

The Significance Of The Male Circumcision Ritual Among the Abagusii Community In Kegogi Between 1885 And 1894

By

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the significance of the male circumcision ritual among the Abagusii community in Kegogi between 1885 and 1894. The study was carried out in Kegogi Division, Marani Sub-County, and Kisii County. The Kegogi Division is comprised of 2 locations and 3 Sub-locations. This research used a descriptive survey design, with the framework provided by social learning theory. Participants included adult men and women from Kegogi, Kisii County's Abagusii community. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed for participant selection. In choosing the songs concerning male circumcision for analysis, a purposive sampling technique was employed. An interview schedule served as the primary research instrument. A pilot study was conducted in the neighboring Marani Sub-County to verify the instrument's reliability. The instruments used in the study were personally administered by the researcher, and the information gathered from respondents was arranged thematically for discussion. The results showed that in the Abagusii community of Kegogi, the male circumcision ritual is very important. Considering the significance of these rites, it would be prudent to create a forum where young people can learn about customs and gain an understanding of the male circumcision rites. Circumcision rituals should incorporate instruction on cultural heritage as well as relevant modern health issues. This method would guarantee that the information given is pertinent to current health concerns while maintaining the rite's educational values and upcoming policies.

Key terms: Kenya, Abagusii, Significance, Male, Circumcision Ritual, Precolonial Period

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Introduction

Male circumcision is one of the oldest and most popular surgical procedures performed globally, according to Drain et al , (2006) Many cultures and faiths have referred to male circumcision. Morris et al., (2016) note that among the 45 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 28 had a circumcision prevalence higher than 80%. Religious and cultural practices frequently involve circumcision. Worldwide, an estimated 30% of all males over the age of 15 have had circumcision. In most traditional African societies, male circumcision served as a symbol of the transition from childhood to adulthood (Simiyu, 2011). Up until then, you were not allowed to take part in any of the clan's cultural events because you were still viewed as a youngster and dirty. Simiyu (2011) emphasized the significance of the male circumcision practice among the particular groups that carried out the ceremony.

One of the major events among the Abagusii was the entrance of boys into maturity ,(Akama, 2017). Male circumcision through "Okwaroka" was available to all young boys between the ages of eleven and sixteen. "Okwaroka" was not only an initiation procedure but also a means of imparting unique knowledge, especially with regard to sex, to the novices through songs about male circumcision. It was also a method of preparing for marriage, which is why it was so important to each and every "Omogusii". It was also a period when songs about male circumcision were used to teach the newcomers to value common principles like those linked to bravery and patriotism, (KNA DC/KSI/3/2:)

Review of Related Literature

Significance of Male Circumcision Ritual

Male circumcision is common among the Bantu people, as reported by Packard, (1981). Battignole, (1984) argues that one of the most important ceremonies in a person's life is male circumcision. According to him, male circumcision is the basis of Bantu-speaking people's "tribal" way of life. A Xhosa man could only inherit property, get married, or perform traditional ceremonies following male circumcision, according to Mdedetyana, (2019). He continues by saying that a Xhosa man begins to count the years he has lived from the moment he was circumcised. Male circumcision is the basis for the age system in many African societies.

According to Mdedetyana (2019) and Mhlahlo, (2009), it is recognized that an adult Xhosa male who is called a "man" (ndoda) has fulfilled the requirements of the traditional male circumcision process. Men who speak Xhosa and have had male circumcision are considered members of the esidodeni, a group that defines manhood, and are respected and welcomed. Male circumcised ritually have the freedom to marry, inherit from their parents, and engage in traditional customs such as sending gifts to their ancestors (Meissner, 2007). However, a male initiate known as iNkwenkwe is typically treated like a young child. Such a person typically faces rejection from his family and society if he gets married before having ulwaluko (Venter, 2011).

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The origins of male circumcision as a fertility sacrifice offered to the gods in return for an abundant crop may help to explain why most tribal societies refer to these periods as "male circumcision seasons" (Hopkins & Cantalupo, 2008). For instance, male circumcision is performed in Kenya's Bungoma County every other year after the main harvest (Bailey and Egesah, 2006). Every four to six years, the Balante people of Guinea-Bissau and Senegal perform male circumcision rites. The process is done in the rice fields as a sign of reverence for Mother Earth and the Balante people's ancestors (Niang & Boiro, 2007). According to alternative views, male circumcision is a self-sacrificing religious rite performed, in nations where idolatry is prevalent, to identify God's offspring (or, in other contexts, to identify defeated soldiers and slaves after fights). The anti-masturbation movement of the late 1800s led to the widespread practice of male circumcision in more recent times (Povenmire, 1998).

For the Bantu-speaking peoples of sub-equatorial Africa, Marck, (1997), describes the general cultural context of the process. The contemporary cultural environment of male circumcision is now variable and frequently changing among ethnic groups that maintain the practice. Customs were typically concerned with toughening, preparing, and the initiation of male teens into warrior status; their scope was particular and constrained. In those communities, initiation schools—sometimes referred to as "initiation schools" in anthropological literature—served as the traditional social context for male circumcision. Consequently, there was a strong correlation between these and "age-grades," which were age-graded male cohorts whose membership was determined by attending the same initiation schools in the same year.

Male circumcision is seen as a rite of passage into manhood in societies throughout Eastern and Southern Africa where it is practiced (Organization, 2008). Approximately two-thirds of men in Sub-Saharan Africa undergo male circumcision, whereas 84% of Kenyan men participate in this practice throughout numerous groups (Njoroge, 2014). The three stages of traditional male circumcision among the Babukusu of western Kenya are the preparation for circumcision, the actual male circumcision, and the post-male circumcision rites. Especially when it comes to the music, these levels are dominated by elaborate ritual and ceremony elements that are full of logic, symbolism, and significance. The unavoidable, gradual modifications in the form, substance, practice, and performance of Babukusu male circumcision have rendered the once structural and functional features of the surgery less manly. It might be argued that its current function is essentially limited to acting as a cultural identity symbol (Wanyama, 2006).

Meissner, (2007.) stressed that the social status associated with male circumcision is crucial in historically circumcising communities because it is the only way to become a man. In Xhosa culture, a boy's development into a man starts in the first six to seven years of his life. He cannot yet distinguish between good and wrong, thus he cannot be held responsible for any harm he may commit during this period. Older boys are considered more capable of making thoughtful judgments, even though they are still not held fully responsible for their actions. Until they have undergone circumcision, they are not allowed to work, own property, get married, or participate in other social events like feasts and beer-drinking rituals. Uncircumcised boys are not forbidden from having intercourse with women, but this is often the reason why they are turned away (Meissner, 2007). Because of the social pressure to get circumcised, boys who choose not to get it run the risk of being rejected. They face discrimination in a number of ways, including as being called derogatory names, given menial tasks, and utilized as "punching bags" for crimes committed in the neighborhood.

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Vincent, (2008) asserted that males who undergo male circumcision become warriors (referred to as "moran" in Masaai culture), and when their children undergo circumcision, males are regarded as seniors. Comparable social structures have been noted in Kenya's Bukusu and Masaai villages. ((Marck, 1997). Grant et al., (2004), stated that male circumcision is considered essential for becoming a full member of society among the Meru in Kenya. Grant et al (2004), also noted that in Bendel State, Nigeria, rural Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal males to completely integrate into society, they must undergo male circumcision. Niang & Boiro, (2007); Myers, et al, (1985) highlight the relevance of male circumcision as a way to reassert masculinity, given that the prepuce is regarded to symbolize femininity. Furthermore, because male circumcision is linked to women losing their virginity, it is said to balance the cycles of men and women (Niang & Boiro, 2007).

However, it is significant that male circumcision is perceived as "the source of new social relations" (Niang & Boiro, 2007). Relationships between men who have undergone circumcision within their community are highly prized in Senegal and rural Guinea-Bissau, although relationships with their parents among different ethnic groups are not as highly appreciated. Male circumcision is a socially significant issue in relationships with women, as it is believed that women have a substantial influence on men's decisions to get circumcised. In a survey conducted by Lagarde in South Africa in 2003, 13.1% of traditionally circumcised men said that they got circumcised at their partner's request. Regarding the custom of male circumcision among the Xhosa people, Crowley & Kesner, (1990), stated that "no self-respecting Xhosa girl would marry a Xhosa male unless he had submitted to the Umkhwetha (Male circumcision ritual)". The religious implications of male circumcision are demonstrated by Niang et al. Male teenagers and young men undergo circumcision as a blood sacrifice to the soil and their ancestors, as well as a show of devotion to God,(Niang & Boiro, 2007).

According to a study conducted in South Africa, it is unlucky to not get circumcised (Rain-Taljaard et al., 2003). According to a survey conducted in South Africa Rain-Taljaard et al., (2003), many individuals believe that not becoming circumcised brings bad luck. Male circumcision has a philosophical association with death; initiation procedures symbolize "symbolic death, through pain and isolation from society, from which springs new life and rebirth as a new being, a man" (Mayatula & Mavundla, 1997). According to Van Gennep, there are three stages of transition associated with male circumcision: withdrawing from society, changing, and reintegrating into a new role (Alexandra, 2021).

Matumbu, (2019), conducted a research to better understand how cultural practices that function as initiation rites might provide a corpus of pertinent education that aids young people at the beginning of puberty in developing healthy behaviors and attitudes. This study investigates the male circumcision and initiation rituals of the Varembe people in Zimbabwe's Mwenezi region using social scientific methodologies and the phenomenology of religion. Data were gathered through observation and in-depth interviews. The Varembe ethnic group participants consequently supplied a multitude of data.

The participants were selected via non-probability purposive selection and non-probability convenience sampling. Sensitive topic matter meant that the research depended heavily on participant availability and willingness to contribute information. The findings demonstrated that, whether directly or indirectly, the lessons acquired by the initiates during the initiation rites constituted a relevant traditional pedagogy with the power to modify sexual behavior. Initiation rituals can influence moral and social reform in society by guiding young people through important life stages and teaching moral lessons about sex and sexuality. The

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study concluded that by encouraging behavioral change in young people, initiation ceremonies can support behavior-influencing intervention measures.

While the cultural context of male circumcision differs and is constantly evolving among the participating ethnic groups, traditional practices frequently had a tight and specific emphasis, linked to introducing male adolescents into warrior rank and toughening them up. In those societies, male circumcision naturally occurred within the context of teenage rites of passage known as "initiation schools" in anthropological literature. As such, there was a strong association between these and 'age-grades,' a classification of male age cohorts based on attendance at the same initiation schools in the same year.

Makila, (1978), claimed that the Babukusu's male circumcision ceremony marked the beginning of adulthood and the taking on of new responsibilities that were engrained in Bukusu knowledge and tradition. Since oral tradition was the only method of passing on this knowledge, the study focused on the function of "Chinyimbo" in identifying contemporary concerns and using them to teach moral principles to modern Babukusu initiates so they can grow up to be responsible adult members of their society.

Similar to this, songs were employed for a variety of purposes during male circumcision by the Kipsigis of Kenya's Rift Valley. For example, as Hellen, (2016) pointed out, the boys and girls initiators would sing in the morning to show their gratitude and reverence to their moms, fathers, and friends. In contrast to this study, where songs were utilized to educate the initiates, here it was the initiates who sung to gain respect. Hellen, (2016) did, however, continue to observe that songs were utilized to highlight morality among the initiates—a circumstance that the current study aims to explore in relation to the male circumcision rite.

This study supported the findings of Hellen, (2016) who investigated the meaning of the male circumcision rite. To address this, Roberts & Cohen, (2014) examined the goal of cultural heritage discussions connected to the histories of popular music in the UK. This examination emphasized the connection between music and cultural legacy as well as the differences in official definitions based on how different people understand the same piece of music. This research explored the varying interpretations of the same musical piece by different individuals. It focused on the socio-cultural significance of songs related to male circumcision, contributing meaningfully to the ongoing discourse. To examine how heritage was practiced and represented by various organizations and sectors involved in the history of popular music in the UK, Roberts and Cohen (2012) employed ethnographic research and discourse analysis.

Similarly, Reitsamer, (2014) analyzed the meanings associated with cultural heritage and its connection to Austropop in Austria. Utilizing extensive qualitative interview data, the authors highlighted the evolving distinctions between official, vernacular, and collective memories within the realm of the country's popular music. They observed that the prevailing official interpretations of heritage, which focused on highbrow or classical music, were often at odds with alternative perspectives promoted primarily by the music industry. In contrast to Reitsamer, (2014), who examined heritage in relation to popular music, this study specifically addressed the socio-cultural relevance of songs about male circumcision.

Singh, (2012) examined how popular music actively shapes the identity and collective memory of British Asian communities in the United Kingdom. Their music's marginalization in popular music history narratives that are mainstreamed brought to light the gaps in alternative accounts of the musical legacy of ethnically diverse regions. Ottenberg, (2023) points out that the famous Chinese philosopher Confucius had a profound effect on the

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Chinese people's spirit and made a noteworthy addition to global culture. He instructed students in calligraphy, music, archery, chariot riding, and computation the Six Arts rites. Music was the second most important subject in Confucius's view, after morality. He integrated music into his teaching methods and underlined its importance. The purpose of this study was to examine the relevance of songs about male circumcision.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Kegogi Division, Marani Sub-County, and Kisii County. The Kegogi Division is comprised of 2 locations and 3 Sub-locations. Data were gathered for the study from primary and secondary sources. Purposive and snowballing strategies were used to recruit informants. These techniques were helpful because participants had to be found because the population with the characteristics under investigation was not well-known. The interviewees' responses on the importance, modifications, and resiliency of male circumcision were obtained using an interview guide. The majority of data analysis was qualitative. Instantaneous transcription of primary data obtained from interviews was done to ensure its validity was maintained and to facilitate analysis. Determining the uniqueness of the information sources was prioritized. Through historical study, appraisal, and comparison of the gathered data with the available data, this validity was established. After that, the findings were analyzed to either confirm or refute the study's hypotheses. Ethical considerations were prioritized, and data collection began only after obtaining the necessary approvals from relevant authorities.

Results and Discussion

An important phase in the maturation of boys and girls into adults was the Abagusii initiation. Children who were between the ages of twelve and eighteen could be initiated. It was crucial since the initiation process was the means by which the initiates received specialized training and instruction such as sex education. First, the fundamental principles of bravery and nationalism were taught. The youngster would typically initiate the conversation about being initiated with the parents, (KNA DC/KSI/5/1). The parents might or might not concur. The age of the child and the appropriateness of the setting primarily determined whether a girl or boy would be set. Eliakim Onsomu (O. I. 13/6/2015).

The initiates got instruction and training to get them ready for life outside of seclusion during their seclusion. Further training on future gender roles was given to female initiates. This kind of training came from their mothers, grandmothers, and other female community members. Following graduation and parental and grandparental approval, the initiates were regarded as adults and prepared for marriage. At this point, they were capable of managing every task allocated to Abagusii adults. The initiates' bodies were covered in white clay (Ebundo), according to Onchore Ong'era (O. I, 12/07/2015), indicating that they were ready to move on to the next step.

Significance of People's Philosophy and the Male Circumcision Ritual

The researcher wanted to know if songs that were part of male circumcision rituals expressed people's philosophical views. According to Nyamwaka et al, (2013), scholars from Africa who have studied African dance and music traditions have emphasized the importance of dance and music as means of communication and self-expression that aid in understanding people's customs and cultural heritage. According to Nyamwaka et al. (2013), music and dance among

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the Gusii have customary origins and can be used to understand the community's cultural history.

The social and environmental circumstances of the Gusii people influenced the development of intricate dance and music traditions. African music and dance were practiced by the community, which improved harmony and cohesiveness. The research aimed to investigate if the male circumcision process, which involves isolation, aids in the development of communal living skills. It was found that the employment of seclusion rites connected to male circumcision taught people the art of community living. Elawa, (2020) states that the elders held teaching sessions outside the homesteads where they taught the initiates the fundamentals of life. Ochwada, (2007) said that the isolation served as the Abagusii's equivalent of a school, imparting cultural norms.

Ochwada, (2007), claimed that the coming out rite signaled the end of the seclusion phase. In the initiation hut, bandages, sticks, and other personal items were burned as a sign of the end of boyhood, and the initiates were given new blankets in place of their old ones. It was also highly suggested that they should not turn to look back at the burning cottage, since this would surely bring calamity upon the initiates. Covering the initiates with blankets was a surefire technique to keep any possibility of this from happening. They had come out of hiding with crimson lipstick on their faces and new clothes that befitted their newfound prominence.

The Significance of Sexual Life Issues and the Male Circumcision Ritual

The researcher tried to find out if songs regarding male circumcision were used to impart sexuality-related advice. The findings showed that sexual life guidance was being imparted through the music. As to the statement made by Onsomu Bosire (O.I. on July 18, 2015), the songs performed during "okwaroka" served to both delight the attendees and effectively convey the theme concerns of the "Abagusii." Poetic license was employed by the actors to hint at the idea that the interaction was called "hot tea." The artists politely explained the urge for reproduction to the accompanying males, including the initiate, through the circumcision songs.

We get hot tea from hot tea.
Give us hot tea instead of sugar even.
Give us even a tiny bit
—hot tea, please.

The song was intended to arouse sexual desire among the men in the audience. The fact that the initiates were expected to have fruitful relationships following marriage made the offer to have sex telling. The community made it clear to them that they were accountable for this. Kipkorir & Welbourn, (1973), reported that Marakwet male circumcisers were instructed through songs pertaining to sexual matters. The Matumo songs and dances, which friends and family performed at the Kikuyu male circumcision rite, dealt with sexual knowledge, according to (Kenyatta, 2015). This gave the initiates the opportunity to become familiar with the rules and laws controlling social interactions between persons of different genders in order to support a peaceful family life. The message of the Matumo song and dances was to be worthy and respectable members of the community into which they were to graduate.

The purpose of the research was to ascertain whether or not the male circumcision rituals of seclusion served as a vehicle for transmitting sexual teachings. It was found that during private male circumcision ceremony rituals, advice regarding sexual concerns were

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conveyed. Akama, (2017) notes that the children were taught the principles of life after death and kept apart before to their initiation. The Gusii viewed the period of isolation as a sort of rebirth, according to Akama (2017). And the individual was ritualistically duplicated to start over as an adult. As per Koyana, (1980), undergoing circumcision served as a means for individuals to acquire knowledge about adult responsibilities, wherein marriage and sexual education were deemed necessary constituents of manhood. For instance, Pitje, (1950) described the severe actions taken against those who were discovered to have lured girls. They tortured the man after the procedure, saying, "It was the blood of women," when he began to bleed profusely. They heard disparaging comments and were often reminded inadvertently of their "bad behavior." Pedi kids, for instance, were well-versed in sexual matters by the time they reached initiation, when "they are reminded of the sexual behavior that was expected of adults," as highlighted by Delius & Glaser, (2002) in their historical analysis of South African sexual socialization.

It was clear from Delius and Glaser's (2002) research that Pedi youths had a comprehensive sexual socialization process. However, it is still up for debate how efficient this tactic is at discouraging premarital sex and/or pregnancy. However, Ngalande, Levy, Kapondo, & Bailey, (2006) noted that during the brief period that followed male circumcision in Malawi, counseling was apparently given regarding good behavior, genital hygiene, and sexuality. Many subjects were discussed in this period of time.

Self-control and sexual restriction were advocated in some situations. For example, initiates in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau were told that after a long period had passed, they would have to undergo another, more painful male circumcision if they had sex Cheikh, (2007). In the Eastern Cape of South Africa, how one related to women following initiation was important (Vincent, 2007). Promiscuity was viewed as something "boys" performed rather than "men"; elders taught newcomers on sex hygiene and manly manners (Meissner, 2007.) In other ethnic groups, peer education sent rather different messages. For example, the Kikuyu people of central Kenya encouraged recently circumcised boys to immediately engage in sexual activity after their seclusion as a means of displaying their manhood. According to myths, "kwhura mbiro," or "cleaning the soot," or early post-circumcision intercourse, helps wounds heal and prevents illness and death. It is also reported that older men encouraged boys to have intercourse three months after being circumcised (Boyden, Pankhurst, & Tafere, 2013).

The penis will remain soft forever if one does not have sex soon after Male circumcision," claim a few of the 140 Meru boys examined for an alternative study carried out in Kenya Millett, et al (2008). This helped the study's attempts to assess the significance of male circumcision ceremonies. Finding out if the circumcision ritual's "rite of fire" symbolized sexual fertility was the aim of the study. The majority of respondents thought that the male circumcision ritual's use of fire represented sexual fecundity. Nyarango & Griffin, (2018) state that a horizontal stick, which was usually soft, signified a lady, and a vertical stick, which was hard signified a man.

If the fire went out, it would symbolize the neophytes' lack of sexual potential. The ceremonial fire served as another expressive form in "*chinyangi*" and "*chi'abare*". As mentioned on May 30, 2015, by Ogamba Oyaro (O.I.) and Asuma Momanyi (O.I.), drilling was utilized to ignite the ritual fire. On September 13, 2015, Musa Ondieki (O.I.), the patron, asserted that the person in charge of lighting the ritual fire was obligated by regulations stating that drilling should be done in lieu of using a glowing split (*ekegenga*,) or matchbox (*ekebiriti*,), as these methods date back to the time before colonization. As soon as the fire

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started, it needed to be put out right away because waiting may have catastrophic consequences.

Drilling tools included a stick and two slightly bigger "ebirende" (plural) and "ekerende" (single, sharp-pointed sticks,(Akama, 2017). According to Ogamba Sitemba (O.I. on October 27, 2015), drilling began and continued until smoke or embers (*erioki*) developed on the dry cow dung and finally began to ignite. One of the informants, Onsomu Orina (O.I 13/6/15), observed that lighting the ritual fire had significance since it symbolized a man and woman in coitus. As a result, the fire's extinguish symbolized the initiate's sexual fecundity. Thus, fire served as a symbol for life. Its existence so implied that life was ongoing or procreative. The continual fire in the initiates' cottage reminded the newcomers of their expected role in preserving generational continuity and overall community well-being.

According to Musa (omosegi) or Patron (O.I., 13/9/15), the performers thought that fire itself has the capacity for reproduction. The fire gained this prominence because it was seen as sacred and implied the sexual lives of the initiates. After being circumcised, the initiates had entered the sacred life of procreation. The purpose of the study was to determine whether a man and woman in coitus was symbolized by fire, the ceremony of male circumcision. The results showed that a man and woman in coitus were symbolized by fire rituals associated with male circumcision. Nyarango, (2011).)observed that drilling was the method used to start the ceremonial fire.

The Significance of Male Circumcision Ritual and Instilling of Wisdom/cultural indoctrination

Finding out if song played a role in passing down wisdom during the male circumcision ceremony was the aim of this study. The findings demonstrated that singing along with the male circumcision ceremony accomplished its intended goal. These findings corroborated Mbunga, (2013), assertions that profoundly wise songs exist concerning rainmaking events, harvesting dances, male circumcision ceremonies, marriage rites, and dances for success in combat. For example, the Song "*Mboera ee*" taught the novice that, soon after his circumcision, his main priority was preparing for marriage.

Mboera ee

- 1 .Mboera ee ee ee
Mboera richambe ngende
Ing'a omogoye mboere richambe
2. Boera ee ee ee
Mboera mbwango inde ngende
Ing'a omogoye mboere richambe
3. Kururia ee ee ee
Kururia abanto baigwe
Ing'a omogoye mboere richa

Meaning

- 1.Tie for ee ee ee
Tie for me, my sleeping mat so that I go,
Give me a string with which to tie my sleeping mat.
2. Tie for me, please, because I'm in a rush.
Give me a string so I may secure my sleeping mat with it.

3. Drag her huh eh eh Drag, give me a cord to tie my sleeping mat with so that everyone may hear.

The significance of procreation and the institution of matrimony were emphasized. The purpose of the study was to determine whether songs associated with male circumcision rituals were utilized to teach participants or initiates social skills., Nyamongo Orina (O.I On June 20, 2015.) noticed that songs concerning male circumcision were being used to teach social skills to people. This finding was consistent with Kang'ethe's (1981) observation that, traditionally, iconography, ritual, dance rhythm, and ceremonial song lyrics were used to teach people social education. As an artistic endeavor, each person in the audience and the performer(s) fulfilled a distinct function inside the ritual.

This participation was essential to the Abagusii perspective. Usually, costumes were used to do this; when employed, they functioned as multimedia for entertainment and interaction. In addition to other common general conventions of *okwaroka's* performance, the engagement mechanisms of "okwaroka" included communal entertainment and collaborative artistry through the use of multimedia and paralinguistic resources such gestures and other body movements. Material culture so enhanced the artistic quality of the performance. The "esimbore" acted as a medium via which the novices received the teaching materials. The performance of the song made cultural expectations clearer, especially for young guys. One of the informants contacted for the study, Ombwori Onchonga (O.I. 25/07/2015), mentioned that the Abagusii equated male circumcision to the modern educational system. The male initiates were taught that their responsibilities went beyond the Abagusii Community. It was the rationale behind pushing the novices to visit new locations.

Allow a spear to be crafted for him, specifically this particular spear
He will battle in Kipsigis territory; he will fight in Kipsigis land
– this one
– and Maasai land, and Maasai land
– this one. And a strong shield, and a thick shield
– this one.

It appeared as though the listed communities were being incited to fight against the newcomers. Ombwori Onchonga (O.I, July 25, 2015,.) confirmed on that the song's intention was to arouse the beginners' spirit of adventure. Conversely, the song demonstrated the values that the beginners had been instructed in. They were seen as having the courage, bravery, and persistence to face the challenges posed by their just acquired rank. During the male circumcision songs performance, the men escorts noticed that the escort males positioned themselves close to the initiates and even closer to each other.

Throughout the performance, not a single performer exited the circle. An onlooker would have concluded that the performers were passive as a result of this. After sprinting forward for a short distance, one of the escort guys returned to join the others. As a result, it is possible to infer that the circle the escort men formed symbolized the society's completion and emphasized how highly the performer's community respected each person's life and integrity. He continued by saying that the circle symbolized the performers' complete devotion to their gods (*engoro*) and ancestors (*chisokoro*). The circle represents the spiritual continuity of the society. Human existence, according to the Abagusii, is cyclical; a person is created, goes through the stages of communal growth, and then dies to return as a newborn to

the realm of their ancestors. The circle constructed begged both *chisokoro* (ancestors) and *Engoro* (God) to recognize the noble relationship that they, the performers, held with the world of the living dead. Akama (2017) asserts that the performers were imparting to the newcomers the value of genuinely loving and respecting their community by forming the circle.

In this case, being a part of the community meant getting closer to the other members rather than isolating oneself. The overall arrangement confirmed the perceived connections between the theme-level emphasis on social norm compliance and structural coherence. Mayieka Asuma (O.I, On August 14, 2015,.) stated that the social norms and values were created to emphasize the ideas of harmony, support, and agreement. They included obligatory affection for everyone and respect for the community's elders. During "okwaroka," the female dancers employed a song that was intertwined with explicit dance moves that conveyed a deliberate sense of humor or gravity. This successfully conveyed the attitude of the listener regarding the primary spoken message. Consequently, the audience's modeling and vocal evaluation of the performance , exemplified by applause, gestures, and spontaneous participation—became important aesthetic markers of the performance's quality and the effectiveness of the communication process as a whole.

However, in order to impart his distinct personality on the performance and govern the audience's reaction, the literary artist had to exercise constant control over it. In the end, the artist's hidden objectives of comedy, lightheartedness, satire, and/or moral seriousness won out, and these carefully crafted theme elements were what allowed those purposes to become apparent and intelligible to a direct audience. When the "esimbore" performance began, there were yells and ululations. Since the style consistently exuded energy, these elements remained constant. The only time women were permitted to ululate was when the males accompanying them let out a terrified cry. The happy moment of the escort to the neophytes' homes perfectly captured the attitude of the performance for the occasion. The atmosphere of the play was further enhanced by cries and ululations (KNA /DP/6/7:).

The happy celebratory mood was broken by the women's ululations and the escort men's interjections of crying. The reason for the festive mood was because the "chinyangi chia abare" performance symbolized the community's social growth and development. The women dancers' pangas and the escort men's spears, long poles, and rungus represented the performers' emotions of excitement and security. The Abagusii community was made secure and happy by male circumcision, which fulfilled the community's ethos. These objects' carrying represented what the actors thought the newcomers would be like. They were expected to preserve the community's values, customs, and etiquette. For both the artists and the audience, carrying these props was an enjoyable, engaging, and extremely inspiring experience.

Another symbol that was employed was color. Ugwu, (2022), claims that color in African culture has symbolic importance in relation to significant events or situations. The Abagusii were similar in that they valued color. In an artistic performance, the colors were intended to convey specific concepts. The Gusii were a people who shared a common concept of color and its connotations. The Abagusii artists' use of color in okwaroka relied on pictorial communication by combining its effect speed and freedom from verbal boundaries in order to accomplish quick and efficient communication. The colors yellow, green, and grey were among those employed by the Abagusii to express different meanings in the context of "okwaroka." When these colors were combined, the community created significant interpretations (Twigs).

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The female performers' use of "egwagwa" (flowers) to adorn small twigs was a significant expressive technique. It was observed that the creeping plant the female actresses wore had green leaves and yellow blooms. According to Bitutu, (O.I. 15/6/15), the color yellow stood for resolve and hope (*ogosemeria*), whereas the color green symbolized life (*obogima*). She also said that farmers had hope for a prosperous agricultural year, the next year because of the golden color during the wet season, when most trees flowered. The performers' green and yellow decorations inside the "chinyangi chi'abare" performance referenced the community's hope.

The celebration of male circumcision showed how determined the society was to preserve its cultural traditions. Concurrently, yellow also served as a signal for periodic events. After September and October, it was generally wet, making it an ideal season for circumcision. The yellow flower is thought to represent the start of the New Year because farmers started preparing their gardens for the coming year's farming endeavors as soon as it appeared. That represented hope and resolve because of this. The color green was selected to represent hope. As stated by (Dzobo, 1988).

African worldview is replete with symbols. African symbols are "sources of insights into African orientations to life." He further argues that "...symbols are used to communicate complex knowledge" (86-7).

"Okwaroka" was laced with symbols meant to represent the Abagusii community's customs. The phrases "ekebwe" (singular), "ebibwe" (plural), and "egesimba" (singular) denote animals in the wild that eat poultry. Because of their reputation for hiding, it might be challenging to see these predators during the day. During the seclusion period, these traits were connected to the neophytes' manner of life. Without any input from the community, the newcomers were free to hunt and slaughter domestic poultry. On the other hand, the public was not meant to witness the novices. They were invisible to the naked eye; one could only feel their presence. The goal of the solitary lifestyle, which exposed the novices to a variety of difficulties, was to toughen them and prepare them for new ventures in the next stage of life.

Grass was one of the ritual symbols used in the performance of "chinyangi chi'abare". As observed, once the neophytes had entered the cottage, "omosegi" planted two grass stumps on either side of the gate that led to the cottage. Mayieka Asuma (O.I, 14/08/2015), noted that the grass was an indicator of the presence of neophytes in that homestead. Besides that, the grass also served as a caution to passers-by especially women from using that particular entrance. It was considered taboo for women to use the same gate with the neophytes.

As stated by Ombati Nelson (O.I on September 22, 2015), *esuguta* was thought to have a connection to the wellbeing of beginners. It was thought that in the future, the neophytes would be healthy and give birth to robust and healthy offspring if "*esuguta*" was properly hydrated and demonstrated its health by growing vivid green shoots. Should it wither, it would represent the novices' bleak destiny. As a result, caring for *esuguta* required fervent attention to ritual needs. The purpose of the study was to determine whether lessons regarding family responsibilities were imparted through male circumcision rituals including seclusion. Therefore, lessons regarding family responsibilities were given through the male circumcision ritual of the seclusion rituals. It is considered mature to be nonviolent and to treat everyone with respect. It was expected of a man to engage in conversation when

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problems arose. Multiple partner relationships were strongly discouraged. The goal was to create solid, long-term relationships that might result in marriage.

According to Ombati Nelson (O.I. on September 22, 2015), he informed his girlfriend that the wrongs he had done to her would not happen again since he comprehended humanity at the time (after initiation). Among these bad habits were beating her, smoking daggers, and using alcohol (Wood, 1998; Wood, 1998). According to Lugira, (2009), the youth were taken by the elders to retreats that were separate from their homes, where they were taught about community and family obligations. For instance, they are trained to become adults who will sacrifice their lives for the good of their nation through initiation.

Three phases were found by Genep, (1960) through an analysis of the ceremonies associated with the stages that people go through in life: separation, transition, and inclusion. He saw that the purpose of the ceremonies of separation was to cut off the initiate from their former surroundings or world. For example, the rites of incorporation exposed a girl to a new world and isolated her from her father and male community members. According to Genep, the purpose of all these rites was to alter the initiates' self-perception, so bringing about a transformation in their life. Similar observations are made by La Fontaine, (1985), who states that the meaning of the terms "boy" and "man" depends on the society in issue.

La Fontaine's theories align with those of Richards, (1982), who provided extensive details on the socialization process of the Bemba Girls in Zambia, including guidance on how to submit to their husbands. According to Richards, the purpose of the "*chinsungu*" initiation rite for girls was to prepare them for motherhood by transforming them into young ladies. Change was meant by these rites. According to Ochola, (2022), a Luo becomes a true adult by ongoing engagement and instruction in many institutions using a variety of techniques like proverbs, riddles, and real-world examples.

This researcher indicates that the Luo men and women were required to behave in a specific way regarding their duties as fathers and husbands, and as mothers and wives, respectively, even though circumcision was not stressed in their socialization process of initiation. His opinions were important because they showed how differently society socialized people to play specific roles based on their gender. One general conclusion drawn from initiation rites was that, according to most writers, these ceremonies defined people's roles according to their sex. As a result, their contributions served as helpful starting points for examining how these rites affected Abagusii men and women and how they saw their place in society.

The researcher set out to see whether the seclusion ceremonies of male circumcision were utilized to subject the initiates to a variety of difficulties. The results showed that the male circumcision rite of seclusion served as a means of exposing the initiates to a variety of difficulties. According to Lugira, (2009), the initiates are segregated by the elders in order to teach them the fundamentals of communal living. According to Niang, & Boiro, (2007) the time spent in isolation is like a "incubation period" for the initiates' new perspectives, behaviors, and personalities, all of which are vital for the dissemination of cultural information. In actuality, this was intended to use humiliation, bullying, and deprivation to harden the lads. This was probably a holdover from earlier times when male circumcision was associated with toughening, preparing, and initiating male teenagers into warrior status. The challenges faced during the retreat were likely meant to simulate those the boys would encounter in the real world and help them develop emotional control. (Niang & Boiro, 2007; Vincent, 2008).

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Nyamboki (O.I, 01/10/2015) stated that the goal of isolation was to develop the following qualities in people: strength, courage, endurance, and fortitude. In the successful project, these values were instilled more through exposure to deprivation and a strict system of punishments and criticisms that were intended to be endured stoically than through explicit instruction. During their training, initiates were taught virtues such as endurance, manliness, chastity, courage, and respect. Part of the instruction involved physical abstinence. For example, according to Momoti, (2002), "it was common for a young man to be seriously beaten for any offense, even if it was trivial or otherwise" among the initiates. Occasionally, the initiates would test their levels by lying nude on chilly grass.

The importance of the male circumcision ritual and its role in promoting community welfare

The results of the study proved that a crucial component used in the performance of okwaroka was the male circumcision ritual ceremony of the song. "Esimbore" was a rite associated with the occasion it commemorated and was revered. The informant, Mayieka Asuma (O.I) 14/08/2015, stated that the execution of "esimbore" served as a sign of the "okwaroka" ceremony. Anyone who chance to walk by and hear the song performed was undoubtedly made aware of the event.

The performers, with a tone that reflected the pride associated with male circumcision, emphasized the notion that those who underwent the procedure had attained the status of a 'real man.' This assertion reinforced the Abagusii cultural beliefs that girls should evolve into ladies while boys should mature into men. As noted by Makila (1986), the male circumcision ceremony acted as a significant marker for the transition from childhood to adulthood, embodying the wisdom and responsibilities linked to this new life stage. Through the practice of male circumcision and the rigorous training that accompanied seclusion, a clear cultural distinction between childhood and adulthood was established. The informant, Mayieka Asuma (O.I 14/08/2015), further elaborated that the singers of the song "Esimbore" underscored the fact that the neophytes had been equipped with virtues that enabled them to get on well with other community members.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the fire ceremony of male circumcision served as a reminder to the initiates of their role in the community's well-being. Furthermore, the ceremonies of fire associated with male circumcision served to remind the newcomers of their role in the community's well-being. This result is consistent with Nyarango's (2011) observation that lighting a fire was a symbolic act that symbolized a man and woman having sex. The initiates were therefore ready for their responsibilities and contributions to the community.

Conclusion

The pre-colonial context of the Abagusii is examined in this chapter. The Abagusii had attained a certain degree of political, social, and economic order, as this chapter also showed. Circumcision of the male was an important social ritual. An essential stage in the maturation of boys and girls into adults was the Abagusii initiation. Twelve to eighteen-year-old children may be initiated. It was required because the initiates received specialized training and courses, including sex education, through the initiation procedure. Initiates were taught the fundamental principles of bravery and patriotism. A philosophical belief was expressed through male circumcision. Understanding people's customs and cultural history is aided by male circumcision.

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Rituals of male circumcision helped people learn how to coexist. It was found that participating in seclusion rites connected to male circumcision taught people the art of community living. During teaching sessions outside the homesteads, the elders gave the initiates an introduction to life's essentials. Boyhood ends with the burning of bandages, sticks, and other personal items in the initiation hut at the end of the seclusion time, when the initiates receive new blankets in place of their old ones.

Male circumcision was also instituted to guide sexual behavior, provide knowledge and cultural indoctrination, and improve community well-being. As the chapter has shown, a major ritual in the evolution of Abagusii was male circumcision. A man had to become a circumcised man in order to climb the political and economic ladder. Socially, a man could not marry or discover the community's secrets until he had undergone male circumcision. Male circumcision was a multi-step procedure that engaged nearly every member of the community and was not just a one-day event.

The following chapter looked at the modifications made to the male circumcision procedure in Kegogi's Abagusii community between 1895 and 1963, when they were under colonial rule. The study's framework was derived from the social learning theory. Social structures and practices were considered to be among the major changes brought about by cultural evolution and change.

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Appendix III: List of People Interviewed

NAME	AGE(YEARS)	DATE OF INTERVIEW	PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1. Asuma Momanyi	68	30/5/15	Gesure
2. Bitutu Omwenga	60	15/6/2015	Ragogo
3. Eliakim Onsomu	70	13/6/15	Nyamare
4. Mayieka Asuma	73	14/8/15	Nyamare
5.. Musa Ondieki	69	13/5/15	Nyansakia
6.. Nelson Ombati	60	22/9/15	Gesonso
7.Nyamongo Orina	58	20/6/15	Nyakeburoni
8. Ogamba Oyaro	79	30/5/15	Gesure
9. Ogamba Sitemba	86	17/10/15	Bumburia
10. Ombwori Onchonga	69	25/7/15	Bumburia
11.. Ongera Abogo	80	12/7/15	Riamosorori
12. .Onsomu Bosire	70	18/7/15	Tabuka
13. Orina Onsomu	68	13/6/15	Gesunura.