhibits in his conduct the inward purity, benevolence, and holy devotedness to the Savior, with whom the heart overflows (White, 1956:123). Mogaka (O.I, 23:06:2009) adds that the idea of other communities like the Jews being holy and considered chosen (*abachorwa*) and commissioned (*abanontigwa*) by God makes God to appear as one who segregates his own people. It has also made others to develop the spiritual pride, an element which Christianity itself preaches against.

God is Omnipotent and Omniscient

Christians believe that God is all-powerful. Christ's miracles are evidence of God's power over the physical universe. The words spoken by Jesus about the resurrection from the grave all support the Christian argument about the omnipotence of God. White (1954 b: 131) asserts that the belief of the power of resurrection, authority over death and power to restore life all describe the omnipotence of God. Mervyn (1981:211) argues that

God has power to forgive sins (Matt 9:6), power in heaven and on earth (Matt 28:18), power over nature (Luke 8:25), power to give eternal life (John 17:2), power to heal the sick people and those possessed by demons (Mark 1:29-34) and power to transform anybody who believes (Philippians 3:21). Christianity maintains that the power of God is revealed in Christ's incarnation, life, death and resurrection. Schaff (1983:75) indicates that the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus is a confirmation to the Christians that God has power to give life, protect life, take life and restore life of the dead.

Christianity holds a belief that God knows everything throughout eternity. God has a perfect and eternal knowledge of all things. The omniscience of God does not come in the same way that knowledge comes to humanity. Humanity arrives at knowledge by learning. God does not go through a learning process to acquire knowledge about things. Schaff (1983:22) adds that the omniscience of God does not come through reasoning, inference, senses, imaginations, induction, or deduction. God's knowledge is direct, sharp, distinct, true and real. Christianity acknowledges God as the source of all wisdom and knowledge.

This Christian perception of God is emphasized in John 2:24-25. Mervyn (1981:12) states that this attribute portrays God as the wisest prophet, who

knows the past, present and foretells the future of people. The knowledge of God is far beyond any human or mortal knowledge. God's wisdom far exceeds humanity's limitations. The wisdom of God can be classified as the perfect knowledge. God knows the inward thoughts and memories of humanity, discerns the human hearts, reads the human hearts and knows the puzzles in the hearts of people. Christianity further underlines that God knows all that which is happening in heaven, on earth and in waters. It is on this basis that Christians argue that in God are hidden all the treasures of knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

Abagusii perceived God as all powerful and all-seeing who does not tolerate evil and evil doers. The Christian concept that humanity is free to chose to do what is desirable in their sight and wait for judgment in the future from a Holy and Sovereign God has influenced evil in Gusii community.

The terms omnipotent and omniscient are Greek metaphysical terms which have no relevance in Gusii understanding. The use of these terms in reference to the attributes of God makes Abagusii perceive God as complicated, hard to understand and withdrawn from human reality. The use of the incomprehensible Greek metaphysical terms in reference to God

makes Abagusii to insist on their former names for *Engoro* whom they describe in comprehensible terms.

God is Omnipresent

Christianity teaches that God is eternal, and therefore not limited by time, is omnipresent, and not limited by space (Psalm 139:7-10; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:23, 24). He is universally present at all times. Abagusii hold a similar belief but even so, they believe that this does not mean that God is dispersed throughout the infinite reaches of space, so that every part of space has at least a little part of God. In other words, God is not present in all space. This means that the unlimited God is present at every point of our space. Perhaps a better way to express God's omnipresence is to say that all space is immediately present before God (Brook, 1950:341).

Christianity also believes that God is everlasting. God is everywhere present at each point in the universe. This belief as Brook (1950:125) maintains does not imply that God is everything but it reveals that God is everywhere at once and not everything at once. Nyachiro (O.I, 04:08:2009) opines that this attribute of God helps the Christians to believe that God is able to help, deliver, love, defend, and meet the people's needs and longings everywhere and at once. This is emphasized in Ephesians 4:10, Matthew 4:8 and Matthew 28:20 and in other texts in the Bible.

In spite of the similar belief of Abagusii with Christianity that God is here and there at the same time, the Christian missionaries influenced Abagusii to a belief that God's presence is more in Christian sacred places like in the church than in the shrines where they usually interacted with God in their traditional religion. This influenced them to destroy the shrines and stop going to the hills to ask God to do according to their requests. The term omnipresence is a Greek metaphysical term however; the missionaries insisted on its use. This affected Gusii concept of God's attributes as one who is everywhere at the same time, all-knowing and all-seeing.

The all-presence of God among Abagusii was experienced as protective, sustaining, upholding, saving, and healing. The belief in the all-presence of God made Abagusii to offer prayers, sacrifices and offerings to God on behalf of the sick, the barren and those in distress. When the missionaries came, they considered sacrifices and offerings to God as pagan and introduced new concepts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God without clearly explaining these concepts to the understanding of the local people. This has resulted to some secretly visiting the traditional healers and priests for spiritual fulfillment (Bangueso, O.I. 29:08:2009).

God's Pre-Existence

Christianity has a belief that God's existence was there from the infinite past. God was there before anything came into being. Bruce (1972:231) argues that Jesus confirms God's pre-existence in the New Testament. Jesus says in John 16:28 that God's origin is outside the world. Jesus' word that "I am leaving the world again and going to the father," shows that God's existence is beyond the domains of the world's space.

The teaching of God's pre-existence is foundational to the Christian faith (Hamill, 1982:34). Its teaching is also the basis on which the Christian doctrines depend. Without the pre-existence Christ's incarnation, resurrection, and atoning work are in question. Since Christ's pre-existence has been taught since the beginning of the early church and reaffirmed by the New Testament authors, the acceptance or rejection of this doctrine affects the whole of Christology and the overall understanding of Christianity. The traditional teaching is that Christ pre-existed before becoming human as Jesus of Nazareth. God the Son, and the second person of the Trinity, is part of Godhead, pre-existing before the incarnation. This doctrine of Christ's pre-existence explains why the incarnation is an expression of God's love for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ existed before entering into this world through the incarnation. Our understanding and acceptance of the pre-existence is important as it

affects our concept of God, the Trinity, Christology, Creation, and Salvation. Without the Son's pre-existence, there can be no incarnation, which is the precursor to the Christian doctrine of salvation and God's covenant laid out in the Old Testament scriptures. This is why the pre-existence of God is so significant in Christianity (McCready, 1977:72 and Harring,1981:23).).

Abagusii believed in the pre-existence of God. They believed that God was never created. They did not have the concept of the pre-existence of the Son Jesus Christ neither did they have the concept of the Trinity. The coming of Christianity influenced them to believing in the pre-existence of God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit. It took a long time to explain the incarnation of Jesus who is God and the mystery of salvation through incarnation. This delayed the evangelization process in Gusii.

The Immutability of God

God in the Bible is portrayed as an eternal God. God is beyond time. There was never a time that God was not and never will there be a time when God will be not. In the New Testament, Jesus points out in John 8:58 that "before Abraham was born I AM". The Greek text clearly uses the present tense 'I am' not 'I was'. Bruce (1972:89) points out that Jesus'

pre-existence is a demonstration and confirmation that Jesus is ever present and eternal. The I AM claims the eternity of existence of Jesus who is also God. Omote (O.I, 21:08:2009) is of the view that God was there before time, after time and always is.

God in Christianity is not capable or susceptible to change. God's personality is immutable. White (1954 a: 12, 13) confirms that God's essence, relationship to humanity, attributes and actions to humanity are not subject to any change. God can be relied upon by humanity because God does not change. God's promises and assurances are permanent and would never be changed as is the case with humanity. Jesus and the Father stand as immutably one and of identical essence.

The attribute of God as eternal is one of those where the conflict between the Greek and Jewish heritage of philosophical theism is most obvious. Both Jewish and Christian scriptures point to a God who is everlasting, acting in human history, and very much capable of making changes in everything.

God is Infinite

God knows no boundaries and is without measure. The Christians emphasize this attribute of God because they have a conviction that God is eternal. Gordon (1978:119) asserts that since God is infinite, everything else about God is also without measure and boundary. This supports the Christian belief that humanity's knowledge about God does not exhaust who God actually is.

Abagusii also believe that God has no limit, is at all places at the same time and has no boundaries. He is approached by anyone, anywhere and at any time. Christianity as Nyatichi (O.I, 02:06:2009) stated introduced the days of rest and emphasized that these are days when people meet with the Christian God. This idea the missionaries introduced is good and biblical but they did not teach the people well so as to understand it in reference to the authenticity of the scriptures. People thought that God is only present on Saturdays, Sundays or on Christian celebration seasons like the Easter and Christmas. Christianity discouraged the people from going to the hills and valleys to offer sacrifices to God, instead they introduced the churches which they described as the only places where people go to approach their God. This affected Abagusii's belief that God is infinite and is approached anywhere, any day and any time. The people

were left with a notion that God's presence can only be limited to particular places and seasons (Kerosi O.I, 28:08:2009)

3.7.2 The Christian Teaching on the Sharable Attributes of God and Their Influence on Gusii Traditional Concept of God

Christians believe that, God shares some extrinsic attributes with humanity. Humanity can become like God in character as a result of their inclination and interactions with God. Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18 says "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Abagusii also believed that humanity shares with *Engoro* his extrinsic attributes. When Christianity came, the first Gusii converts to Christianity were taught of the Christian God and were easily influenced because the Christian God seemed to have similar human or extrinsic attributes as their *Engoro*. God in the Christian understanding has the sharable attributes. They believe that *Engoro* is good, wise, faithful, patient, loving, trustworthy, just, caring, compassionate, pitiful and friendly. This section will discuss God as good, wise and faithful.

God is Good

In our participant observation, we noted that the Christians commonly in form of greetings say “God is good, all the times... and all the times, God is good... and that is His nature...” The goodness of God as argued by Manchner (1998:6-8) endures continually. The goodness of God refers to the perfection of God’s nature. In the New Testament John the disciple in the Gospel relates the goodness of God as to the light which opposes darkness (John 1:5). Monro (1961:220) shows that, the goodness of God can be summed up by the act of God sending the begotten son Jesus to die an eternal death to redeem fallen humanity. The goodness of God is further revealed in God’s day-to-day provision for humanity’s needs. White (1954 b:70,72) insists that the goodness of God can also be realized by the act of God continually forgiving people of their sins.

Abagusii also believe that God is good in reference to what God does to them. Christianity presented God as one who loves both the righteous and the sinners. Abagusii believed that God has no relationship with evil doers and for that matter, Mose (O.I. 23:06:2009) says that *Engoro* punishes instantly those who do evil against others. The Christian teaching about the goodness of God made Abagusii assume that God tolerates evil and evil doers and that has affected the people’s general morality.

God Is Wise

Christians as argued by Schaff (1983:311) believe that God has the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve these ends by the most perfect means. They further argue that God makes no mistakes as human beings do. They also refer to God as a father who truly gives what is best for the child. The apostle Paul (Romans 11:33) substantiates that, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

Abagusii also believe that God is wise. They have their ancestors whose wisdom they say was given by God and it helped them as a community in times of inter-community wars, calamities, drought, famine and diseases. It is for this reason that they remembered the long and recent dead of their community through re-naming, libations and references in prayers. Christianity discourages Abagusii from remembering and referring to the wisdom of the ancestors and directs them to references of biblical icons of wisdom like Solomon. This makes Abagusii to believe that the wisdom of God is limited to some and not to others and in that respect, they forget their own people whom God had given wisdom which helped them as a community in the past (Sani O.I, 14:07:2009).

God is Faithful

Christians believe in the faithfulness of God. What God has promised in the Bible and to the people comes to pass. Jesus asserts in the Bible that “I am the Truth”. This is extremely important to the Christians because it is from this attribute of God that they anchor their belief in the eternal life as promised by God. Regarding the faithfulness of God, Davison (O.I, 23:08:2009) points out that God is faithful to the Bible promises.

Abagusii also believe that God is faithful to all people in the universe. The missionaries taught that God is faithful to those who are faithful in giving of tithes and offerings. They presented the teaching in a manner that made the tithes and offerings to appear as debts humanity owes God and that made people to fear God as one would fear a human debtor. This teaching confused Abagusii who believe that God’s faithfulness is not based on how much one gives but how faithful one is in his/her daily endeavors. The principles of returning of tithes and offerings is clearly taught in the scriptures but the missionaries misrepresented it and made Abagusii to perceive God as a harsh debtor and themselves as unfaithful creditors deserving punishment from God because of failing to pay the required percentage and at the right time (Ombui, O.I, 25:06:2009).

3.7.3 The Biblical Images of God and Their Influence on Gusii Traditional References to God

God in the Bible is presented in various anthropomorphic, animal and bird images. The Bible writers used the images so that the people to whom the message was originally presented could understand without any difficulty. Christianity presented the biblical images to Abagusii wholesome while others are not relevant to Abagusii in their day-to-day understanding of the image of God. Some of the images make it difficult for Abagusii to understand who God is. These anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God include God as a father, Lord or King, friend, potter, husbandman or vinedresser, shepherd, lion and as a dove. Most of the biblical images of God are male because of the influence of the Jewish patriarchal systems which are similarly witnessed among Abagusii. Neibuhr's (1951) conceptual framework helps to refine the images of God which are not in use in the contemporary society through God the transformer of culture, God above culture and God and culture in paradox paradigms.

God as a Father

Christians address God as a father and themselves as sons or daughters. They believe that those who believe in God and are led by the Holy Spirit are sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:14). Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:18

says that those who believe in God, as a father are sons and daughters of God. Christians also believe that God as a father withholds nothing good from his people (Omote O.I, 21:08:2009). As a father, God protects, comforts, guides, counsels, disciplines and provides for humanity of their daily needs. Similarly, Abagusii perceive God as a father who lives with people, provides, cares, protects and comforts them.

In the Bible as White ((1986b:21,22) states, a father is often synonymous with ancestor, founder, or originator (Genesis 4:20-21; John 8:56; Romans 4:16). As a father, God is also known to take the roles of a counsellor and provider in the family (Genesis 45:8). Christians address God as a father because they believe God is the creator and the great parent of all, the preserver of the human family and the provider of the family needs (Matthew 5:45; 6:32).

Christianity influenced Abagusii to believe that it is through Jesus the son that they can call God by that endearing name, "our Father," (John 20:17; Romans 8:15-17.). Christianity influenced Abagusii to address God as one who lives in heaven especially as written in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:7. Christianity influenced Abagusii to perceive God as a father who will punish the evil doers in the future. It also makes God to appear too far away from the people because God lives in heaven. Christianity further

influenced Abagusii to believe that God cannot be presented in the image of a Gusii father because God is remote, indifferent and unavailable. They finally portrayed a Gusii father as one who is detached, unconcerned and uninvolved in the daily needs of his family.

God as King and Lord

Christians address God as a King or Lord and themselves as subjects. God as a King is a leader of heaven and earth. They address God as a King or Lord because they believe God is powerful, has authority, is a protector, is impartial, is never contested or contradicted and just. The name Lord as Monro (1961:141) asserts belongs to God by pre-eminence and in this sense ought never to be given to any creature. Brown, J and Parker (1989:45) add that Jesus Christ, as the Messiah the Son of God and equal with the Father, is often called Lord in the Scriptures.

The address of God as a King or Lord by Christians influenced Abagusii to address God as Lord and King who before the coming of Christianity perceived God as *Omokumi* (Community Elder) who was powerful, had authority, was never contradicted, just and protected the community from attacks from their enemies. Abagusii in their traditional heritage did not have kings and lords but had *Omokumi* and clan elders (*Abagaka Be'mechie*) in their government.

Addressing God as a King or Lord makes God appear as one who is harsh and dictatorial. Abagusii are neighbours to the Luo community who had kings. Abagusii were great enemies of the Luo community because young men from either community at night crossed the boundaries and stole livestock and other property belonging to people of the other community. These are some of the instances which caused war between Abagusii and their neighbouring communities (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009). The Luo kings are the ones who ordered war against Abagusii on when to start and when to end. Addressing God as a king makes Abagusii associate God with the brutal, merciless, dictatorial and uncompromising Luo king. This made some Gusii elders to resist Christianity in its initial stages in the area (Moraya, O.I, 10:06:2009).

God as a Friend

Christians address God as a constant friend. Friendship was highly valued in the Greco-Roman world (Swedenberg, 1988:41, 42). Friendship among the Jews as Stagg (1962:90, 91) reveals was of basic pleasure and one was considered popular if he/she had many friends. In Christianity and in Gusii traditional religion God is considered a constant friend for protection, comfort, provision and companionship.

The Bible as Bacchiochi (1976:67) states provides many references to God as a friend. Schaff (1983:12) points out that in the Old Testament, it was understood that a human being could also be a friend of God. He further argues that in Jewish thought, God could be a friend of human beings. In Exodus 33:11, "Yahweh would talk to Moses face to face, as a man talks to his friend." But it was only Moses who had this special position. With John's Gospel, everyone can be a friend of God (John 3:19), John the Baptist describes himself as "the friend of the bridegroom," and Lazarus is described as a friend of Jesus in John 11:11. It is Jesus' friendship that is betrayed by Judas (John 13:18).

The image of God as a friend in both Christianity and Gusii traditional religion is slightly different. Christianity presents God as one who selects people he communes with. The Bible presents specific people whom God used like Moses, Abraham, Enoch and the prophets. This concept of God has influenced the ranking of persons in the Christian church which has in most cases increased interpersonal differences (Nyanchama, O.I, 12:06:2009).

Abagusii believe that God as a friend considers all people equal and makes friendship with anyone who is willing to become his friend. Christianity presents God as a friend who reasons out with humanity.

“Come now and let us reason together...” Isaiah 1:18. The idea of God reasoning with humanity according to Abagusii reduces the authority of God. Christianity emphasis on this image of God as a friend has influenced a weakened inclination of Abagusii with God.

God as a Potter

Christianity presented God in the image of a potter. A potter is a maker of earthenware (Gen 24:14-15; Judges 7:16, 19; Psalms 2:9.). The Ancient Egyptian paintings represent the potter turning and shaping, on his small and simple wheel made to revolve rapidly by the foot, the lump of clay, which he had previously kneaded with his feet (Mackenzie, 1974:54). A pan of water stands by his side, with which he kept the clay moist. After the body of the vessel was worked into shape and beauty, the handle was affixed to it, devices traced upon it and after drying a little it was carefully taken to the oven and baked.

The potter's control over the clay as argued by (Nichol, et al 1956:29) illustrates the sovereignty of God, who created humanity of clay forms and disposes of them as God deems good: "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, saith the Lord," (Jeremiah 18:1-6.) "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me

thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" (Rom 9:20-21.).

Christianity teaches that humanity is like clay in the hands of a potter. God chooses how to model humanity into the desired shape. (Jeremiah 19:11) "And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury". Gray (1997:33, 34) insists that the breaking of the bottle was the symbolical representation of the destruction of the city and of the state. This seems to refer rather to the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, than to what was done by the Chaldeans. Jerusalem was healed after 70 years: but nearly 1800 years have elapsed since Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans and it was then so broken, that it could not be made whole again. (Revelation 2:27) "And he shall rule them with a rod of iron as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."

Taking note of the process of jar making is interesting and an effective way of learning. Its spiritual significance helps every believer to gain more knowledge and understanding concerning God's creative way of shaping the lives of His precious children. It is so amazing to see a well-mixed

mass of clay placed on the potter's wheels ready to be shaped according to the potter's will. The potter spins the wheels through his/her foot then gently and skillfully molds the formless clay. The potter's physical and emotional composure cannot be ignored as he/she expectantly waits the clay to be ready to be used. In just a few minutes, the shapeless clay gradually rises up showing its promising beauty as the potter's amazing hands form it aesthetically with care and incomparable interest (Bangueso, O.I.23:08:2009).

To make a bigger vessel, the potter molds the upper part and the lower part separately and then joins them meticulously. The part that catches our attention is the progressive procedure in which the potter carefully taps the vessel with his flat wooden tool to strengthen the joining, to shape the vessel and make it firm and beautiful. Some extra master's touch is being made to enhance the vessel's distinction and peculiarity. White (1963:65) states every believer is in the hands of God and being shaped according to His perfect will. As the potter pats the clay for a purpose, so is the Lord in shaping humanity through chastisement, not to destroy them, but to teach, discipline and strengthen them. It is also a wonderful manifestation of God's great love for humanity.

When God is addressed as a potter, Abagusii do not understand the interpretation of that image because potters were not originally in their community. The perception Abagusii have about God as a potter is that God is poor. This is because pots were originally sold to them by the Luo community potters who exchanged them with a basket or two of the *wimbi/obori* (eleusine) or sorghum (*amaemba*). Abagusii perceived the Luo potters as traders, poor and homeless.

God as a Husbandman

Christians address God as a husbandman, vinedresser or a farmer, Christ as the true vine and themselves as the crops or the branches and their character as the fruits (John 15:1-8). The word vine-dresser as Wagner (1979:52,53) and O'Brien (1974:43) states more properly expresses the sense of the original word than husbandman. It means one who has the care of a vineyard whose office is to nurture, trim and defend the vine, and who of course feels a deep interest in its growth and welfare (Matthew 21:33).

Abagusii similarly before the coming of Christianity perceived God in the image of a farmer in Gusii background. Abagusii were farmers of both animals and crops. They perceived God as a good farmer whose interest and commitment was entirely on the crops or the flock. Christianity

presented God as a farmer of vines or the vinedresser. This influenced Abagusii to drop their perception of God as a farmer of millet (*wimbi*), sorghum and pumpkins to the perception of God as a vinedresser or husbandman. Omote (O.I, 21:08:2009) illuminates that the influence is so much to an extent that even in the Lord's Supper, most churches use wine extracted from the grapevines which are not locally found. Wine in Christianity as White (1956:76, 77) states represents the blood of Christ given for remission of humanity's sins.

God as a Lion

Christians address Jesus Christ who is God as "The Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), who came from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David, and overcame death, the world, and the devil. It is said that a lion was the device of the tribe of Judah whence this allusion (Genesis 49:9).

The lion is the king of beasts, the monarch of the forest and thus becomes an emblem of one of kingly authority and of power (Revelation 4:7) and as such the appellation is used to refer to Christ. It is because Christ has power to open the seals as a ruler over the universe and all events are under his control, as the lion rules in the forest. Jesus is also addressed as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," with reference to the prophecy in Genesis

9:9 "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion;" and from the fact that the Messiah was of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). The use of the term would connect him in the apprehension of John with the prophecy, and would suggest the idea of his being a ruler, or having dominion. As such, therefore, it would be appropriate that the power of breaking these seals should be committed to him (White, 1954 a: 322,324).

Given these circumstances, it is no surprise that the lion was often used metaphorically in apocalyptic literature to refer to rulers, particularly strong or ruthless ones (Ezekiel. 1.10; 10.14; Daniel. 7.4). It was a popular symbol of royalty, and it is not a surprise that the lion was seen by many as the king of the predators, or even the king of all beasts. There are texts in 1 and 2 Kings which refer to God using lions as agents of divine punishment. There are even texts in which God's just actions are said to be lion-like: "I will rend and go away, I will carry off and none will rescue" (Hosea. 5.14). Yet the lion is also an image of injustice or wickedness-the Psalmist says about evil humans that "like a lion they will tear me apart; they will drag me away with no one to rescue." (Psalms 19:5).

In the New Testament, even the devil is seen as analogous to the lion, "for we hear how he preys on people like a lion" (1 Peter. 5.8; 2 Timothy. 4.17).

By no means, then, is the lion always used as an image of God, a good king or goodness or majesty as abstract qualities in the Bible.

Presenting God in the image of a lion to Abagusii makes God appear harsh, fearful, dangerous and unfriendly to human life. Lions are not friendly animals and do not have any economic value to Abagusii that God can be likened to. Omote (O.I, 21:08:2009) adds that a lion (*endo*) comes only to kill and scatter something which God can never do. Abagusii would be comfortable if God would be presented as an ox which is a symbol of strength, leadership and companionship.

God as a Shepherd

Christians address God as a good shepherd. They borrow this image from the biblical Palestinian shepherd mentioned in Psalms 23:1. A shepherd in the Palestinian context leads the flock out and in, so that they find pasture and safety. He also knows where to feed them and in the course of his grace and providence leads them in the way in which they should go. He further watches over them and keeps them from being destroyed by ravenous beasts. If some have strayed, he brings them back. He brings them to the shade in times of scorching heat. In times of persecution and affliction, he finds out an asylum for them. Finally, he takes care that they shall lack no manner of thing that is good. Abagusii also address God as a

shepherd because a shepherd in Gusii context protects, provides and cares for the flock.

The Bible has a variety of examples of good shepherds whom the Christians use to support their address of God in the image of a good shepherd. For instance, Abel was a keeper of sheep (Genesis 4:2), as were the greater number of the ancient patriarchs. When men began to multiply, and to follow different employments, Jabal son of Lamech was acknowledged as father, that is, founder of shepherds and nomads (Genesis 4:20). A large part of the wealth of ancient patriarchs consisted in flocks and herds, the care of which was shared by their sons, daughters and servants. Rachel the bride of Jacob was a shepherdess (Genesis 29:6); his sons, the fathers of the tribes of Israel were shepherds, and so was David their king (Psalms 78:70-72). The economic activity is highly honoured in the Bible (Luke 2:8-20).

The Christian image of God as a shepherd lacked the local concept of a shepherd. A Gusii shepherd as Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) illuminates stayed very close to the flock and even slept in the same room with the flock to protect them from the attack of the enemies and wild animals. The biblical shepherd appears only concerned with the closing door when all the flock has entered into their house but a Gusii shepherd goes

beyond a door and sleeps in the same room with the flock. This helps Gusii shepherd to understand the condition of the sheep all the times. When God is presented in the image of a Gusii shepherd it implies closeness and concern with humanity than the biblical shepherd.

God as a Dove

The presence and character of God in the Bible is represented in the image of a dove (Lindavs, 1973:117). The doves were clean birds according to the Mosaic ritual, and were offered as sacrifice, especially by the poor (Genesis 15:9; Leviticus 5:7; 12:6-8; Luke 2:24). Several kinds of doves or pigeons frequented the Holy Land from Lebanon; and the immense flocks of them sometimes witnessed is illustrated by a passage in Isaiah 60:8. They are symbols of simplicity, innocence and fidelity (Hosea 7:11; Matthew 10:16). The dove was the chosen harbinger of God's returning favour after the flood (Gen 8:1-22), and was honoured as an emblem of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16).

The dove, among the Jews, was the symbol of purity or harmlessness, (Matthew 10:16) and of softness, (Psalms 55:7.). The dove as the image of God portrays an emblem of the innocence, meekness and tenderness of the Savior. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus, (John 1:33,) and a sign of his being set apart to the

office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change wrought in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed (Lindavs,1973:23).

Doves were never in the traditional days found among Abagusii. They were brought later as exotic birds by the whites (Sani, O.I, 14:07:2009). When God's presence and character were presented in the image of a dove, they did not understand what that meant so Abagusii addressed God as an eagle. Christianity popularized the image of God as a dove until Abagusii dropped their image of God as an eagle. It is only the elderly generation in Gusii who refer God as an eagle. The eagles are not common in Gusii nowadays. God the transformer of Culture conceptual framework by Neibuhr(1951:69-92) refines the image of God as an eagle to emphasize on images similar to the eagle which are relevant to the contemporary society.

3.8 Similarities Between Gusii Traditional Concept of God and the Christian Concept of God

These two religions are monotheistic in their worldviews. While Abagusii believe in *Engoro* (God), Christianity believes in God who is in point of fact the same God. According to these two religions, the deity is

independent, unchangeable, eternal and omnipresent. The deity exists as a spiritual being having no form or dimensions and is omniscient (all-knowing) wise, truthful, faithful, good, loving, merciful, graceful, patient, holy, at peace, righteous, just, jealous for his own honour, wrathful towards evil, perfect in every way, beautiful beyond comprehension and is glorified through the revelation (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009)

The attributes of God especially for Christianity are listed in the Bible although not in a particular order. Each aspect of the character of God is equal in characterization. For example, in 1st John 1:5 that “God is light” goes ahead and says that “God is love” in 1st John 4:8, 16. Abagusii described the character of God likewise referring to situations or phenomena like in instances of victory and deliverance; they could refer to *Engoro* as *omobui*, *omonyanguru*, *omorwa* (conqueror, powerful, giver). Situations, times, phenomena, seasons and miracles made the two religions to refer to the eternal and moral attributes of their deity.

Both Gusii traditional religion and Christianity have the divine attributes of God as non-communicable and communicable attributes or eternal and moral attributes. Non-communicable or eternal attributes are those aspects of the deity which cannot be shared with humanity or any creature. Communicable or moral attributes refer to those divine

attributes which humanity adapt from God from their experiences and interaction with the deity in their spiritual living. The communicable attributes humanity possesses are the parameters humanity uses to judge one's adherence to the religious dogma (Bangueso (O.I, 10:07:2009).

The name God in both Gusii traditional religion and Christianity is the derivation of which is uncertain, we give to that eternal, infinite, perfect and incomprehensible being. God is referred to as the creator of all things, who preserves and governs all by almighty power and wisdom, and is the only proper object of worship and adoration.

In Exodus 3:14, God replies to Moses, when he asks Him His name, I AM THAT I AM; which means either, I am he who I am, or, I am what I am. In either case the expression implies the eternal self-existence of God and his incomprehensible nature. This also applies to Gusii traditional understating of the nature of *Engoro* who could not be described in human language because no *omogusii* had seen *Engoro* face-to-face (Omote, O.I, 21:08:2009).

The Bible assumes and asserts the existence of God, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" and is in itself the most illustrious proof of God's existence, as well as our chief instructor. It puts a voice

into the mute lips of creation; and not only reveals God working in creation but illustrates God's ways in providence, displays the glories of God's character, law and grace, and brings humanity into true and saving communion with God. It reveals God to humanity as a Spirit, the only being from everlasting and to everlasting by nature, infinite, perfect, powerful, wise, omniscient, omnipresent, just, holy, truthful, good and merciful.

Both religions belief that God is the source, owner and ruler of all things, foreknows and predetermines all events and is the eternal judge and arbiter of the destiny of all. These religions have their foundations in the right knowledge of God and consist in their supremely loving and faithfully obeying the deity. They emphasize reconciliation with the deity at individual and community levels.

Christianity and Gusii religion believe that God is everywhere at the same time. This belief makes both the Christians and Gusii traditional religion adherents worship God from anywhere any time. Both religions believe that there is nowhere one can hide away from God (Mogaka, O.I. 23:06:2009).

Both religions believe that God is transcendent. The Christians believe that God lives in heaven while Abagusii believed that God lives in the sun and in the sky. Both religions believed that God is unchangeable. The two religions hold that God is eternal. God has no beginning or end. God sees all time equally yet discerns the place of events in time, and acts in specific points in time. Both religions similarly believe that God does not have size or shape that can be measured.

Both religions believe that humanity possesses the communicable or moral attributes of God (Akama, 2006:55). They believe that God is spiritual and humanity can emulate God of his attributes to become spiritual, besides, they both assert that God is a being who is not made of matter, has no parts or dimensions and cannot be perceived by any of human bodily senses. God is wise in all circumstances and situations and with this attribute both religions teach their adherents to emulate the wisdom of God. This is because they both argue that God generously gives wisdom without cost to all people. It is indisputable in both religions that God is truthful, good, loving, merciful, graceful, peaceful, righteous, just, jealous, perfect, beautiful and glory-filled. All these attributes of God are present in both Gusii traditional religion and in Christianity.

Gusii traditional religion and Christianity believe in the anthropomorphic and animal images of God. Both religions address God as a father, farmer, shepherd, friend, healer and elder. They develop these images of God out of their day-to-day interactions with God. These images make the people feel closer to God who is concerned with the welfare of the people.

3.9 Differences between Gusii Traditional Concept of God and the Christian Concept of God

Christianity and Gusii traditional religion when studied independently one is able to note the distinctiveness of each. The differences in these two religions are managed through the inculturation process which refines, drops or retains the local cultures to make Christianity meaningful to the local people. The dissimilarities in the two religions are because of the experiences and general socio-religio-cultural background of the people affected by each religion which dictate the local people's concept of God. Mbiti (1969:90,91) argues that the people's concept of the deity is dependent on their historical, geographical, economical, social and political background.

Gusii traditional religion does not have the concept of the Trinity as in Christianity. Christianity believes in the existence of the Trinitarian God- God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christianity

teaches that the Trinity works jointly and are inseparable. This does not make any relevance to Abagusii traditionalists who believe in one God (*Engoro*) without any equal partners. How the Trinity works and be termed as one is still an issue which Christianity has not managed to clarify though the concept of the Trinity does not contradict the Christian monotheism.

Before the coming of Christianity, all Abagusii had a distinct religion with *Engoro* as their God. Their religious teachings and practices were similar without any *omogusii* contradicting one other. Their religious teachings are informally taught, and are passed from one generation to the other through Gusii oral tradition. Abagusii were united in one religion with common religious teachings which collectively were applied by the entire Gusii populace. On the contrary, Christianity came with diversified denominational teachings. The Catholic and the Protestant missionaries believed in the same God but with different understanding and applications of denominational practices. They used the same Bible but with different exegetical interpretations. These differences which seemed to disunite the missionaries posed sobriety challenges to Christianity because they were not witnessed in Gusii traditional religion (Mose, O.I. 23:06:2009).

Gusii traditional religion understood God in pragmatic terms while Christianity understood God in absolute terms. Abagusii believed that punishment for those who committed evil was instant while Christianity taught that punishment for evil was in the future. Christianity taught that anybody who committed evil had a chance of approaching God in secret prayer and be forgiven without informing the offended or seeking for public reconciliation and restitution (Ochieng', 1974:56). Abagusii believed that evil committed by an individual brought sufferings, death and diseases to the entire community while Christianity taught that evil of an individual never caused trouble to the entire society but to that particular individual. These differences as Gusii traditionalists complain, weakens Gusii moral fibre because it tolerates evil which later impacts on socio-moral values of the entire Gusii society.

Gusii religion had one name for God (*Engoro*) while Christianity borrows the biblical names of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic origin to refer to the same God. For instance, Christianity uses the biblical names like Yahweh, Jehovah, King, Lord, *Elohim*, and *Adonai* for God. These are names which do not have any meaningful interpretation to Abagusii. When God is referred to as a King, it is not clearly understood because Abagusii in their socio-religio-political background did not have kings. This also applies to the usage of terms like Lord, Jehovah and *Adonai*.

Gusii traditional religion teaches and believes in the living dead. They believe that the dead still have relevance and authority over the living. They believe that those family members and community heroes and heroines who died while in good relationship with the ancestors, are re-born and continue living to the next generation. Christianity teaches that once one dies, that person has no influence among the living and therefore discourages people from referring to them. It instead teaches about saints and holy persons.

In Gusii traditional religion, persons who served as intermediaries between the deity and humanity were installed to office with rituals and sacrifices before doing their designated roles and duties. The ancestors played a central role in determining who was approved by *Engoro* to serve in any religious office. Religious priests were highly respected by the local people in that nobody contradicted their religious orders because they believed they represented *Engoro*. Christianity holds that all people are equal before God. While Christianity has consecration of priests and religious men and women, it is not clear how these people receive their call from God because of accusations that some Christian religious leaders are not called by God although already consecrated as religious leaders. The consecration and requirements for religious leaders differ from one

denomination to the other which was not the case in Gusii traditional religion.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter affirms the premise that Christian missionaries who first came to Africa came with misinformed minds that God was not known to Africans. On this basis, the Christian missionaries who first came to Gusii were determined to teach Abagusii a 'true God'. They considered Abagusii irreligious and dismissed their traditional concept of *Engoro* (God) as non informative and pagan. In the light of God and culture conceptual framework by Neibuhr(1951:69-92), the chapter has shown how God and culture, God the transformer of culture and God and culture in paradox paradigm refines, retains or eliminates either Gusii or Christian concept of God as they influence each other.

Among the Christian missionaries who first came to Gusii were the Catholics, The Seventh-Day Adventists, The Salvation Army, The Africa Inland Mission, The Swedish Lutheran Mission, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, The Church of God and The Friends Africa Mission. These missionaries evaluated Gusii Traditional concept of God as misleading and backward.

The Christian missionaries started teaching Abagusii about God. They presented God in what they called the Trinitarian Theology - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They described the attributes of God as omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, pre-existent, eternal, immutable, infinite, sovereign, holy, wise and faithful. All these were not new concepts to Abagusii except that they used their local terms which meant the same thing. The missionaries did not see the need to learn that Abagusii in their traditional religion already had a concept of God similar to the Christian God. They also did not see the need to know that Abagusii knew the same God they were teaching them about and worshiped that same God in their traditional way which was guided by their daily manner of life.

There are similarities and differences in the concept of God in both Christianity and in Gusii traditional religion. These similarities and differences come as a result of the people's socio-religio-cultural background. These similarities and differences do not reduce God to humanity level but reveal the unity in diversity.

Chapter four in the light of Neibuhr's God and Culture conceptual framework is going to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. This will help Abagusii to understand God better in their religio-cultural

background so that they can perceive God as one who is very near to them in all aspects of their living.

CHAPTER FOUR

INCULTURATION OF GUSII TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOD

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three explored how the Euro-American missionaries transplanted their home developed and inculturated Christianity and planted it wholesale among Abagusii without first adjusting it to fit the new religio-cultural setting. This chapter presents the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God to affirm that inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God provides Abagusii with a balanced, holistic and integral way of life. It also contextualizes theological meaning and purpose of inculturation. Second, Gusii religiosity as a seed-bed for the inculturation of the concept of God is given. Finally, the chapter examines the application of the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God as a father (*Tata*), as a community elder (*Omokumi*), as a healer (*Omogwenia*), as a friend (*omosani*), as a blacksmith (*omoturi*), as a farmer (*omoremi*), as a shepherd (*Omorisia*) as an ox (*entang'ana*) and as an Eagle (*ekeongo*). Inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God would make the local people feel that God lives and does everything to them in their daily lives.

4.2 Meaning and Purpose of Inculturation

Inculturation is a process which presents the Gospel message in a manner that the Word becomes companionable and agreeable with human and ecological realities of the people. It is a term best understood in the context of evangelizing in a cross-cultural setting (Shorter, 1974:87).

Waliggo (1986:12) and Ndegwah (2007:36) add that inculturation means honest and serious attempt to make Christ and the message of salvation to be understood by people of every culture, locality and time. Inculturation deals with the transformation of people into a Christian life and doctrine in the very thought pattern of the people. It is also a conviction that Christ and Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all time and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people in their religio-cultural background (Nasimiyu, 1985). Ndegwah (2007:65) writes that inculturation in Christian missiology refers to the adaptation of the way the gospel is presented to specific cultures being evangelized.

In the process of inculturation, Christianity wears one cultural dress and encounters a non-Christian culture, and then incarnates itself in the new culture (Shorter, 1974:69). In doing this, Christianity challenges, refines and reforms that culture. While this is going on, Shorter (1974:72) further argues that two processes are involved which include, the concept of

Christianity from a foreign culture and accommodating Christianity in the indigenous culture.

In Philippians 2:1-11, inculturation can be exemplified in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Nasimiyu (1985:87), Magesa (1975:123), and Waliggo (1986:98), use the incarnation of Jesus Christ as synonymous to inculturation. Their ideas find basis in the gospel of John (3:16) that propagates the Good News of salvation to the entire human populace. The term was popularized by the Encyclical Redemptio in Mente of Pope John Paul II (1990:12). So inculturation is traced to St. Paul's speech at the Aeropagus of Athens (Acts 17: 22-33).

Through the inculturation process, the Gospel is channeled to people in their cultural plurality and the influence of Christianity in different cultural backgrounds becomes edified and given deeper interpretation. Uzukwu (1996: 82) and Nasimiyu (1985:97) argue that inculturation is a process through which a mutual interaction between the gospel and people's cultures are enriched through sharing the culture of the host and the hosted. In this way, the affected group feel incorporated and accepted in their cultural moral values which are dictated by their historical, geographical, social, religious and economical backlines.

Starkloff (1994:56) reveals that analysis of cultural systems provides a basis for examination of the concept of inculturation. He adds that inculturation has been used to describe the development of mutual influence sandwiched between Christianity and particular cultures. He further discusses ideology, religion, common sense and art as four major cultural systems, which are historically institutionalized systems of importance. Each of these interacting systems has its own theology, even if it may not be expressed and functions to support social integration. Starkloff's analysis suggests that inculturation should not be confined to a compartmentalized sphere, but should affect all systems of social meaning.

The rationale on which we base our argument is that the inculturation process is substantiated in both the Old and New Testaments. Citing an example of inculturation in the Old Testament, Nasimiya (1985:78) states that the Jewish people adopted circumcision ritual from the Egyptians is a symbol of a covenant between God and the descendants of the patriarch Abraham (Genesis 17:9-14).

4.3 Gusii Religiosity as a Seedbed for Inculturation

Inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of *Engoro* (God) is based on a theological premise and the discussions in chapter 2 that Abagusii were innately religious in their way of life. This inherent religiosity is a fundamental aspect which acts as a seedbed or a preparatory root for the Gospel. Turner's (1977:23) arguments confirm Gusii concept that there exists an affinity between the Christian and the cultural traditions which appear in the common reactions between Christian missionaries who arrived first. He further contends that it is evident in the vast range of new religious movements from the interaction between the primal religions and in Christianity.

The religious affinity of Gusii religious concept of God is observed in the people's concept of God. This affinity as Nyamoki (O.I. 25:07:2009) puts it is articulate in Gusii knowledge and moral values contained in the indigenous culture which serve as preparatory roots for the Gospel. Waliggo (1986:25) argues that man and woman of every age have been able to search for God and often have succeeded finding and worshipping this Supreme Being. These people as Waliggo (1986:89) further puts it have formed morality that has been able to find God through worship and faith. These people have had their cultures which reflect their philosophy of life, their worldview and their aspirations. The institutions they have

set up contain much of value of their entire humanity. All these are good elements which have been real preparatory roots or seedbeds for inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God.

The root of Gusii traditional concept of God as we saw in Chapter Two of this study is in their social, religious and cultural heritage. Orioki (O.I. 30:07:2009) says that in their historical background, God is recognized as the one who brought them from *Misri* (Gusii mythical origin). In their worldview, God is believed to be the creator and sustainer of human life as well as the source of Christian virtues. This also forms the seedbed of faith in God or a preparatory root which formed a natural link with the process of evangelization. The missionary teaching about belief in God was not a strange concept among Abagusii. Kibicho (1972:241) highlights that the traditional Gikuyu belief in God (*Ngai*) formed the basis of the Christian evangelization among the Agikuyu of Central Kenya. This is what comparatively happened with Abagusii.

The Old Testament shows how the Jewish cultural heritage believed in the existence of God before the Christian era. The Jews like Abagusii believed in God as their creator and sustainer, (cf Genesis 1, 2:22, Ps 104:10-30), deliverer from their enemies (Exodus 3:1-22) and source of virtues. Similarly, Gusii cultural heritage serves as the seedbed for the Gospel.

The role of the Gospel is not to condemn Gusii traditional concept of God and their cultural heritage but to teach it and fulfill the demands of Gusii belief in God in the people's daily lives. The task of the Christian Church is to facilitate the Gospel to fulfill Gusii culture through the process of inculturation. Shorter (1974: 113) and Nasimiyu (1985:322) argue that through the Good News, the Church should make the cultural traditions more genuine and true. Through love, Kerubo (O.I. 23:07:2009) informs us that these cultures can be raised to new and more glorious religious traditions.

The success of the inculturation process as argued above finds basis on the people's cultural heritage which is the seedbed of the Gospel. This introduces us to the application of the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God.

4.4 Application of the Inculturation of Gusii Traditional

Concept of *Engoro*

Belief in the existence of *Engoro* (God) is inherent in Gusii religio-cultural heritage. Gusii religiosity is an oral and experiential tradition which makes Gusii traditional names and concept of God recur throughout generations. They address God based on the human attributes to God in their daily experiences. For instance, Abagusii address God as a father, a community elder, a healer, a friend, a blacksmith, a farmer, a shepherd an ox and an eagle (Nyakoe, O.I, 04:08:2009). We are going to examine each one in details in this section. Gusii community is patriarchal and as such most of the names of *Engoro* reflect mainly the male gender.

Based on God the Transformer of Culture, God above Culture, God and Culture in Paradox and God against Culture paradigms, inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God will act as a sieve to ignore those cultural elements which are compatible with the biblical teachings for the purpose of interaction with Christianity. It further replaces those which are incompatible with Christianity as well as refining others to maintain the authenticity of the Bible.

Application of a properly guided inculturation process of Gusii traditional concept of God will evaluate, identify and analyze the core ingredients of

Gusii traditional concept of God and the cultural elements which may be integrated with Christianity. Nasimiya (1985:43) and Roy (1982:234) add that integration of these cultural elements of the concept of God will fill the spiritual vacuum with the related effects of practice of the religious duality. This is ideally to identify the core indigenous cultural elements and integrate them with Christianity in order to enrich Christians with Gusii traditional religion and consequently overcome the religious duality, vacuum and the resultant problems of dual personality so as to give Abagusii a wholesome livelihood.

In seeking to apply the inculturation process, the study critically evaluated Gusii traditional concept of God on the basis of the biblical theology. This evaluation as Eitel (1986:133) argues, helps to analyze the diversity of cultural behaviour or religious mannerisms elsewhere in the globe meaning that not all cultural elements would be swallowed wholesome. There are those cultural elements which will either be transformed or be eliminated.

The forthcoming discussion will inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God as a Father (*Tata*), a Friend (*Omosani*), a Community Elder (*Omokumi*), a Shepherd (*Omorisia*), a Healer (*Omogwenia*), a Blacksmith (*Omoturi*), a Farmer (*Omoremi*) an Ox (*Entang'ana*) and an Eagle (*Ekeongo*).

4.4.1 Inculturation of God as a Father

Abagusii had/have several names for *Engoro* in their religio-cultural heritage. They address *Engoro* as Father because of the central role the father plays in the family and in the community. Gusii father provides, disciplines, guides, protects, instills wisdom, is consulted, blesses and comforts the family members. Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) posits that it is upon the evidence of what *Engoro* does to the people which recounts to the duties and roles of a father to the family which make the people refer to God as Father (*Tata*).

A father among Abagusii provides care, security, guidance and protection to all the family members. The father ensures that the family members are not attacked by the enemies from outside and nothing harms the family members. Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) observes that anything which threatens the life of any of the family member is reported to the father who takes immediate and instant responses. The father also provides unconditional love to all the family members, disciplines with love and guides the members with patience. The father among Abagusii imparts wisdom to all members of the family and is the one consulted by every member in the family.

A father can bless the members of the family and can also curse those who disobey. The father can with love discipline any member of the family who errs. All the wealth and property owned by the family belongs to the father and every member of the family is entitled to its use without any discrimination or favour. The father as Bangueso (O.I, 10:07:2009) adds, treats all the family members with impartiality and the members respect the father and no one contradicts the father's orders. The father is generous and does not withhold anything which benefits the family members and knows what is best for the family members all the time. In case of any calamity or misfortune against any family member, the father provides the social, psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual support. Finally, the father provides the identity of all the family members in the sense that all members take the father's name as the surname.

God as a father imparts wisdom to all family members and must be asked before commencing or doing anything. Kinaro (O.I. 12:08:2009) puts it that, God as a father does confer blessings to those who do right and allows punishment in form of diseases, calamities and sometimes death to those who commit evil. God as a father treats all people with impartiality and every one has a right of partaking of the riches in Gods' possession without any favour, partiality or segregation.

Gusii community is a patriarchal society with a culture where men dominate practically in every sphere of life. Men's thinking, their interpretation, and their definitions are the norms that guide everything in the community. This is the reason why Abagusii refer to God as father and not mother in spite of the many motherly characteristics for example compassionate, kindness, patience, endurance and generosity which are attributed to *Engoro*. Nyatichi (O.I, 02:06:2009) asserts that "even us women (*abakungu* or *abencheri*) have been indoctrinated by men that we perceive God in male terms only. God can also be addressed as a mother." *Engoro* is not male or female and is beyond human titles. The name cannot be translated to English to make any comprehensible meaning.

The *ekegusii* language does not have pronouns like he and she therefore, it is unsafe to refer to God as a male or female by use of these English pronouns. Based on Niebuhr's (1951) paradigm of God, the transformer of culture, this element of Abagusii concept of God as a father and not mother is transformed so that we can have *Engoro* referred also to as mother because God is neither male nor female.

Christianity as Lindivas (1973:32) and Wandel (1991:45) argue also presents God as a father in the doctrine of the Trinity. God in Christianity is portrayed as the one who provides love and care for entire human

populace. The love of God for humanity as a father is expressed in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Christian God as a father guides all humanity into doing good, protects people, cares for people's wellbeing and indiscriminately provides for all people's needs. Presenting God as a father, Christianity affirms that those who are saved make up a family of believers having God as their father. Christianity teaches that God as a father is approachable by all people and can be consulted through individual prayers and through the religious leaders.

In Christianity, a father is often synonymous with ancestor, founder, or originator (Genesis 4:20-21; Joshua 8:56; Romans 4:16.). God is the father of humanity and creator (Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Luke 3:38). But as Mackenzie (1974:312) states, humanity has forfeited the rights of children by their sins, it is only through Christ that humanity can call God by the name, "Our Father," (John 20:17; Romans 8:15-17).

In patriarchal times as White (1954b:132) reflects, a father was master and judge in his own household and exercised authority almost unlimited over his family. Filial disobedience or disrespect was a high offence. Under the law, certain acts of children were capital crimes, (Exodus 21:15,

17; Leviticus 20:9) and the father was required to bring his son to the public tribunal (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

Christianity introduced God in the Three God Head - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, in what is referred to as the Trinitarian Theology. This concept of God especially as a son does not become clearly understood by Abagusii who believe that the roles of the father cannot be shared by the son. Inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God through God the Transformer of Culture paradigm refines Gusii concept of God and reconciles it with the Christian trinitarian theology on their concept of God.

The Bible does not show anywhere in both the New and the Old Testaments that God is male to be referred to as father only. Christianity as argued by Cooley et al., (1991:65) borrowed the male concept from the Jewish culture which is patriarchal. This has been the basis for the contemporary feminist theologians in their discussions on feminism and patriarchy to suggest that God is genderless. Based on Neibuhr's (1951) paradigm of God above Culture, the argument for God as a mother can be applicable because God has motherly attributes

Inculturation of God as a father makes Abagusii feel closer to God as children are ever close with their father. This instills the fear of God in the people and also makes them fear doing evil for this upsets God, the Father. A father does not live far away from his children but constantly watches over his children. To be gender inclusive God as a father is also addressed as *omoibori* (used for either male or female Gusii parent).

4.4.2 Inculturation of God as a Gusii Community Elder

Abagusii address God as *Omokumi* (Gusii Community Elder) and themselves as subjects. The *omokumi* was the highest authority in the entire Gusii community. Everybody in the entire Gusii community obeyed *omokumi's* commands irrespective of one's social-economic class. As God is the supreme authority of the entire human populace, *Omokumi* was the supreme authority among all Abagusii. *Omokumi* was the head of Gusii clan elders called *Etureti* and *Egesaku*.

Nyabera (O.I, 10:06:2009) states that clan elders (*etureti* and *egesaku*) were elected by the community but Gusii elder (*Omokumi*) was not elected by people but he received his mystical supreme powers over the entire Gusii community in inexplicable way. This was the reason why they address God as *omokumi* because God is not an elected authority. None was allowed to contest for this position and if there was anyone who

contradicted or challenged *Omokumi's* authority, he/she person was heavily fined or severely punished.

The *Omokumi* was an agent of moral uprightness in Gusii community and his duties and responsibilities included conferring judgment upon the evil doers, solemnizing oaths, and facilitating reconciliations among people who had personal or community differences. He was considered the big eye and ear of the community. He was responsible for ensuring that justice was done and no one's rights were violated. People considered this leader as the big hand that disciplines and no one questioned his authority or confronted him over whatever decisions he arrived at concerning any case. His authority commanded the people's morality and social order (Omote, O.I. 21:08:2009).

Through the presence and the authority of *Omokumi* Gusii community had a socio-political structure which was glowingly organized, making Gusii community an island of peace, tranquillity and philanthropy (Mayer, 1949:4-5) and Ray, 1976). The position of *Omokumi* in the socio-political organization helped in settling land and other socio-economic disputes and misunderstandings which came up with time among the people.

Abagusii did not have a paramount chief who reigned in the whole of the large Gusii community as witnessed in other Bantu communities (Bogonko, 1977:36). Ochieng' (1974:6) argues that the pre-colonial Gusii society was stateless, meaning that they did not have a centralized society with paramount chiefs or kings with fortified retainers, to implement law and order yet the community through the *Omokumi* recorded the highest moral integrity in its social-moral exposition.

The *Omokumi* in the socio-political structure was overriding in the rationale that he maintained social order in Gusii socio-religio cultural tradition. He handled interpersonal and inter-community disputes which came as a result of the people's social interactions. Gusii community being a patriarchal society, the *Omokumi* and the four levels of power structure were occupied by only men. These men were supposed to be highly reputable. They were men who practised and cuddled impartiality in their duties to the community. People respected the decisions they arrived at with fervent spirits because of their religious and social accreditations. These elders instilled moral values into Gusii society and introduced religious concepts to the youth in their informal education process. These religious concepts were further reinforced by the religious leaders in religious forums (Osindi, O.I. 10:06:2009).

People who were chosen to the *Etureti* court were clansmen of honest impartiality, high morality, sound judgment, free from substance addiction, good character and wealthy. This court was headed by a senior elder with support from other elders. This court mainly gave directions and counsels on cases related to land issues, domestic violence, and other moral related cases which were forwarded to them by *Omogaka Bwo'mochie* (homestead patriarch). These elders were under the headship of the *Omokumi* and all of them worked under his directives.

The *Egesaku* court dealt with appeals that emerged from *Etureti* court. They could handle issues that dealt with more than one *Egesaku*. This court had powers to revert decisions arrived at by the *Etureti* court like demolition and erection of boundaries. Describing the powers possessed by the Supreme Court, Bogonko (1977: 37) annotates that *Omokumi* dealt with inter-clan disputes. The *omokumi* was the supreme administrative and judicial power in Gusii community. He was responsible for the welfare of Gusii society and for peace or war. He adds that *Omokumi* had a staff (*enyimbo*) of office which was used as an authority for levying debts from other locations.

The elders of the people are highly respected among Christians. The Old and New Testaments have a variety of examples of how the elders of the

people ruled over the people with authority and people respected and obeyed their commands (Finley, 1982:213 and Schoffeleers, 1990:98). For instance, the elders of the Hebrew tribes before the settlement of the Hebrew commonwealth had a government and authority over their own families and the people of Israel (Lee, 2003:143). Moses and Aaron treated the elders as representatives of the nation (Exodus 3:16; 4:29; 12:21). When the law was given, God directed Moses to take the seventy elders, as well as Aaron, and Nadab and Abihu his sons, as witnesses, (Exodus 24:1, 9). Even in the New Testament times, we find this number of seventy, or rather, seventy-two, elders; six from each tribe. In allusion to the Jewish elders, the ordinary governors and teachers of the Christian Church are called elders, or presbyters, (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; 1Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1). The Bible records these as highly recognized people who spoke on behalf of God (Lee, 2003:3,4).

God in the New Testament (Revelation 4:4; 5:6) is surrounded by twenty-four elders as the righteous judge. These twenty-four elders obey God whom the Bible refers to as the elder of many years. God is revealed in the Bible as the one full of knowledge and power who knows the end from the beginning.

Abagusii had a negative interpretation of the term king. It was wrong for God to be introduced as king among Abagusii. Abagusii did not have kings, chiefs, lords and do not know anything about the Greek alphabets which Christianity uses to address God as the Alpha and the Omega which means the beginning and the end. When God is referred to as a king of kings, or lord of lords and the Alpha and the Omega, Abagusii do not understand what that means. If God was referred to as the *omokumi*, they would understand who God is based on their daily experiences with God.

Inculturation of God as *Omokumi* makes Abagusii perceive God as an ever present God who is never contested, who has authority over everybody, who confers oaths and judgment to the evil doers. This as Uzuku (1996:187) affirms presents God as the big eye for the people, a big ear to listen to any discussion, conspiracies or deliberations whether good or evil and a righteous judge. It eliminates the terms referring to God as Lord and King which does not apply to the local people's concept of God (Maruko, O.I, 12:06:2009).

Based on the paradigm of God, the Transformer of Culture, inculturation of God as *Omokumi* who was a man would also be refined so that God is not understood in male terms. The process of inculturation refines this

concept so that God is not being viewed to be tyrannical as sometimes was observed in the *Omokumi*. The *Omokumi* was human and was subject to death. This concept shows that God does not die but has the human elements or the image of the *Omokumi*.

The term *Omokumi* which is not commonly used in Gusii because of the influence of Christianity is refined through God, the Transformer of Culture paradigm to become Great (*omonene*) which is commonly used. *Omonene* (Great) is used to refer to both men and women who have power or who lead the people.

4.4.3 Inculturation of God as a Healer

Abagusii in their traditional religion address *Engoro* as a Divine Healer (*omogwenia*). They believe that God is the provider and protector of human and animal life. The healers in Gusii community include the medicine persons, the seers, diviners, priests and prophets. They refer to these people as mediators of God. They further insist that God heals the sick through them. God as a healer according to the Banguesso (O.I. 02:07:2009) is concerned with the holistic human health (*omogwenia bwe'keene ore ang'e rioka*). God as a healer does not delight in the sufferings of his people through sicknesses but in their good health. Abagusii address God as a healer because of the many calamities and diseases they

claim God has delivered them from in their traditional heritage (Marita, O.I, 13:08:2009).

The medicine persons (*abanyamekogosi, abanyamete, abanyamerungi*) as Cleopas Gchiko (O.I. 03:08:2009) adds were believed to apply physical medicine and asked God's divine intervention. The medical practitioners detected the mystical causes of illnesses or calamity and consequently invoked mystical measures to foretell the probable future recurrences. This made them to solicit for preventive measures.

Abagusii regard healers, seers and diviners as appointees of God to prescribe medicines to people in the community. Asuga (O.I, 26:06:2009) informs us that Abagusii believe that God appoints the persons to combat the mystical powers which torment humanity through illnesses. Supporting the divine appointment of the medicine persons, Mbiti (1969:45) adds that these people have access to the force of nature. Therefore, the community entrusts them with the duty of removing what may harm the society. God as a Healer through these functionaries as Bangweso (O.I. 10:05:2009) and Obiri (O.I, 13:07:2009) observe goes deep into the beliefs of Abagusii and this belief which is transmitted from one generation to the other through the oral tradition.

Gusii medicine persons used medicines in form of plants (*emete*), powder (*obosaro*) and liquids (*eriogo ri'emete*). These are natural things provided by God. Mbiti (1969:87) argues that the application of both the physical and spiritual sources in the healing process makes the medicine persons both a doctor and a preacher to the patient and the relatives. The missionaries dismissed this practice as evil and this made the converted Christians to practice both Christianity and Gusii traditional religion. Inculturation of God as a healer (*omonyamariogo* or *omonyamete*) makes Abagusii to perceive God as a physical and a spiritual healer present all the times.

Before the sick people are treated in Gusii traditional society, Bangueso (O.I, 10:07:2009) posits that it is necessary to establish the causes of the illnesses so as to help the medicine persons to prevent future occurrences. Treatment preceded prevention. The prevention and spiritual understanding measure (*ogokireka*) as Nyatichi (O.I, 02:06:2009) highlights lacks in the Western medical practice which consequently leads Abagusii converts to Christianity to have a dual personality. The preventive measure makes the people feel very secure from present and future ailments by diseases and in constant protection by God through whom the medicine persons received the healing powers.

The Bible has a variety of instances which support the indigenous healing. Farrel (1967:65) indicates that in the Old Testament, God was believed to be the sole healer who provided both physical and spiritual treatment. In the book of Exodus 15:22-26, God sweetened the bitter water of Marah which later became medicinal to the people. God chose the prophets in the Old Testament as the agents of healing (Isaiah 19:22; Jeremiah 17:14; Hosea 7:1). David the psalmist confirms that the healing powers are of God (Psalms 6:2; 41:4; 103:3).

God in the Old Testament appointed special persons who became agents of divine healing. For instance, God chose Moses to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage where they were suffering physically, socially and spiritually (Exodus 15:22- 26:1). Elijah was sent to heal the son of the widow of Zerahat (1 Kings 17:8-24). Elisha cured Naaman of leprosy (2kings 5:1-14) and the Shunamite's son (2 Kings 4:18-37). The people whom God used as agents of healing used simple natural physical rudiments in healing. They used physical things like water, plants, saliva, and others as the Bible states (cf 1 Kings17:21; 2 Kings 4:34-35; 2 Kings 5:14). In other instances, God used the powers to heal the sick (Numbers 12:31). The faith of a person to be healed and his/her relatives was a basis on which the sickness was healed. Without faith of both the patient and the relatives, healing was not effected.

The New Testament equally has a variety of experiences where God used humanity as agents of healing. God in the New Testament used medicines from plants and other natural objects to heal people of their maladies and ailments (Matt 12:10; Mark 3:5,15; Luke 5:17; Luke 6:19; Luke 7:21,22; John 5:8). Faith in the New Testament healing is a fundamental element as also observed in the Old Testament and in Gusii traditional religion. God in the New Testament is represented in the person of Jesus Christ who is the main healer (Nichol, et al., 1956:398).

Farrell (1967:8-10) observes that the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) take up the Old Testament understanding of God as a Healer to the people through Jesus Christ. He further notes that this fulfillment signifies the presence of God who heals the people through Jesus Christ. Jesus in the understanding of the New Testament is called Emmanuel meaning God with us: God in unconditional presence with the people. As God with us, Jesus Christ heals with powers emanating from God. Kolic (1991:32) argues that Jesus' mode of healing was based on simple natural physical applications to the sick people. Jesus on the other healing mode could speak a word or a sign and the sick person could become healed. Jesus would sometimes use water as in the case of the pool of Siloam (John 9:7; 9:11). The words, saliva or touching are some of the healing

methodologies which Jesus employed. The apostles like Peter and Paul in the New Testament were given powers by God to heal and perform miracles for the good and healthful living of the people.

Inculturation of God as a healer makes people feel that it is God who personally heals them in homes and in hospitals. Mogaka (O.I, 23:06:2009) adds that inculturation of God as a healer encourages people to offer special prayers before a patient is administered either herbal medicines or hospital treatments. It makes them integrate the spiritual healing with the physical healing process. It also makes the people feel the presence and the touch of God in the healing process. As Gitonga (2005:56) argues, it incorporates the divine agents of healing, invocation of divine power and the prevention of the future recurrences by establishing and combating the causes of the diseases. It also introduces prayer sessions in hospitals as a way of invoking the power of God before the administration of treatments. The priests and pastors are addressed as agents of the divine healer.

The concept of God as a healer replaces the traditional understanding of determining the cause of disease by divination with the modern laboratory tests and through the administration of the prevention tablets given in hospitals. Because of modern technology, inculturation of God as

a healer is refined to incorporate contemporary medical practitioners as agents through which God heals all the sicknesses. It also encourages people to go to hospitals for medications besides the use of local herbal medicines (Okeri, O.I, 12:07:2009).

Inculturation of God as a healer refines the Western and Christian view that for one to administer healing measures for the sick, the same must go through an informal system of learning and to possess the authentic medical certificates. The perception that priests, pastors and traditional healers are agents of God in the divine healing makes the traditional healers feel part of those people whom God uses in the healing of the sick. Inculturation of God as a healer makes people see God in every person used as an agent of God in the healing process.

4.4.4 Inculturation of God as a Friend

Abagusii address God as a Friend (*Omosani*). Abagusii in their social-cultural heritage are supposed to be very friendly to one another. This aspect of life is inherently transmitted through their traditional heritage because they believe that *Engoro* loves making friendship with those who are friendly to others. They argue that *Engoro* is as a constant friend to everyone irrespective of social class to which one belongs. They further maintain that *Engoro* never segregates anybody. People hold a belief that

those who do not make friendship with one another commit evil and *Engoro* would allow suffering and misfortunes to happen to them. The belief that *Engoro* is a friend promotes peace and tranquillity among Abagusii. *Engoro* is referred to as a friend because people find all the characteristics of a good friend in *Engoro* (Moraya, O.I, 10:06:2009).

A friend in Gusii concept is someone whom one can confide in. This is a friend who cannot reveal the shared insights with anybody. A friend is one who cannot conspire against another and is ready to offer whatever it takes to give comfort to the other person (Nyabwari, O.I, 10:06:2009).

Abagusii are traditionally farmers (Ochieng' 1974:23, Bogonko, 1977:221 and Akama 2006:213). Their economic lifestyle confirms true friendship amongst individuals. A true friend in Gusii community is known when the other person has a problem associated with his/her daily experience as a farmer. The true friend will share the farm equipment, seeds, assist the other in work and share farming skills which the other person is ignorant about. A true friend among Abagusii is one who would support the other during times of sickness and moments of desperate need for human help.

When Abagusii evaluate God based on who is a true friend, they find that God possesses all the qualifications of a true friend. They conclude that God as a friend who meets their social, economic, political and spiritual needs as a true friend can do. They maintain that God is a friend who is near, caring, protector, provider, kind, compassionate, pitiful, constant and impartial than human friends (Obiri, O.I, 13:07:2009).

God in Christianity is addressed as a friend (White, 1986 b: 34) because of the way in which God relate with people in their day-to-day life. For instance, Abraham is termed as a friend of God 'the father of the faithful' (James 2:23). The term "a friend" is intimate and conveys a sense of closeness, trust and sharing. Abraham's assessment of God as a friend is that God as a friend is also great, almighty, ever-present, all-powerful and all-knowing (Monro, 1961:64).

The children of Israel were God's servants and were the offspring of Abraham who was God's friend. God as a friend maintained a good and friendly relationship with them all the times by being close, kind, faithful, protector, provider and the caregiver to them all along their history as can be deduced in the scriptures. The Jews considered God as a friend to only the people of the descendants of Abraham and unlike the people they called the Gentiles. This belief seemed to personalize and localize God

who is universal God to all people. The Jews and the Gentiles belong to God (Herdie, 1964:48).

Gentiles was a name given by the Hebrews to all those that had not received the Law of Moses and were considered enemies of the people of God. Foreigners who embraced Judaism, were called proselytes. Since the promulgation of the gospel, the true religion has been extended to all nations (Nichol, et al., 1956:98). In the writings of Paul, the Gentiles are generally called the Greeks (Romans 1:14, 16; 1Corinthians 1:22, 24; Galatians 3:28.).

Christianity also maintains that God is a true friend who makes friendship with humanity. Christ granted a similar honour and blessing to his disciples, (John 15:15). It is a different word, however, in Greek, by which he addressed Judas (Matthew 26:50), the word "friend" simply means companion and appears to have been used as a conversational term not implying friendship. Paul comments about friendship with the world and friendship with God. James 4:4 "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase

"whosoever will" implies purpose, intention and design. It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world (White, 1986a:91). It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships.

Inculturation of God as a friend makes Abagusii deal with God as one present always and concerned about their welfare. It also makes Abagusii to perceive God as near to the people and in a daily and hourly companionship with the people. Nyanchama (O.I, 12:06:2009) observes that it also makes people fear making enmity with others because making enmity with others upsets God who allows disaster and calamities in their lives.

Christianity teaches that God loves all people; both the sinners and the righteous equally. Inculturation of God as a friend refines this Christian teaching that God loves even sinners by letting people know that God never associates with those who commit evil nor does God make friendship with them in their evilness (Reid, 2000:74). Inculturation of God as a friend eliminates the Jewish concept of God as a friend to only the Jews and not to the Gentiles. Inculturation of God as a friend makes

people know that God is trans-cultural and a friend to all people who choose to obey the commandments and statutes. Swedenberg (1988:12,13) adds that God is a friend to all irrespective of history, culture, genealogy, colour, race, tribe and tongue. Jesus who is God expressed friendship with the disciples and all the people both of the Gentile and the Jewish origin. The disciples were commissioned to propagate the Gospel to both the Gentile including Abagusii and Jewish communities.

4.4.5 Inculturation of God as a Blacksmith

Abagusii address God as a skilled blacksmith (*omoturi ebioma*). They address God as a blacksmith because of the way the blacksmith is understood in Gusii context. As God, the blacksmith is very patient in the process of making metallic tools. Osindi (O.I, 10:06:2009) observes that coming up with a metallic tool required the highest concentration and determination. It also required a constant presence of the blacksmith with maximum attention to the process of coming up with the preferred object out of the heating process. Blacksmithing involved keeping a constant temperature on the heated material in a skillfully locally invented oven. A good blacksmith maintained high heating temperatures to the end of the process. Based on what God does to the people, they conclude that God is as a blacksmith.

Gusii blacksmith were innovative, active and industrious. They were skilled in making tools like spears (*amatimo*), arrows (*chinsara*), axes, knives and *pangas* (*emioro*). They made these tools for domestic use and the surpluses were for sale. Each of these tools was made by persons specialized in specific tools. These talents were not concentrated in one clan but in all clans of Gusii populace (Masese, 2006:23).

The metal industry besides sales of the metallic tools to the outside communities like the Dholuo (*abagere*), the Kipsigis (*abanyamato*) and the Maasai (*abamanyi*) for subsistence, it also provided farm tools, defense tools and hunting equipment. Management and maintenance of this unique industry depict the highest intellectual and creative skills that Abagusii possessed. Timothy Gechiko (O.I, 15:06:2009) observes that these hereditary skills were provided by God to the original Gusii persons because God knew how much this could save Abagusii from their socio, political and economic challenges.

Bogonko (1977:43) notes that specific centers were designed for making these tools among the community. He identifies Matierio near Nyamaiya in Nyamira zone as a centre for Bogirango clan, Marani and Boburia (*Mwambaka*) centres in Marani zone near the present Itibo Mission for the Abagetutu clan.

Among the Jews and Hebrew communities as revealed in the Bible, the blacksmiths were people who shaped metals into tools. They worked them over the coals and shaped them with hammers, working them by their strong arms. They were very hard working and determined people because this work needed patience and determination. They were artificers in brass and iron first mentioned in Genesis 4:22. The art of the smithery is one of the essential of civilizations and without it, a nation was peculiarly defenseless in time of war (Judges 5:8; 1Sam 13:19-22; 2Kings 24:14). Workers in silver and in copper were distinguished from each other (Acts 19:24; 2 Timothy 4:14).

The blacksmiths were highly regarded people Hebrew communities because they served the nations with war tools. In 1samuel 3:19, the Bible records that Israel was once after the attack by the Philistines was in the lowest state of depression and degradation. Gray (1997:45) argues that it is very likely that in the former wars, the Philistines carried away all the smiths from Israel, as Porsenna did in the peace which he granted to the Romans, not permitting any iron to be forged except for the purposes of agriculture. The Chaldeans did the same to the Jews in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; they carried away all the artificers, (2 Kings 24:14; Jeremiah 24:1; 29:2). Nichol *et al* (1956:123) reveal that the Philistines not

only prevented the people of Israel from making weapons of war, but obliged them to depend upon their enemies, even for instruments of husbandry.

Christians believe that character is formed through an individual's personal interaction with God. As a blacksmith moulds iron after heating it in the oven, so does God mould the peoples' character through permission of the trials and temptations. The New Testament (Hebrews 10:32; James 1:12; 1Peter 1:7; 1Peter 4:12, 19) shows how God forms the human character through permission of trials, afflictions and temptations. White (1956:200) shows that trials, temptations and afflictions are likened to the blacksmiths' oven which purifies iron to make it into desirable tools.

Inculturation of God as a Blacksmith makes Abagusii conceptualize that they are as metal ore in the hands of a blacksmith in readiness of being shaped into a morally, socially, politically, spiritually and physically better persons. This makes them know that whatever challenges and trials they pass through are important for their refinement just like a blacksmith does to the iron objects through heating in the oven.

The image of God as a blacksmith is in the memory of the older Gusii generation. In the present day, there are no blacksmiths in Gusii. Introduction of western metal tools replaced those made locally and that caused extinction of the smithing industry (Mogaka, O.I, 23:06:2009). The making of war tools like arrows and spears is highly criminalized by the government and that has also contributed to the loss of the industry. Inculturation of God as a blacksmith strengthens Gusii concept of God as a maker and a refiner of human character. They argue that the image of God as a brick maker is similar to God as a blacksmith. Brick making industry is present in Gusii in many centers. It is particularly popular in Nyamira zone, Manga zone and parts of Ekerenyo zone. The same characteristics discussed above affecting a blacksmith are equivalent of a Gusii brick maker.

4.4.6 Inculturation of God as a Farmer

The main economic activity of Abagusii is farming. They perceive God as a good farmer (*Omoremi*) and themselves as either crops or livestock. Commenting on the character of God, Ombui (O.I, 25:06:2009) is of the opinion that God is like a good farmer who is concerned with his or her livestock or crops. Abagusii argue that God is concerned about the wellbeing of humanity as a good farmer is concerned about the wellbeing of the crops or livestock.

The image of God as a farmer is derived from the daily experiences of what a good Gusii farmer is. From time immemorial, the economy of Abagusii has been the focal point governing all their human aspects of existence. A farmer in Gusii context is a very patient person. To earn good yields from the farming activities, a Gusii farmer must not become easily discouraged by the challenges of the weather and the natural catastrophes. A good farmer is always determined to achieve the desired ends. Good crop farming goes with correct timing of the seasons putting in the right choice of crops and spending all the available time on the crops. Every good crop farmer is a good manager of time doing the right thing to the crops at the right time which is later reflected in the crop production. Crop dressing (*ogochanchima*) is common in Gusii crop farming which involves the removal of unproductive branches (*ogocherera*) from the crop (Nyaitondi O.I, 23:08:2009).

A good farmer protects the crops from harmful sources like the birds, and monkeys which normally attack the crops when they are almost ripening for harvest. The farmer selects the right choice of crops in the planting season and prepares the fields well where the seeds would be planted. Abagusii farming activities include crop farming and livestock husbandry.

Bogonko (1977:39) notes that Abagusii term cattle as the symbol of wealth which the patriarchs possessed. He also insists that Gusii men farmers struggle to acquire as large numbers of cattle as probable for social identity and power command in the family and the society. Gusii elders argue that the poor, orphaned and marginalized persons struggle in their day-to-day life in gathering their subsistence income which they could exchange for at least a cow which is a reputable asset, a symbol of wealth and a crown to an individual's hard work.

The people practiced subsistence crop farming besides others mentioned above. The main crop, *obori* (Eleusine) which Bogonko (1977:40) says was first planted with a mild mixture of *amaemba* (sorghum). Small pink and yellow coloured maize as Moenga, O.I, 23:08:2009) illuminates was planted in very small quantities around the Eleusine plantation. This kind of maize was never harvested while dry but was leisurely taken from the *shamba* while almost fading leaves and was roasted and eaten especially by boys (*abaisia abarabera*) and young men (*abamura, chinge'ereru*) at graze fields while tending livestock. Nyaanga (O.I, 15:06:2009) reveals that maize was not originally a subsistence crop as witnessed in the present days.

Good farming was emphasized and embraced by every human person in Gusii community. Farming responsibilities and roles were defined accordingly to every sex within each age bracket. No age bracket had reasons for idling. Gusii community being a patriarchal society assigned prestigious duties to men. Women were allocated subordinate duties which kept them nearer the home, kitchen and children. While duties assigned to boys related to those of their fathers, girl (*chinyaroka*)'s duties correlated to those of their mothers. Nyabera (O.I, 10:06:2009) states that the rationale behind gender duty correlation was that the patriarchs were preparing prospective husbands (*abasacha*) and wives (*abarugi*) who will propagate Gusii socio-religio-cultural identities. For instance, Bogonko (1977:41) argues that men were involved in fieldwork like clearing the bushes of the virgin land, while the women did the digging, planting, attending and dressing (*okoburugera*) the crops. Women (*abencheri*, *abakungu*) teamed up in what was called *amasaga*, *ebisangio*, *ebibosano* (all meaning united work) to make work easier and pleasurable. As work continued, women sang specific work songs whose contents accredited God and ancestors for blessing and providing Gusii's mesmerizing land which yielded them the bounteous harvest.

Men were also actively involved in the *shamba* (farm) work although not as actively involved as women. This is argued out by Akama (2006:231)

that it is because men were involved in more other activities outside the farm and the home like searching for pastures for the livestock, fencing the cow's kraals, protecting the livestock from the enemies and social issues which prompted the amity of the family. Masese (2006:132) supports these arguments by confirming that men as well attended to farm issues whenever it was needful.

In John 15:1-3, God is presented as a vine-dresser or a husbandman and the Christians as the vine branches. The word vine-dresser more properly expresses the sense of the original word than husbandman. It means one who has the care of a vineyard; whose office it is to nurture, trim and defend the vine, and who of course feels a deep interest in its growth and welfare (Matthew 21:33). The figure means that God gave Jesus Christ to be the source of blessings to humanity that all grace descends through Jesus Christ and that God takes care of all the branches of this vine, that is, of all who are by faith united to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus and all his church he feels the deepest interest and it is an object of great solicitude that the church should receive these blessings and bear much fruit.

When Jesus says "I 'm the true vine", the reference is made to Jeremiah 2:21. The word true, here is used in the sense of real and genuine (Nichol, et al., 1956:452). He gives what is symbolically represented by a vine. The

point of the comparison or the meaning of the figure is this: A vine yields proper juice and nourishment to all the branches, whether they are large or small. All the nourishment of each branch and tendril passes through the main stalk, or the vine, that springs from the ground. So Jesus is the source of all real strength and grace to the disciples. He is their leader and teacher and imparts to them as they need, grace and strength to bear the fruits of holiness.

Inculturation of God as a farmer presents God in a true Gusii image of a farmer of Eleusine (*obori*), cows, goats, sheep, tea, and sorghum (*amaemba*). When God is presented in the image of a vinedresser or a husbandman of vines, Abagusii seem not to clearly understand who truly God is in this image because Abagusii are never farmers of vines and have no idea of who the vinedresser or husbandman is (Kegwaro, O.I, 23:06:2009).

The Christian or biblical concept of God as a farmer is similar to Gusii concept of God as a farmer; therefore, the biblical concept of God as a farmer strengthens Gusii traditional concept of God as a farmer. Inculturation of God as a farmer makes Abagusii perceive God as one who does not become easily disparaged with humanity's feebleness, one who is patient and very much determined to realize good results in humanity. It further presents God as one who is aware of what people

need and at what time, one who eliminates whatever is unnecessary in humanity's character through the daily challenges and one who protects the people. It finally presents God as a loving farmer who maintains contact with the people.

4.4.7 Inculturation of God as a Shepherd

Abagusii refer to God as a good shepherd (*omorisia*) and themselves as the flock (*riicho*). Keeping of sheep, goats and cows is a common activity among Abagusii. There are those who in the traditional days specialized in keeping of large numbers of sheep, goats and cows. Some of Gusii shepherds literally slept in the same house where the sheep and goats stayed to give them protection against attack from wild dogs. God among Abagusii is referred to as a good shepherd because of sharing human characteristics with Gusii good shepherds. God as a good shepherd protects people's lives from any harm and danger (Maruko, O.I, 12:06:2009).

A good shepherd in Gusii community looks for good pasture for the flock before he takes the flock to the pastures. He feeds the flock indiscriminately, preserves the foods for the future and gathers the flock, ascertains they are all present and drives them home (Nyaribari O.I, 24:06:2009). The good shepherd as Ndegwah (2007:231) adds from the

Pokot pastoralist community in Kenya's perspective, walks with the flock, feeds the flock, cares for the weak, protects the flock and knows each of the flock by their individual names.

The shepherd among Abagusii was responsible for each member of the flock entrusted to him, he needed courage and endurance. He also exercised tender care towards the feeble flock, carried the lambs in his arms and searched for the lost sheep, bringing it back from the rocky hills and valleys into green pastures and still waters (Sani, O.I, 14:07:2009).

God in the Bible takes the name of the Shepherd of Israel (Psalms 80:1 Jeremiah 31:10) and kings, both in Scripture and ancient writers are distinguished by the title of shepherds of the people (Hardie, 1964:12). The prophets are against the "shepherds of Israel," that is, the kings, who attended to their personal needs themselves and neglected their people; who distress, ill-treat, seduce and lead them astray (Ezekiel 34:10). Christ as the Messiah is often called a shepherd (Zechariah 13:7) and also takes on himself the title of "the Good Shepherd," who gives his life for his sheep (John 10:11,14,15). Paul calls Jesus the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb 13:20) and Peter gives him the appellation of the Prince of Shepherds (1Peter 5:4). His ministers are the pastors or shepherds of the flock, (Jeremiah 3:15; 23:3; Ephesians 4:11.).

In John 10:1-16, our Savior says the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep; that he knows them, and they know him; that they hear his voice, and follow him; that he goes before them; that no one shall force them out of his hands, and that he calls them by their names. These, however, being all incidents taken from the customs of the country, are by no means so striking to us as they must have been to those who heard our Lord, and who every day witnessed such methods of conducting this domesticated animal (Nichol, et al., 1956:213).

Monro (1961:23) posits that modern travellers in the East meet with many pleasing confirmation of the truth of Scripture in respect to these particulars; they see the shepherd walking before his flock, any one of which will instantly run to him when called by its own name. The hireling, or bad shepherd, forsakes the sheep, and the thief enters not by the door of the sheepfold, but climbs in through another way. The Bible applies many of the excellences of the faithful shepherd in illustration of the Savior's care of his flock.

The biblical concept of God as a shepherd enhances and enriches Gusii traditional concept of God. Inculturation of God as a shepherd makes the people to perceive God as a Gusii shepherd who commits his/her total life and time for the flock. While the Biblical shepherd leads and the sheep

follow as Monro (1961:12) asserts, Gusii traditional shepherd drives the sheep to go a head and the shepherd follows them. God the transformer of culture paradigm puts emphasis on the concept that both Gusii sheep and the biblical sheep hear the voice of their shepherd and the shepherd knows all the sheep by individual names. God is addressed as a shepherd who leads and humanity follows. God as a shepherd also protects the sheep from behind so that the enemies will not snatch any flock from behind (Kaoka, O.I. 18:08:2009).

Christians of the Seventh-Day Adventists Church (SDA) address their church elder as *Omoririsa* (shepherd). The role of the SDA elder (*omorisia*) as argued by White (1954 a:132) is guiding, leading, teaching, instructing and preaching to the people when they are in church. Mogaka, O.I, 23:06:2009) observes that the functions of the church elder as a shepherd are limited because they are many elders within one congregation who sometimes contradict each other based on the human weaknesses and the diversity of talents and abilities. The office of a church elder in the SDA church is viable within one year and is filled by re-election through the nomination committee appointed by the church members. Moraya (O.I, 10:06:2009) reveals that those who serve as *abarisia* (Plural of *omorisia*) in the SDA church as elders are consecrated through the laying on of hands by the ordained SDA pastors. They bear the name *omorisia* as long as they

are in regular standing in the SDA Church. Vane (O.I. 25:08:2009) highlights the equals of the *omorisia* in the SDA church in the Catholic Church and PAG are the catechist (*omokatekista*) and *omoriai* (leader) respectively. These religious leaders in the Catholic and PAG churches share characteristics of *omorisia* in the SDA church.

Inculturation of God as a shepherd (*Omorisia*) refines this interpretation to show that God unlike the SDA elder is an ever present shepherd, comforter, provider, protector, divine guider, compassionate and immortal shepherd. Inculturation of God as a shepherd (*Omorisia*) refines the SDA concept of a shepherd to show that God as *omorisia* is not ordained by being laid hands on by religious functionaries and God's time of office is not limited to time and talent. It also shows that God as a shepherd is not elected or removed from authority by people as sometimes observed in the churches. It further portrays God as a leader without defects because God will never be of regular standing as a Shepherd of the people. It finally shows that God as a divine shepherd does not only lead the SDA congregation but all the people in the entire universe.

4.4.8 Inculturation of God as an Ox

Abagusii were cattle keepers as discussed earlier in this study. An ox (*entang'ana*) was a highly preferred animal among Abagusii. It was of greater economic value than any of the livestock a farmer had. An ox was found virtually in every home and was highly favoured than any of the livestock. Gusii older generation address *Engoro* as an ox (*Entang'ana*) because of the central roles the ox played in Gusii economy. As Gusii term *entang'ana* (ox) implies, God is the leader of Abagusii people (Mogaka, O.I, 23:06:2009).

An ox as Guto (O.I, 09:07:2009) puts it pulls the plough, pulls heavy loads, turns the sugarcane grinders and is the one which leads and others follow to the site for drinking water. God as the ox as is perceived among the older Gusii informants, is of incomparable strength, is a powerful God, does not complain over hard work, pulls humanity out of the socio-economic disorders and accompanies humanity in every engagement of life.

An ox in the Bible as argued by Nichol, et al (1956:142) is the male of the beef kind when grown, synonymous with the bull. It is a clean animal, by the Levitical law, much used for food, (1King 19:21) and constituting no small part of the wealth of the Hebrews in their pastoral life (Genesis

24:35; Job 1:14; 42:12). Oxen were used in agriculture for pulling a plough (1Kings 19:19) and for treading out the grain during which they were not to be muzzled, (1Corinthians 9:9,) but well fed (Isaiah 30:24).

The testing of a new yoke of oxen is still a business of great importance in the Middle East (Luke 14:19). A passage in Campbell's travels in South Africa well illustrates the proverbial expression, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, (Jeremiah 31:18). "I had frequent opportunities of witnessing the conduct of oxen when for the first time put into the yoke to assist in dragging the wagons. On observing an ox that had been in yoke beginning to get weak, or his hoofs to be worn down by treading on the sharp gravel, a fresh ox was put to the yoke in his place" (Nichol, et al 1956:143).

An ox in the Jewish and Hebrew culture which was later adapted to Christianity is a symbol of strength (Moltman 1999: 26). For instance, the oxen of Bashan, pasturing in a fertile region and with but few keepers, became strong and fierce. They would compass about an intruder and trample him/her under foot and cause injuries or kill. They are symbols of powerful, fierce and numerous foes (Psalms 22:12; 68:30; Isaiah 34:7).

The Christian concept of God as powerful is similar to Abagusii traditional perception of God as strong in their image of God as an ox. Inculturation of God as an ox makes Abagusii of the older generation perceive God as a powerful God. It makes them reflect the strength of an ox which ploughs the whole day without getting tired. It also make Abagusii perceive God as one who does not complain of all work God done to human beings. Inculturation of God as an ox further makes the people perceive God as the one who pulls them out of their economic situations and as the one who accompanies them in any of the life's engagements.

The reference to God as an ox is in the memory of only the older generation who are more or less vulnerable to natural death. The image of God as an ox has been overcome by events. In the conventional days an ox was viewed as powerful while in the contemporary society there are inventions which are stronger than Gusii ox. The image of God as an ox only strengthens Gusii concept of God as strong, powerful, proficient and capable. Each generation based on this concept of God through God the transformer of culture paradigm refines the image of an ox to a more inclusive biblical image unsurpassed at that time but retain the traditional concept of God. The present generation as was found out in this study understands God as strong as a Caterpillar (*ekerini*). The Caterpillar

empowers the crane to lift the heavy loads into a lorry or to an elevated site.

4.4.9 Inculturation of God as an Eagle

Abagusii older generation refer to *Engoro* as an eagle (*ekeongo*). Moraya (O.I, 10:06:2009) observes that an eagle was a sacred bird which was never eaten by the people and anyone who first found it dead, the same person was cleansed through rituals and sacrifices by Gusii elders. As an eagle, God is as a powerful bird, lives and operates from or in the sky, swift, careful, sees from afar and detects situations and circumstances from afar.

Abagusii understand the eagle as the most powerful bird of all the birds existing in the universe. It is known as the bird which flies highest and rapidly compared to all other birds. The eagle is the bird which is known to live longest because it renews itself by shedding off its feathers after some years of its existence. This bird is the most careful bird in teaching its young ones how to fly high and spend many hours in the sky than all other birds. The eagle is the keenest bird with distinctive eyesight to see objects from very high above the ground. It gets the scents and smells of its prey from very far. It is finally considered a sacred bird which is never eaten or tamed by anyone. Even the children were warned from disturbing their nests or young ones (Osindi, O.I, 10:06:2009).

The Bible observes the eagle (Job 39:27-30) as a large and very powerful bird, hence called the 'King' of birds of the prey. There are several species of eagles described by naturalists, and it is probable that this word in the Bible comprehends more than one of these. The noble eastern species, called by Bruce J. "the golden eagle," measures eight feet four inches from wing to wing; and from the tip of his tail to the point of his beak, when dead, four feet seven inches (Mackenzie,1974:23).

The Bible notes that of all known birds, the eagle flies not only the highest (Proverbs 23:5; Jeremiah 49:16; Obadiah 1:40) but also with the greatest rapidity (2 Samuel 1:23; Job 9:26; Lamentations 4:19). Among the evils threatened to the Israelites in case of their disobedience, the prophet names one in the following terms: "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth" (Deuteronomy 28:49).

The march of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, is predicted in similar terms: "Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles," (Jeremiah 4:13; 48:40; 49:22; Hosea 8:1). This bird was a national emblem on Persian and Roman standards, as it now is on United States' coins (Smith, 1973:76).

The eagle, it is said, lives to a great age and like other birds of prey, sheds its feathers in the beginning of spring, after which its old age assumes the appearance of youthhood. To this, David the psalmist alludes, when gratefully reviewing the mercies of Jehovah: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like eagles," (Psalms 103:5; Isaiah 40:31). The careful pains of the eagle in teaching its young to fly, beautifully illustrate God's providential care over Israel (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11,12).

The eagle is remarkable for its keen sight and scent. Its flesh, like that of all birds of prey, was unclean to the Jews; and is never eaten by any body, unless in cases of necessity, (Matthew 24:28; Luke 17:37). It is observed from the above views that both Christianity and Gusii concept of an eagle are similar. Inculturation of God as an Eagle (*Ekeongo*) makes people feel that God sees them from afar. This makes people fear doing evil which orders the social, moral and religious practices of the people. In case of any one committing evil, the same will know that God sees him or her from very far. It also makes the people know that God moves at a very high speed to help them once combated with calamity.

Based on God and Culture in paradox paradigm, inculturation of God as an eagle purifies the idea of an eagle shedding its feathers to appear young with a teaching that God renews his relationship with humanity each day by forgiving people of their trespasses and sins.

The older generation among Abagusii are the ones who refer to God as an eagle. Inculturation of God as an eagle enhances among Abagusii that God has the ability of seeing any activity happening in the universe from far. It strengthens the actuality that God has ears, eyes and the ability of monitoring whatever goes on amongst humanity. The eagles are birds which are no longer present in Gusii so when God is addressed as an eagle, Abagusii of the younger generation fail to understand who God really is but they accept the interpretation provided by the elderly people about the character of God observed in the eagle. God the transformer of culture paradigm refines the image of God as an eagle to biblical images which portray God as one who is all-seeing. The young people perceive God as either a telescope, or microscope. These instruments as an eagle have the aptitude of seeing incredibly small things which are either far or near.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has inculturated Gusii traditional concept of God using God the transformer of culture, God above culture and God and culture in paradox paradigms of God and Culture conceptual framework developed by Neibuhr (1951:32). Investigating the relevance of inculturation to Gusii religio-culture, the chapter has affirmed the premise that inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God provides Abagusii with a balanced, holistic integral way of life. It has integrated Gusii and biblical religio-cultural elements with the elimination of elements which are anti-life and discriminative from Gusii traditional culture. It has also given a new interpretation to traditional religio-cultural symbols so that there is mutual enhancement of Gusii traditional religio-cultural and the biblical concept of God.

In this chapter, it evident that inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God which make Abagusii perceive God on their daily interpretations of who God is through what they see, hear, feel, experience and interact with. Their interpretation of God's images is guided by patriarchy and their daily experiences as a people. When God is addressed by use of biblical Jewish images as, Lord, King, Lion, Vine-dresser, Husbandman, Potter and Palestinian farmer or a Palestinian shepherd, Abagusii do not

understand who God is clearly. Inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God solves this problem.

Inculturation is a theological concept which remains faithful to biblical teachings, while seeking to interpret the biblical concepts in local cultural settings. It is as a channel through which Abagusii understand and interpret God as one who is closer to them, who sees them, touches, hears and walks with them, eats with them and practically does everything with them. Inculturation as a process with life in itself translates the Gospel message in a manner in which the local people interpret the message based on their local understating. Gusii religiosity forms a basis of inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God.

Abagusii had many names for *Engoro*. They addressed God as a father (*tata*), a community leader (*omokumi*), a healer (*omogwenia*), a friend (*omosani*), a blacksmith (*omoturi*), a farmer (*omoremi*), a shepherd (*omorisia*), an ox (*entang'ana*) and an eagle (*ekeongo*). Most of these terms portray masculinity because Abagusii are a patriarchal community with a culture where everything about *Engoro* is defined and interpreted in masculine terms yet *Engoro* (God) is not male or female. On basis of God the transformer of culture, God and Culture in paradox and God above

Culture paradigms, the masculine interpretation of God is redefined in order to make God an all inclusive and genderless.

Chapter five summarizes the main findings in this study and links the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of *Engoro* with Gusii traditional concept of God and their response to Christianity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the entire study. First, it presents a synopsis of the main findings. Second, it presents recommendations arising from the study. Finally, it proposes areas for further research in the concept of God.

5.2 Summary and Conclusions of the Study

This study sought to examine the inculturation of the concept of God in the traditional religion of Abagusii of Western Kenya. It reveals that failure of Christianity to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God creates a religious vacuum among Abagusii. It has also examined Gusii traditional concept of God before the advent of Christianity and the influences it had on Gusii traditional concept of God. The study has further evaluated the Christian teachings on Gusii traditional concept of God with general concepts of inculturation and how inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God enables Abagusii converts to perceive the Christian God not as the same *Engoro* they have worshiped from time immemorial.

An inquiry was made for a requisite conceptual framework for the study. God and Culture conceptual framework was employed with God above Culture, God of Culture, God the Transformer of Culture, God against Culture and God and Culture in Paradox paradigms. This conceptual framework has been used to refine, retain or eliminate some elements of Gusii traditional concept of God to create harmony with the biblical hermeneutics. The study has highlighted Abagusii traditional concept of God.

Data for the study were mainly obtained through the oral interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and secondary sources. The obtained data were categorized and thematized based on the objectives of the study for purpose of analysis and interpretation. The following is a discussion of the summary of the study objectives.

The first objective of the study was to investigate Gusii traditional concept of God. It was found that in their worldview, Abagusii had a belief in the existence of *Engoro* (God). The existence of God came as a result of the people's reflection of the universe, their limitations and the focus on the harmony in nature. It was established that Abagusii believe that *Engoro* is the creator, sustainer of creation, provider of creation, and a ruler of the universe. They also believe that God has human images like they

perceive God as a father, a friend, a judge, a healer and a diviner. It was further realized that Abagusii describe the nature of *Engoro* as good, merciful, holy, all powerful, all knowing, everywhere, has no limit, is self-existent, is first and last, is a spirit, never changes and is beyond human comprehension.

Abagusii believe in the spiritual realm and *Engoro* as the controller of the spirits. They believe in the nature spirits which they categorize as the nature spirits of the sky and the nature spirits of the earth. The study has shown their belief in the human spirits who are relatives who died long time ago who were heroes and great people in Gusii community who the study revealed were closer to *Engoro* and linked them to *Engoro*.

The study affirms the first premise that Abagusii believe in the existence of God in their traditional religion. It reveals that Gusii belief in God is inherent and is transmitted from one generation to the other through Gusii oral tradition. In the light of Neibuhr (1951:69-92) God, the transformer of culture, God against culture and God and culture in paradox paradigms, some Gusii traditional concept of God have been removed, refined or dropped. It was therefore concluded that Abagusii had an inherent traditional concept of God passed on from one generation to another through their oral tradition. The researcher further concluded

that intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of *Engoro* portray him as near and concerned with the welfare of Abagusii. The researcher finally concluded that Gusii traditional anthropomorphic, animal and bird images of God make people to feel the consistence, commitment and closeness of *Engoro* to the people.

The second objective was to examine Christianity influence on Gusii traditional concept of God. The study investigated a brief history of the coming of the Catholic and the protestant missionaries 1909-1963 to Gusii. The study unveiled two waves (1909-1936 and 1936-1963) of the coming of the missionaries in Gusii. It discussed the Christian denominations which Christianized Abagusii. These as the study show were The Seventh-Day Adventist, The Catholic, The Salvation Army, The Africa Inland Mission, The Swedish Lutheran Mission, The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada or the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, The Church of God, and The Friends African Mission (the Quakers).

The study has shown the Christian concept of God and the Christian Trinitarian theology which argues for God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. It has also discussed the Christian concept of the attribute of God. The Christians as shown in the study insist that God is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, pre-existent, eternal, immutable,

infinite, sovereign, holy, wise and faithful. The study has further shown that Christians have names for God which are borrowed from the Jewish and Hebrew backgrounds which are later dismissed in the following objective as not applicable in Gusii traditional concept of God through God above Culture paradigm. The study affirms the second premise that the Christian missionaries did not see the need to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. It has further revealed that there are similarities and differences between the Christian teachings on the concept of God and Gusii traditional teachings on the concept of God. The researcher was able to conclude that the Christian missionaries did not see the need to appreciate the fact that Abagusii in their traditional religion believed in the same God they introduced to them. The researcher further concluded that the influence of Christianity on Gusii traditional concept of God made Abagusii to drop their traditional concept of God which tolerated evil and declined the people's religiosity.

The fourth objective of the study was to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God. The study deduced that the inculturation is a process which is biblical and relevant. The importance of inculturation of Abagusii concept of God as shown in this study helps Abagusii to receive Gospel and perceive God's images in their own ethnic community, culture, tongue, art, language, syntax and form.

The study affirms the third premise that inculturation of Gusii Traditional concept of God makes Abagusii understand God based on the images of their day-to-day experiences. It will further help to stop the religious duality experienced from the converted Christians. The study shows that Abagusii, being a patriarchal society, the images of God are given a male interpretation. God and Culture conceptual framework has been used to refine or eliminate those aspects of Gusii traditional concept of God which are incompatible with the scriptures and the human rights. It was therefore concluded that inculturation Gusii traditional concept of God provides Abagusii with a balanced, holistic and an integral way of life.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education restructure the curriculum so that we can have emphasis made on the Christian religious studies covering the African traditional religion studies. It is recommended that the Religious Studies subject should be a compulsory subject in schools so that the youth can know their traditional concept of God and appreciate the African indigenous religion. The Western educational system as was deduced during the study has greatly contributed to the loss of Gusii religio-culture. Parents and elderly persons have no access to the youth to get a chance of inculcating Gusii

religio-culture. The Western systems of education do not have allocations in its curriculum lessons which inform the learners on their cultures and traditions. In other levels of the Kenyan education system religion is given an optional slot, a condition which threatens the future of the traditional religio-cultural values. For revival of Gusii traditional concept of God, the curriculum and policy developers need to incorporate the African traditional religious heritage lessons in the school syllabus. Children should be taught the value of interacting with the elderly persons in the society for the informal education.

Second, the study recommends that parents should be reminded to play their roles in teaching their children on their traditional concept of God. During school holidays, parents should create some time for their children in teaching them the concept of God. The young parents in Gusii should use the elderly people in the community to teach them and their children on the traditional concept of God. It is further recommended that children who do not have parents should be taught by their relatives and the community in general on Gusii traditional concept of God.

Third, the study recommends to the Protestant and Catholic churches in Gusii to appreciate the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God. There is need for the revival of Gusii traditional religious practices which

do not contravene the biblical teachings. This will be effective when the ministers of the Gospel will re-interpret the scriptures to fit Gusii context without compromising the biblical doctrines. Let the clergy employ the biblical hermeneutics which will affect the local people positively so that Abagusii may be and part and parcel of the Gospel.

Fourth, the study recommends inculturation is an ongoing process and all church leaders should have a proper training in it. The churches should have local persons as the clergy who will be men and women who understand the traditional concept of God and how they can be inculturated. The local clergy needs to have adequate training on African traditional concept of God and biblical interpretation to fit the local people. It was realized in this study that most clergies in the Catholic, Protestant churches have theological trainings from the Western countries with theological content deficient of inculturation and African ethno-theologies. These clergies need re-training on the concepts of inculturation and appreciation of the African ethno-theologies.

Finally, a recommendation to the world church is that let the Western Christianity respect the religious diversity and the traditional concept of God. They should also promote the process of inculturation of the traditional concept of God so that the local people can also feel the

presence of God among them by having their ethnic images of God inculturated.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study investigated the inculturation of the concept of God in the traditional religion of Abagusii. Therefore, further research on inculturation should be based on other different communities to enhance the generalizations of the harmonized findings on the inculturation of the concept of God.

Future study should include the inculturation of Gusii traditional religion on the individual family and public worship. This will examine reasons why Abagusii professing Christians practice a religious duality - secretly visiting the traditional herbalists, diviners and fortune tellers.

Bibliography

A. Books

- Akama, S. et. al (2006). *Ethnography of Gusii of Western Kenya*. New York. The Edwin Millen Press.
- Arbuckle, G (1991). *Earthing the Gospel*. Maryknoll. New York: Orbis Books.
- Bacchiochi, S (1976). *Rest for Modern Man*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association.
- Baur, J (1994). *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: Nairobi Kenya*. Paulines Publications.
- Benne, R (1995). *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology of 21st Century*. Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press.
- Brook, W (1950). *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids. WMB Eerdmans.
- Brown, J and Parker, R (1989). *For God So Loved The World in Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*. Chicago. Pilgrim Press.
- Bujo, B (1976). *African Christian Morality: The Age of Inculturation*. Nairobi Pauline Publications. Kinshasa. Faculkte De Keotigie Catholique.
- Cantelon, W (1980). *Speaking With other Tongues*. Nairobi Evangelical Publishing.
- Cooley, P. et. al (1991). *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions*. Maryknoll. N.Y Orbis Books.
- Drago, P (1980). *The Mission of the Local Church and the Inculturation of the Gospel in Mission and Dialogue*. eds Molte, M; Lang, J. Maryknoll. New York, Orbis Books.
- Dube, M. (2002). *Re-reading the Bible. Biblical Hermeneutics and Social Justice*. In Emmanuel Katongole (ed). *African Theology Today*. Scranton. The University of Scranton Press.

- Eitel, E (1986). *Transforming Culture: Developing a Biblical Ethic in an African Context*. Nairobi: Evangelical Publishing Association.
- Farrel, F (1967). *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*. New York. Charles Scribner Sons.
- Finley, M (1982). *The Way to Adventist Church Growth*. Siloam Springs. AR. Concerned Communications.
- Gehmann, R (1990). *African Traditional Religions in Biblical Perspective*. Kijabe Kenya: Kesho Publications.
- Gordon , L (1798). *Decide For Yourself*. Downers grove IL. Intervarsity press.
- Hastings, A (1988). *African Christianity* New York: Seabury
- Herdie, J (1964). *The Mighty Acts of God*. Canada. The United Church Publishing House.
- Idowu E. B (1962). *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London, Longmans.
- _____ (1973). *African Traditional Religions* London. S.C.M Press Ltd.
- John Paul II. (1980). The Gospel and African cultures. In *African ecclesial Review* 22(4). Eldoret. GABA publications .
- Jordan, Anne Devereaux, (1988). *The Seventh Day Adventists: A History*, New York: Hippocrene Books.
- Kenyatta, J.(1972). *Facing Mount Kenya* London. Secker and Warburgy.
- Kolic, C (1991). *Jesus as Healer in Faces of Jesus in Africa*. Schrieter, J. (Ed.) London. SCM Press.
- Kraft, C (1996). *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, New York. Orbis Books.
- Lang, P. (Ed) (1991). *Readings in African Traditional Society*. New York: E.A.P.
- Lee, H (2003). *Effective Church Leadership*. Pacific Press

Publishing Association.

- Lewis, C (1952). *Mere Christianity*. Revised Ed. New York. Macmillan.
 _____ (1982). *The Screwtape Letters*. Revised Ed. New York Mackmillan.
- Lindavs, B.(1973). *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*. CUP.
 Cambridge.
- Lunzbetaks, K. (1998). *The Church and Cultures. New perspective in
 Missiological anthropology* eight print. Maryknoll: orbis books.
- Mackenzie, H (1974). *Fundamentals the Church Needs*. Texas. University
 Press.
- Magesa, L (1975). *African Religions: A Moral Tradition of Abundant Life*.
 Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- _____ (2004). *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church
 in Africa*. Orbis Books. Maryknoll. New York.
- Manchner, J (1998). *God Transcendent*. Banner of Truth Publishers.
- Martin, Walter, (1977). *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis:
 Bethany House Publishers.
- Mayer, F.E., (1961). *Religious Bodies in America*, 4th ed., St. Louis:
 Concordia Publishing House
- Maryer, P (1974). *The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society* OUP London.
- Masese, E (2006). *Witchcraft among Gusii*; in *Ethnography of Gusii
 of Western Kenya* (Ed) Akama, S. and Maxon R. New York.
 The Edwin Millen Press.
- Mbiti, J (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy* New York. Praeger.
- _____ (1970). *Concepts of God in Africa* New York. Praezer
 Publishing House.
- _____ (1981). *Introduction to African Religions*. London: Heinemann.
- Mervyn, M (1981). *God Cares*. Mountain View. CA Pacific Press.

- Moltman, J (1999). *God for the Secular Society. The Public Relevance of Theology*. Minneapolis Fortress.
- Monro, M.(1961). *Enjoying the New Testament*. London. Longman.
- Mugambi, J (1990). *Comparative Study of Religions* Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.
- Mutiso-Mbinda. S (1986). *Inculturation: A Challenge to the African Local Church in Inculturation: Its Meaning, and Urgency*. Waliggo, J. et. al. Kampala. St. Paul Publications.
- Nasimiyu, A (1991). *Christology and an African Woman's Experience in Faces of Jesus in African*. Schreiter, R. (Ed): Maryknoll. Orbis Books.
- Ndegwah, D (2007). *Biblical Hermeneutics as a Tool for Inculturation in Africa. A Case Study of the Pokot People of Kenya*. Creation Enterprises. Kijabe. Kenya.
- Niebuhr, H (1951). *Christ and Culture*. New York. Harb and Brothers Publications.
- Nyaundi, N (1997). *Seventh- Day Adventism in Gusii, Kenya* African Herald Publishing House.
- Nyarangi, K.M. (2003). *Gusii Proverbs in Biblical Hermeneutics* Nairobi: Nairobi University Press
- O'Brien, J (1974). *The Faith of Millions*. Huntington. IN Our Sunday Visitor Inc.
- Onchari, K (1975). *History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God in Gusii*. African Herald Publishing House.
- Ochieng', W (1974). *A Pre-Colonial History of Gusii of Western Kenya: From C A.D1850-1914 E*. Nairobi. EALB.
- p'Bitek, O (1970). *African Religions in Western Scholarship* Nairobi. Kenya Literature Bureau.
- Parrinder, G (1963) *West African Religion*. London, Epworth Press.

- Ray, B (1976). *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community*. Englewood Cliffs. Prentice-Hall, Inc
- Reid, K (2000). *Home at its Best*. African Herald Publishing House.
- Roy, N (1982). *Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts*. Barren Spirings. MI. Institute of Church Ministry.
- Ryan, P (2002). *Inculturation in the S. African Context*. Nairobi. Paulines publications. Africa. Kolbe Press.
- Sanneh, L (1989). *Translating the Message* Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books.
- Schaff, P (1983). *The Person of Christ*. George H. Doran. Ed. New York. Harb and Brothers Publications.
- Schineller, P (1990). *A Handbook of Inculturation* New York. Paulist Press.
- Schoffeleers, M (1990). *The Missionary and the Diviner in the Journal of Religions In Africa* 20;3.
- Shorter, A (1974). *African Culture and the Christian Church*. Maryknoll. New York.
- _____ (1978). *African Christian Spirituality*. Geoffrey Chapman. London.
- _____ (1985). *Jesus and the Witchdoctor*. Geoffrey Chapman. London.
- _____ (1988). *The Theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll. New York. Orbis Books.
- _____ (1991). *The Church in African City*. London, Geoffrey Chapman.
- Smith, P (1973). *Managing God's Goods*. Nashville. Southern Publishing Association.
- Stagg, F (1962). *New Testament Theology*. Nashville ISBN
- Swedenberg, E (1988). *The True Christian Religion*. Swedenberg Society. London.

- Tolstoy, L (1984). *The Kingdom of God with You*: Trans. Constance Garnet NE.
- Urbuckle, G.A (1988). Inculturation not Adaptation. Time to Change Terminology. In *Reprint No 369*. Eldoret. Gaba Publications.
- Uzukwu, E (1996). *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*. Maryknoll. New York, Orbis Books.
- Wagner, P (1979). *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Glendale. CA. Regal Books.
- Waliggo, J. (1986). *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*. Nairobi: St. Paul Publications - Africa.
- Wandel, P(1991). *Friends of God*. New York. Peter Lang.
- Were, S (1967). *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya*. Longman, Nairobi
- White, E (1943). *Acts of the Apostles*. Mountain View. CA. Percific Press.
- _____ (1954a), *The Christian Home*. Chicago. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- _____ (1954b). *The Great Controversy*. Chicago. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- _____ (1956). *The Desire of Ages*. Chicago. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- _____ (1963). *Prophets and Kings*. Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- _____ (1986 a). *The Ministry of Healing*. Chicago. Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- _____ (1986b), *From Here to Forever*. Chicago Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- Wilson, M (1968). *Religion and the Transformation of the Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

B. Journals

Arrupe, P (1978). Catechesis and inculturation: in *African Ecclesiastical Review*. Vol. 20.

Hamill, R (1982). "Spiritual Gifts" in *Ministry*: July 1982.

Harring, B (1981). *Free and Faithfulness in Christ Vol. 3* London. St. Paul Publications.

McCready, D (1977). He Came Down From Heaven: The Pre-existence of Christ Revisited, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 40/3, Sept 1997.

Tutu, D (1975). Black Theology: Soul Mates or Antagonists in *The Journal of Religious Thought*. South Africa.

Turner, N. (1977). The Religions in the World and their Study. In Victor H. ed. *Australian Essays in World Religions*. Bedford Park. Australian Associations for World Religions.

C. Commentaries and Dictionaries

Bruce, F (1972). *Commentary on the Epistles to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids. WMB Eerdmans.

Nichol, F. et al (1956). *The Seventh-Day Bible Commentary*. Review and Herald Publishing Association.

D. Unpublished Works

Bogonko, S (1977). Christian Missionary Education and its Impact on Abagusii of Western Kenya 1909-1963. Nairobi Kenya.

Getui, M (1985). The Establishment and History of the Activity of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (1912-1985) MA Thesis University of Nairobi.

Gitome, J.W (2003). Integration of African Indigenous Guidance Practices to Adolescents Pastoral Care and Counseling Programmes in Selected Churches of Nairobi. PhD Thesis. Kenyatta University.

Gitonga, N (2005). The Process of Inculturation of Christianity in Kenya.

A Case Study of Kaaga Methodist Synod in Meru. Phd Thesis.
Kenyatta University.

Katola, M (1995). Morality among the Kamba.
Phd Thesis. Kenyatta University.

Kibicho, S (1972). The Agikuyu Concept of God. Nashville, Tennessee.

Nasimiyu, A (1985). Vatican II the Problem of Inculturation
Michigan: Ann Arbor, Michigan. A Bell and Howell
Information Company.

Okemwa, P (1993). The Place and Role of Women in the SDA in Kenya
(1911-1990) MA Thesis Kenyatta University

E. Internet Sources

<file:///kenya%/26.nyamira.map.htm>

<file:///F:/kenymap.htm>

Appendix 1

LIST OF INFORMANTS

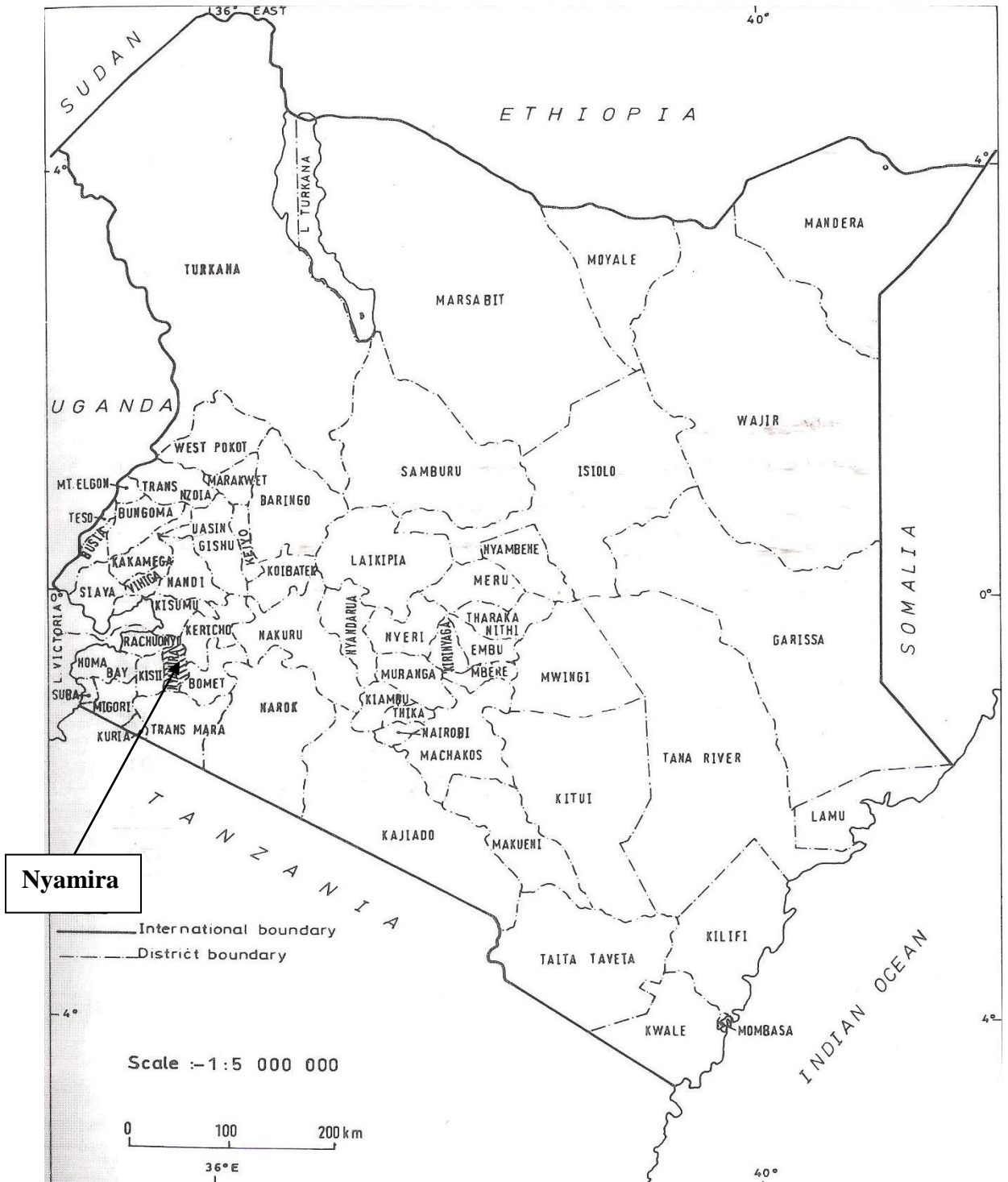
Name	Age	Date	Location
Asuga, R.	65	26:06:2009	Bosamaro
Bangueso, J.	65	10:07:2009	Kiabonyoru
Barongo, S.	81	17:08:2009	Nyangoge
Bikondo, J.	67	09:06:2009	Manga
Cleopas N.	45	10:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Cleopas, G.	55	03:08:2009	Nyankongo
Davison, K	38	23:08:2009	Kiabonyoru
Guto, J.	45	09.07:2009	Bogisanga
Kaoka, J.	64	18:08:2009	Kiabonyoru
Kegwaro, H.	50	23:06:2009	Bosamaro
Kemoko, N.	64	14:07:2009	Bogisanga
Kemuma. R.	25	02.06:2009	Rigoma
Kerosi, C.	45	28:08:2009	Bogichora
Kerubo, F.	65	23:07:2009	Bomanyanya
Kinanga, C.	70	09.07:2009	Manga
Kinaro, J.	40	12:08:2009	Bomanyanya
Kiraro G.	75	13.07:2009	Bogisanga
Mariam, M.	55	10.05:2009	Kiabonyoru
Marita, J.	65	13:08:2009	Amakura

Maruko, S.	59	12:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Mbaka, K.	22	17:07:2009	Nyangoge
Moenga, M.	37	29:08:2009	Bogichora
Mogaka, J.	50	23.06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Momanyi, A.	30	26:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Moraya, H.	78	10:06:2009	Kenyenya
Mose, M.	67	23.06:2009	Manga
Nyaanga, N.	47	15:06:2009	Bosamaro
Nyabera, M.	75	10.06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyabwari, S.	76	10:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyachiro, J.	40	04:08:2009	Amakura
Nyaitondi, D.	36	23:08:2009	Mosocho
Nyakemari, O	25	17:07:2009	Nyamusi
Nyakerario, M.	40	12.07:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyakoe, J.	59	04:08:2009	Bogisanga
Nyambegera, A	56	21:07:2009	Nyamusi
Nyamoki, G.	24	25:07:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyanchama, N.	32	12:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyarabi, K.	45	13:07:2009	Manga
Nyaribari, J.	55	24.06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Nyatichi, J.	45	02:06:2009	Manga
Obiri, J.	78	13:07:2009	Bogisanga

Oigo, D.	74	12:07:2009	Manga
Oira, E.	34	28:08:2009	Amakura
Okeri, N.	60	12:07:2009	Manga
Ombui , O.	40	25:06:2009	Bosamaro
Omote, Z.	55	21:08:2009	Bomanyanya
Omwando, J.	68	23:07:2009	Amakura
Ontiri, H.	24	26:08:2009	Nyamusi
Orioki, N.	55	30:07:2009	Bomanyanya
Osindi, H.	80	10:06:2009	Kiabonyoru
Osoro, E.	56	17:07:2009	Kiabonyoru
Sani, O.	45	14:07:2009	Kiabonyoru
Timothy, G.	23	15:06:2009	Nyankongo
Vane, B.	42	25:08:2009	Keragia

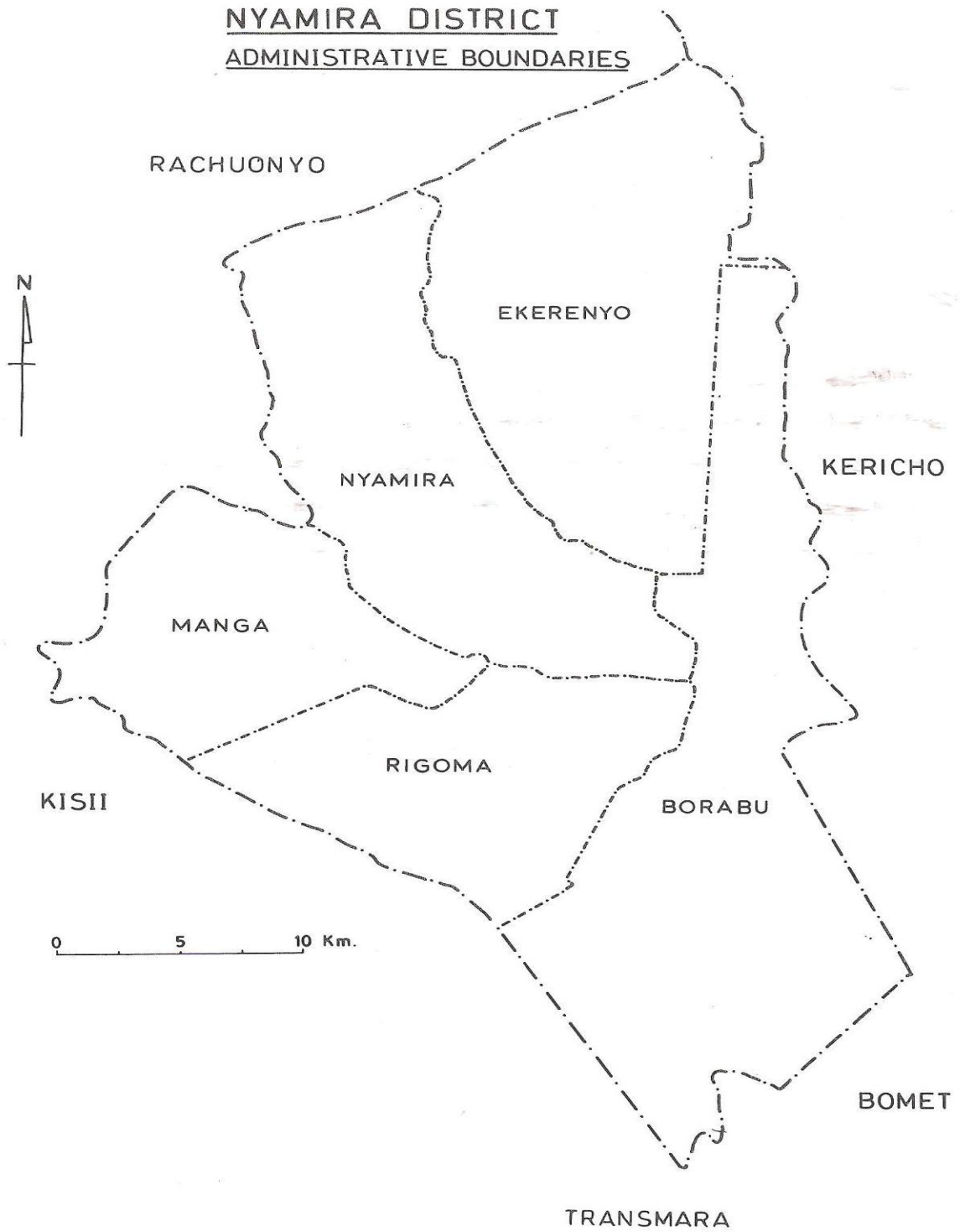
Appendix 2

Map I: Location of Nyamira in the Map of Kenya



Source: file://F:/Kenymap.htm

Map II: NYAMIRA DISTRICT MAP: SITE OF THE STUDY



Questionnaire for Cultural Leaders

Name Age.....

1. What cultural duties are you offering to the community?
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Who is Engoro in Gusii traditional religion?
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. What makes Abagusii believe in the existence of Engoro?
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. What is the basis for Gusii belief in Engoro?
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. What are the non-sharable attributes of God with humanity?
.....
.....
.....
.....

6. What are the sharable attributes of God with humanity?
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. a) Did Abagusii have the human, animal and bird images of God
Yes [...] No [...]

If yes which are some of these images in the categories below?

i) Human
.....
.....

.....
.....

ii) Animal

.....
.....
.....

iii) Bird

.....
.....
.....

b) What are the characteristics of the above (i, ii, iii) images which makes Abagusii to relate them to *Engoro*?

.....
.....
.....

8. How did Gusii Religiosity become a seedbed for inculturation of the concept of God?

.....
.....
.....

9. What will be the implication of inculturating Gusii traditional images of God in question 7 above in the contemporary society?

Interview for the Youth

Name Age.....
Religious Affiliation

- 1. Do you know Gusii traditional name for God?
Yes [...] No [...]

If yes, from which source?

- Grandparents [...]
- Parents [...]
- Teacher [...]
- Church [...]
- Others [...] specify

- 2. What are some of the attributes of Engoro which are similar to the Christian God?

.....
.....
.....

- 3. Which are some of Gusii traditional images of God which are similar to the Christian God?

.....
.....
.....

- 4. i) Do you think it is important to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God?

Yes [...] No [...]

ii) If yes, how will it help the young people in the contemporary society?

.....
.....
.....

- 5. What can the youth learn about God through nature and revelation?

.....
.....
.....

Questionnaire for Parents

Name Age.....
Religious Affiliation

1. How did Engoro relate with evil doers in Gusii traditional society?
.....
.....
.....

2. How did Abagusii relate with nature in their traditional heritage?
.....
.....
.....

3. How did the belief in Engoro preserve morality in Gusii traditional society?
.....
.....
.....

4. Why do Abagusii address Engoro as:-

i) A Parent
.....
.....
.....

ii) A Friend
.....
.....
.....

iii) A Shepherd
.....
.....
.....

iv) Judge
.....
.....
.....

v) A Farmer

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. How did Christianity interfere with Gusii traditional concept of God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. How can the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God help to restore the lost morality in Gusii community in the 21st Century?

Appendix 7

Questionnaire for Church Leaders

Name Age.....
Religious Affiliation

1. For how many years have you been a church leader

- 1-5 Years [...]
5-10 Years [...]
10-15 Years [...]
15-20 Years [...]
20 Years and Above [...]

2. What is the nature of your church leadership?

- ClergyLeadership [...]
Lay Leadership [...]

3. What factors led to the establishment of Christianity in Gusii?

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. In your opinion, what assessment did the missionaries have on Gusii traditional concept of God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. What influence did the Christian teaching of the Trinity have on Gusii traditional concept of God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

6. a) Which are some of the Biblical names used by Christianity to address to God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

b) How did the names in (a) above influence Gusii traditional names which were used to address to God?

.....

.....
.....

7. What is the Christian teaching on the attributes of God and how did these teachings influence Gusii traditional concept of the attributes of God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

8. What are the Biblical images of God and how did they influence Gusii traditional images of God?

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. Which are some of the images of God that need to be inculturated?

.....
.....
.....
.....

10. a) Is it important to inculturate Gusii traditional concept of God?

Yes [...] No [...]

If yes, in your own opinion what will be the implications of the inculturation of Gusii traditional concept of God in the church in the 21st Century?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Focus Group Interviews

1. Who is *Engoro* in Gusii traditional religion?
.....
.....
.....
.....
2. What is the basis for Gusii belief in *Engoro*?
.....
.....
.....
.....
3. God has intrinsic and extrinsic attributes. Discuss:-
 - i) The intrinsic attributes of God
.....
.....
.....
.....
 - ii) The extrinsic attributes of God
.....
.....
.....
.....
 - iii) The images of God
.....
.....
.....
.....
4. How did the coming and the establishment of the Christian missionaries in Gusii interfere with Gusii traditional concept of God?
.....
.....
.....
.....
5. What are similarities and differences of the concept of God in both Christianity and Gusii traditional religion?
.....
.....
.....
.....

6. What is the purpose of inculturating Gusii traditional concept of God?

.....
.....
.....

Official Letters

GS/CCT/1



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

CERTIFICATION OF CORRECTION OF THESIS

NB: This certificate of Correction should be forwarded to the Dean,
Graduate School for clearance before Thesis can be hard bound)

PART I: RELEVANT DETAILS ON THE THESIS

Department: PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES
School: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Degree Title MA
Candidates' Name: NYABWARI BERNARD GECHKO
Registration No. C50/10330/2007 Signature [Signature]
Date of Oral Defence: 25th AUG. 2010
Title of Thesis: INCULTURATION OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD
IN THE TRADITIONAL RELIGION OF THE
ABAGUSII OF WESTERN KENYA

PART II: DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR(S) OVERSEEING CORRECTIONS

I/ we, the undersigned Supervisor(s) of Corrections do hereby confirm that I/ we have closely looked at the corrections as instructed by the candidate's Board of Examiners and I/ we do hereby certify that ALL the corrections have been effected as agreed.

NAME: DR MICHAEL T KATOLA SIGN: [Signature] DATE: 28/10/2010
(CORRECTIONS SUPERVISOR I)
NAME: _____ SIGN _____ DATE: _____
(CORRECTIONS SUPERVISOR II)
NAME: DR EDWIN TUMUDE SIGN: [Signature] DATE: 9/11/10
(CORRECTIONS SUPERVISOR III)

PART III: CONFIRMATION BY DEAN OF THE SCHOOL

Confirmed that the Supervisor(s) appointed to oversee the corrections have done so as per the instructions of the Board of Examiners

NAME: _____ SIGN _____ DATE: _____
DEAN

PART IV: AUTHORITY FOR FINAL BINDING OF THESIS

Authority for final binding of thesis is hereby granted.

NAME _____ DATE & STAMP _____
DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL**

P.O. Box 43844 NAIROBI, Kenya
Tel: 810901 - 19/ 811622/812722
Ext. 57530
Telex: 25483
Fax: 810759

Our Ref: C50/10330/07
Your Ref:

Date: 5th August, 2010

Mr. Nyabwari Bernard Gechiko,
Philosophy & Religious Studies Department,
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

Dear Mr. Gechiko,

REF: NOTICE OF DEFENCE MEETING

This is to let you know that the defence meeting for your M.A thesis has been **scheduled** to take place on **Wednesday, 25th August, 2010 at 9.00 a.m.** at the School of Humanities Boardroom.

Please arrange to avail yourself at the meeting at least thirty minutes before the Board sits.

Meanwhile, I wish you success in your defence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter K. Muchemi'.

**PETER K. MUCHEMI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL**

PKM/cww



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL**

P.O. Box 43844 NAIROBI, Kenya
Tel: 810901 - 19/811622/812722
Ext. 57530
Telex: 25483/Fax: 810759
E-Mail: kubps@yahoo.com

Our Ref: C50/10330/07
Ref:

Date: 31st March 2010

Mr. Nyabwari Bernard Gechiko
Philosophy and Religious Studies Department
Kenyatta University.

Dear Mr. Gechiko,

REF: THESIS SUBMISSION

This is to acknowledge receipt of four loose-bound copies of your M.A thesis entitled, *"Inculturation Of The Concept Of God In The Traditional Religion Of The Abagusii Of Western Kenya."*

This office will get in touch with you in due course. Please note that your defence will not be arranged unless you clear any fees balance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'GK' with a flourish.

GEOFFREY K KORIR
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

GKK/bwk



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

P.O. Box 43844,
NAIROBI
Tel. No. 810901/9 Ext. 57530
E-mail: kubps@yahoo.com

Our Ref: C50/10330/07
Your Ref:

Date: 20th May, 2009

The Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

I write to introduce **Mr. Nyabwari Bernard Gechiko** who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for a M.A. degree programme in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies.

Mr. Gechiko intends to conduct research for a project entitled, "**Inculturation of the Concept of God in the Traditional Religion of the Abagusii of Western, Kenya.**"

Any assistance given to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,


JOHN M. ODONGI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

JMO/bkk



KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
INTERNAL MEMO

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
TO: Nyabwari Bernard Gechiko
C/o Dept. of Philosophy and Religious Studies
REF: C50/10330/07
DATE: 19th May, 2009
RE: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to inform you that the Graduate School Board at its meeting of 4th May, 2009 approved your research proposal for the Masters degree.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JMO', with a circular flourish underneath.

JOHN M. ODONGI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Philosophy and Religious Studies Dept.
Supervisors: Prof. Anne Nasimiyu - Wasike, Dept. of Philosophy &
Religious Studies
Dr. Michel T. Katola, Dept. of Philosophy & Religious
Studies

JMO/cww