

SOCIAL CONCEPTS IN THE INITIATION RITUALS OF
THE ABATACHONI: A HISTORICAL STUDY

BY

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DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a Degree in any other University.



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This Thesis has been submitted for Examination with my knowledge as the University Supervisor.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents Mr. Justino Wanyonyi and Mrs Cheristina Namukhosi; my Wife Violet Khaikwa and my children Zakaria Mutoro, Rael Khayanga and Kevin Toili. It is also dedicated to all who always toil in pursuit of knowledge.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DC - District Commissioner
- DO - District Officer
- EALB - East African Literature Bureau
- EAPH - East Africa Publishing House
- EAYMF- East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends
- Ed(s)- Editor(s)
- KBC - Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
- KLB - Kenya Literature Bureau
- nd - No date
- KNA - Kenya National Archives
- O.I - Oral Interview
- OUP - Oxford University Press
- PC - Provincial Commissioner
- PWPA - Professors of World Peace Academy
- USA - United States of America.

ABSTRACT

The study discusses the social concepts articulated in initiation rituals among Abatachoni between 1750 and 1946. An examination and analysis of some outstanding concepts is made with respect to ritual practices pertaining to circumcision, okhulichana, age-set systems, post initiation nomenclature, symbolism, militarism and smithing. In treating the movement of the above concepts from clan to clan and region to region, an attempt is made at tracing the origin, development and eventually spread of such concepts among Abatachoni and their neighbours.

Furthermore, the study argues that the changing times, human agency and the natural environmental factors affected the movement and function of the concepts in initiation rituals. It also illustrates the mutuality of influences among Abatachoni and their neighbours. These influences engendered various cognitive and speculative dimensions in the communities.

This work contends that in the colonial era initiation ritual ideas obtaining among Abatachoni got disrupted. As a consequence, certain ritual concepts dwindled while new ones emerged. The examples of those whose values and applicability

dwindled include militaristic and pre-colonial nomenclature systems. But those values which emerged include the circumcision concept of olupao and Christian nomenclature systems.

In going about the analysis, the study examines the data procured from the field and libraries within the structural-functional theoretical paradigm. It is the contention of the thesis that such paradigm is apt because of its provision for ritually based models. These models facilitate the thesis' treatment of religious, ritualistic and symbolic structures.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CONCEPTS IN
INITIATION RITUALS OF THE ABATACHONI

(1750 - 1946)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects what was in the proposal. Included are items such as the general background on social concepts in initiation rituals, review of related literature, statement of the problem as well as the theoretical framework and the methodology which I employed in the field. The chapter, therefore, prepares us about what to expect in the rest of the study.

1.2 General Background on Social Concepts

Numerous concepts of great historical value exist among Abatachoni. These concepts are in rituals such as initiation, funeral, birth and marriage. The concepts are not only confined to the written categories, but also include all fundamental assumptions like those referred to by Ogot (1982:38) as 'unarticulated ones, the silences in the old narratives which made the activities of a particular society intelligible to its own members'. Thus, concepts in the cited rituals collectively form thoughts, beliefs and abstractions of the various perceptions of Abatachoni. These affected the

way members looked at themselves and the world around them over the years. In a way, these concepts affected the world-view of Abatachoni.

Among the rituals cited above, concepts in initiation are crucial. They include circumcision, okhulichana¹, age-set systems, post-initiation nomenclature, symbolic concepts, militarism, maternalism and smithing. The movement of these concepts from one clan to the next and from one region to another shows how the concepts started, moved and eventually spread among the members of Abatachoni sub-ethnic collectivity.

Movement of ideas under which this study falls, is a relatively new field in history and seems to have taken prominence only from the 1960s. Scholars like T.O. Ranger, Henry A. Mwanzi and Atieno Odhiambo are among a few who have contributed to this field. In this study, the perception of movement of 'ideas' or social concepts refers to the way concepts, beliefs and assumptions of Abatachoni emerged as the members moved and interacted with their kith and kin, on the one hand, and their neighbours and outright foreigners on the other. These concepts, beliefs and assumptions were

¹Okhulichana: it is a post-circumcision initiation ritual which hinders the youth among Abatachoni into adulthood. Also see Chapter three below.

transported by people from one place to another in the processes of migrations and settlements. Hence, the perception of 'movement' connotes this transfer and dispersion of various concepts, beliefs, values and assumptions from specific regions or directions to other new areas or directions in a historical perspective.

Such movement of ideas has been a process dating back to the pre-colonial period. It continues even up to the present moment. The movement has, as it traverses a great time span, undergone changes brought about by human and physical environmental factors. These changes have either strengthened or weakened the movement of certain social concepts in the initiation rituals.

1.3 A Brief Background of Abatachoni:

Abatachoni are one of the eighteen sub-ethnic groups that constitute the Abaluyia ethnic community found in Western Province of Kenya.² The former emerged mainly from some Kalenjin ethnic communities' interaction with various groups of the Bantu (Osogo 1966; Were 1967b; Wandibba, 1985). Osogo identifies only nine clans while Wandibba identifies thirty-

²Other Abaluyia sub-ethnic communities are: Babukusu, bakabras, Abanyala (Nabakholo), Abawanga, Abamarama, Abatsotso, bedakho, Abesukha, Abanyore, Abashisa, Abalogooli, Abatirichi, pamarachi, Abakhayo, Abasamia Abanyala (Port Victoria or Abaongo) and Abatura.

seven. In this study, however, about thirty-nine clans are identified.³ It is among these thirty-nine clans that the study examines how and why concepts in initiation rituals moved.

Among Abatachoni, initiation of their youth is carried out during every even year between August and December. It was not always like this. Previously, especially in the pre-colonial period, initiation was an annual exercise. The oral accounts maintain that initiating annually among Abatachoni started when their ancestors were still in Misri. A detailed analysis of this Misri issue is found in the next chapter. Since 1942, however, the pattern changed and the even year initiation period was adopted (see chapter five). This change from annual to biennial initiation periods with a stress on even years was vital in the concept of time and its implications. Ritual performance, whether carried out annually or biennially forms the basis of all clans in this study.

Basically, these clans speak Olutachoni, the dialect of

³The clans include:- Abangachi, Abasamo, Abakafusi, Abasioya, Abasang'alo, Abachimuluku, Abaluu, Abawande, Abamarakalu, Abahabichwa, Abakubwayi, Abamuhongo, Abakobolo, Abachambayi, Abakabini, Abacharia, Abachewa, Abasonge, Abaengele, Abasianiaka, Abayumbu, Ababichu, Abakusi, Abasamba, Abalukulu, Abakamukong'i, Abakamutebi, Abachebukwa, Abanyangali, Abamalicha, Abameywa, Abamakhanga, Abatulu, Abachibino, Abamakhuli, Abasituyi, Abakibeti and Abachemai.

Abatachoni. But those bordering the neighbouring communities speak the dialects of those neighbours. Such dialects include Olubukusu and Olukbaras which belong to Babukusu and Abakabras respectively. Whether living where they form the majority or where they form a minority, all Tachoni clans undergo the ritual called Okhulichana.

Abatachoni are mainly found in Bungoma and Kakamega districts of western province. In Bungoma, they occupy most of Webuye, parts of Kanduyi, Sirisia, Kimilili, and Tongaren divisions. In Tongaren, these people live among other communities. This is because Tongaren is a settlement scheme. In Kakamega, Abatachoni occupy North Kabras and Chekalini locations of Lugari division.

The Abatachoni of Webuye division are separated from those in Lugari division by River Nzoia. This river is crucial for initiation rituals of these people. Hence in the study of social concepts, River Nzoia has a part to contribute.

Neighbours of Abatachoni include Babukusu to the north and west, Abanyala (Nabakholo) and Abakabras to the south and south-east, respectively. The settlement schemes of Tongaren and Lugari with varied communities in them form the eastern neighbours. All these neighbours have a part to contribute

to the research (see appendices i and ii for maps showing the areas inhabited by the Abatachoni).

1.4 Review of Related Literature

The paucity of literature on the movement of ideas in the pre-colonial period makes the review work in such a field very difficult. Most of the available literature is basically anthropological. But as is expected, an anthropological study does not use a historical approach to enable one to see how concepts originated and later on moved among communities.

Langley (1979) has identified initiation rituals among the Nandi. But her description of the rituals though detailed is anthropological. It lacks the incisiveness and profound analysis of a historian. She fails to analyse ritual concepts of the dance, Kimusanyit structure and the gazing at stars. This same pitfall is discerned in Daniels (1970;117-173). His discussion of the Kipsigis initiation concepts is anthropological and does not investigate their origin and eventual movement.

Wagner's (1949) extensive research among the Abaluyia ethnic community is rewarding. His description of various rites of passage among the Abaluyia exposes the value of concepts among members. The acknowledgement that initiation rites have streams of ideas with different origins (Ibid:315)

is a thin reference to the movement of ideas. But he does not delve into the very concepts to establish their origins. It is for this reason that there is need for a historical study to be carried out into the concepts of these people.

Sangree (1966) and Merritt (1976) studied initiation rituals of Abaluyia. Sangree discussed circumcision and age-groups among the Tirikij while Merritt identifies ritual concepts of okhulichana, esitabicha⁴ and symbolism among Abatachoni. However, they do not trace the origin and movement of these concepts. This leaves a gap that this study examines.

Some historians have partially tackled social concepts. Hull (1972) is one of them. He argues that music and dance add deeper meaning and greater sensitivity to such rites as of puberty, circumcision, marriage, sowing, harvesting and death. However, he neither concentrates on the dance and music to analyse the meaning and sensitivity contained in them, nor does he identify a particular dance and music to use in demonstrating the concepts contained and how such concepts spread and affected people in a specific area.

⁴Esitabicha: It is a sacred place on an ever flowing river in swampy area where Abatachoni carry out their post-circumcision initiation rituals of passing initiates through small huts before being dipped in water. See Chapter Three.

Herring (1978) argues that concepts of centralised states among the Luo started from their cradleland in southern Sudan and moved into the Shillukland and the Kingdom of Bunyoro Kitara. The similarities in nomenclature of political institutions supports this. Thus reth, rwath and ruoth for chief, jago for assistant chief and bang for village elder are found in both the cradleland and the land of the Shilluk and of the Banyoro. However, his perception of movement is thin. What emerges as a dominant process is the interaction of people in the centralised states with their neighbours more than the influence from Sudan.

Ranger (1969) gives a feel of how social concepts move. He argues that concepts of various types moved from one region to the next through diffusion and involved human agency. For instance, utani concept moved from inland and developed at the coast of Tanzania. Islam, Swahili and later Christianity and moved from the same coast into the interior. The mbeni dance developed at the coastal towns of Tanganyika in the colonial era and moved into the interior of Tanganyika and beyond into Malawi and Zambia.

Furthermore, Ranger (1975) graphically discusses the Beni dance. Tracing its origin at Lamu on the Kenyan coast in the 1890s, Ranger discusses the movement of Beni into Tanzania coastal towns of Tanga and Pangani in the same decade. In

Tanzania, the dance moved into Tabora and Ujiji before crossing into Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. In Kenya, it reached Ukambani, Kikuyuland and Nairobi.

Clerks, ex-soldiers and businessmen were sponsors. The three categories had money and administrative prowess to run the dance. Dancers wore European military attire and played military music. Thus, the dance symbolised African adaptation to European values. This adaptation was manifested mainly in the youth. This could mean that the youth adapted themselves to colonialism faster than did the adults. All this took place between 1890 and 1960.

From 1960 the dance declined. Colonial administrators and muslim reformers advocated for its dissolution. The introduction of Western education and dansi further crippled the dance. Sponsors turned their attention elsewhere leaving the dance in both financial and administrative problems.

This is good treatment of the movement of social concepts. However, this is entirely in the colonial period. Therefore, there is a gap in the pre-colonial period. One would wish to see concepts that moved in such regions before the advent of colonialism.

Abuso's (1980:144-154) treatment of the movement of

social concepts among Abakuria is limited. He argues that totemism, the piercing of ear lobes and iron smithing moved into Bukuria from outside. He, however, does not discuss how and why the concepts moved. Hence there is still room for the study of the movement of social concepts to be carried out among Abakuria and their neighbours.

Atieno Odhiambo's discussion of the movement of social concepts (1976) equally show some limitation. Liganua Village in Alego division of Siaya district is so small a space that when Western concepts of dress, capacity of violence and religion move in from Mumias, there is no further demonstration of the movement. The concepts remain fixed at one place. It would have been interesting if he had allowed enough room for concepts to move to other areas as well.

Mwanzi (1977) identifies several social concepts which moved among various sections of the Kipsigis in the pre-colonial era. These include the concept of arap, age-set systems, matrilineality, iron smithing and the office of orgoiyot. Some of these concepts evolved among the Okiek while others among the Gusii sections and moved to permeate the entire Kipsigis community. To this extent, it is a good demonstration. But he does not show how smithing moved to other sections of the Kipsigis community and beyond. He is also silent on whether the practice was a preserve for experts

who zealously guarded their skills from other members.

Historians who study the pre-colonial history of Abaluyia hardly pay any attention to the movement of concepts. Osogo (1966) concentrates on the origins, migrations and settlements of various Abaluyia sub-ethnic groups without even identifying specific concepts that developed in time perspective to characterise the entire Abaluyia. But in his article (1970), Osogo attempts to trace the movement of some concepts. These include mtemi, omwami and smithing which moved into different parts of East Africa from elsewhere. He argues that smithing was brought into the land of Abaluyia from Ethiopia by Abang'ale clan.

The clan is mainly found among Abasamia sub-ethnic group of Busia district. However, Osogo believes that the clan exists by different names among other parts of Abaluyia. In spite of the attempt, Osogo's treatment of the social concepts is limited. It would have been more rewarding had he brought out the intellectual importance of such concepts.

Were (1967a; 1967b) ignores the area of social concepts among Abaluyia. He discusses origins, migrations and settlements of the various Abaluyia ethnic communities. On concepts of political and military institutions that he identifies, he neither traces their origins nor movement. This

leaves a gap yet to be filled.

Makila (1978) identifies some concepts among Babukusu. These include okhulichana among the Bamwalie section of Babukusu. To him, okhulichana resulted from the interaction between Bamwalie and the Kalenjin who dwelt in their neighbourhood. However, he does not show how the concepts moved from the area of Mwalie to other clans of Bamwalie that he identifies. Furthermore, he does not give the historical period when Bamwalie adopted okhulichana. Hence his treatment of concepts is incomplete in a historical sense.

Makila contradicts Osogo (1966), Were (1967a; 1967b) and Wandibba (1985) on the clans of Abangachi, Abahabiya, Abasang'alo and Abasamo. While he classifies them under Babukusu, his colleagues rightly put them under Abatachoni. This conflict renders his information on Bamwalie shaky. It is among such clans that this study is carried out to resolve the issue.

The above reveals that much is required to make the history of ideas among Abaluyia felt. This urgency is echoed by Were (1985) and Simiyu (1985). Simiyu urges on research to be carried out to establish why Abashitsetse clan of Abawanga, Bayaya, Balunda and Bafumi clans of Babukusu bury the dead in a sitting position. This gap still exists.

Wandibba's (1985) history of Abatachoni mainly concentrates on the origin, migration and settlement. On social concepts, he identifies okhulichana, pastoralism and nomenclature as resembling the Kalenjin ethnic communities. He, however, does not discuss the movement of these social concepts into Abatachoni. The gap is what this study endeavours to fill.

1.5 Statement of the Problem:

This study is an important contribution to the history of ideas and examines social concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni between AD 1750 and 1946. These concepts include circumcision, okhulichana, age-set systems, post-initiation nomenclature, symbolic concepts, militarism, maternalism and smithing. It is the contention of the study that the movement of these concepts from clan to clan and region to region demonstrates how the concepts started, moved and eventually spread among the members of Abatachoni.

The study contends that such movement was always affected by changing times, human agency and the natural environmental factors. Also acknowledged in the study is the mutuality of influences among neighbouring communities. These phenomena are guides in the study as it endeavours to investigate the movement of social concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni. Such guides will lead us in demonstrating how

initiation concepts affected, and got affected by the neighbouring communities. Central to the investigation of the study are the following objectives.

1.6. Objectives:

The study aims at satisfying four basic objectives:-

(a) To assess the contribution of the neighbours of Abatachoni to the movement of social concepts among the people under study.

(b) To analyse the concepts in their initiation rituals and demonstrate how these reflected the people's world-view in a historical perspective.

(c) To explain how concepts in initiation rituals underwent a process of dispersion and gained acceptance by the various clans of the Abatachoni.

(d) To assess the impact of colonialism and Christianity on the movement of concepts particularly those relating to initiation rituals among Abatachoni.

1.7 Scope of the Study:

This study undertakes an inquiry into the origin and movement of social concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni. Though 1750 AD is indicated as the earliest starting point in the study, the study, however, remains

flexible. For in tracing the origin of these concepts, it goes into the period that marked days when the ancestors of Abatachoni were still in their original homelands at Misri which is equated with the present day Egypt, or at Sirikwa and the surrounding areas. The second chapter discusses at length the Misri issue. The significance of 1750, however, is that it roughly serves in indicating the period when Abatachoni were staying at Mwalie and the surrounding areas (Were 1967b; Wandibba, 1985). It was around Mwalie that the community acquired a Bantu dialect.

1946 on the other hand serves as a convenient date to end our investigation and analysis. But like the earlier date, this year is not rigidly adhered to. Where necessary the investigation goes into the present period. The year itself, however, comes soon after the end of the second world war. It also marks the end of kinyikeu age-set. More discussion on age-sets is found in the second and third chapters. By this time there was more influence from the colonial situation into the concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni. This influence gradually distorted the pre-colonial value of initiation concepts. It is this latter change that is left out in the study due to the limited time required for a master's dissertation.

1.8 Rationale of the Study

This study contributes to the field of the history of ideas in Kenya. The long time disregard of such history has rendered the study of African history incomplete. The neglect of the area of ideas is unfortunate for it plays into the hands of racist historians. Such historians as Trevor-Roper and Coupland (cited in Ogot, 1968: 1-2) might capitalise on the neglect of the pre-colonial history of ideas and assert that there was actually no history of ideas before the coming of the white man.

The study of the social concepts as carried in initiation rituals among Abatachoni is a vital way of demonstrating how these people looked at life at different times in their history. The choice of the community by the researcher is based on his experience and therefore, familiarity with the people given that he himself is an Omutachoni. This enabled him to establish a working rapport with the informants more easily during the actual research.

Finally, carrying out research among these people is the best way to salvage information that is perhaps best known to elders. The fact that these elders are dying fast necessitates that urgent steps be taken in collecting the information for storage and further analysis. In this way, the future generation of the community and the rest of Kenyans

and other Africanist scholars will have a wide body of evidence and analysis to inform their curiosity and research interests in the area.

1.9 Research Premises:

The study is based on the following premises:

(a) The neighbours of Abatachoni, significantly contributed to the nature and movement of social concepts among the latter community.

(b) The constant process of interaction facilitated the movement of social concepts in initiation rituals from one section of Abatachoni to the next.

(c) The human and natural environments were also contributory to the definition of the nature and trend of the movement of social concepts transmitted in initiation rituals among Abatachoni.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework or paradigm consists of theoretical formations highlighting a discipline's major concerns and procedures which specify how evidence is to be gathered when investigating a discipline's problems. It also avails a way for sifting through data so as to obtain evidence that constitutes proof for resolutions for such problems (Achola, 1990:2). Theories, therefore, guide

questions to be investigated and methods to be used in understanding the investigations. Furthermore, theories are not a constellation of prescriptions for the solution of practical problems but rather tools for gaining a deeper understanding of the world (Ibid:7).

In this study, several theoretical paradigms are discussed with a view to identifying a better one for use. These include evolution, diffusion and structural-functionalism. The paradigms are either anthropological or sociological in orientation. However, used properly, these paradigms are of immense use to numerous historical studies.

Evolutionary paradigm emerged in the nineteenth century and is generally credited as the earliest of the three paradigms listed above. One of its pioneers was Auguste Comte who lived between 1798 and 1857. He believed that the history of mankind and human society exhibited a simple evolutionary sequence. This view was later elaborated upon by Herbert Spencer in England (Ibid: 10ff). The two scholars received more disciples who further articulated upon the paradigm.

The evolutionary paradigm was directly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution. He posits that, just as living organisms evolved cellular divisions, human communities became more complex through the increase of

individual members. Therefore, as communities became larger there occurred a complex division of labour (Ibid;10-11).

Herbert Spencer and his disciples based on the above Darwinian theory to describe three stages of the evolution of human communities. The first stage, antiquity, was characterised by small bands of hunters and gatherers. This was followed by the secondary agricultural phase where there was food provision. Finally, the industrial phase was characterised by functional specialisation and reliance on machine power instead of human labour (Ibid).

The paradigm, therefore, posits that evolution follows a straight line. It starts with a simplistic and elementary stage of antiquity and proceeds to a more complex and advanced industrial society. This view assumes that only the less developed societies go up the ladder until they reach more complex and industrial levels. This theoretical paradigm was employed in various studies of the history of certain African peoples and their institutions. Discourses on the Kipsigis (Mwanzi, 1977) and the Pare (Kimambo, 1969) bear out the statement. The two scholars competently used the paradigm to demonstrate how particular institutions evolved among their respective areas of study.

Criticisms levelled against the evolutionary paradigm

intimate that it served as a leverage for the colonialists. The European colonialists employed cultural Darwinism embedded in the paradigm to justify their colonisation of non-Caucasian races, especially in Africa. During the colonial process, the white race posed as superior and claimed a God-given responsibility to 'civilise' others. These racial overtones subsumed in the paradigm render it unpalatable in this study.

Additionally, the paradigm's developmental stages fail to explain social anomalies such as the survival of highly traditional religious rituals in modern industrial communities. This very weakness makes the paradigm unfit for use in this study since it is the ritual concepts that are the main focus. Using the paradigm might not demonstrate how the concepts contained in initiation rituals among Abatachoni permeated through various sections of its community and helped to crystallise the community's world-view.

The paradigm of diffusion is considered next. It emerged in the first years of the twentieth century due to the inadequacies of the evolutionary paradigm. The former posits that various culture complexes develop at different times in different parts of the world and later spread to other parts of the earth. Thus, the paradigm was useful in tracing the spread of various cultural complexes and noting how they were reworked upon by the receiving societies. Most early European

scholars relied on this theoretical paradigm in their studies among African indigenous peoples. Such scholars included Seligman C.G., Ranger T.O. and Davidson B.

However, the diffusionary framework is besmirched with racial overtones associated with the hamitic theory. Seligman (1939) for example, asserts that all monumental developments in political, social and economic institutions in Africa south of the Sahara were ushered in by a people of the Caucasian race (Ibid:18). He further alleges that Africans learnt the idea of iron working from the same Caucasoid race who lived in the Northern part of Africa and especially in Egypt. This Caucasoid race was designated 'Hamites' by Seligman and his European colleagues.

Recent studies however, demonstrate that all monumental advancements in pre-colonial Africa were brought about by the black people (Diop, 1974: 1-10; Gray, 1970:76-79; Rodney, 1989:41-80). Diop demonstrates that the root of the word 'ham' from which 'Hamite' is derived is in Egypt. There, the Egyptians called their country Kemit which meant black in their language. He further argues that in Hebrew Kam means heat, black or burned. Hence, Diop submits that the inhabitants of ancient Egypt, were symbolised by their black colour kemit or 'Ham of the Bible. The whites, therefore, whitened, 'hamites' so as to deprive the Blacks of their moral

advantage of the Egyptian civilization and other African civilisations.

Furthermore, some recent studies also demonstrate that concepts did not always move from Egypt southwards. Indeed, there were others which moved from the land of the Great lakes and systematically spread to North Africa and beyond (Mwanzi, 1987;4-8). Hence Seligman's 'Hamitic myth' is hollow and racist to the extent that it has no room in this study.

Similarly, the one sidedness and conquest allusions encapsulated in the paradigm of diffusion is misleading. As this study demonstrates, concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni were not acquired through coercion. More-so, the source was not necessarily from outside the community. Thus, using diffusionism with the above short-comings is to partly subscribe to the racist overtones contained in the paradigm. This explains why the paradigm is not employed in the discourse on Abatachoni.

The inadequacies in the above paradigm resulted in the formulation of the structural functionalist paradigm. This was also a modification of the evolutionary paradigm and it dominated social science theory and research between the 1940s and 1970s. Emile Durkheim who lived between 1858 and 1917 was probably the first influential structural-functionalist. He

wrote a powerful work on the role of religion in the maintenance of social order (Achola, op cit:12).

Durkheim's work was reinforced by those of Talcott Parsons in the 1940s and 1950s. The latter scholar went beyond religious institutions and examined the functions of several major institutions for the wider society. He postulated that for every society to survive, at least four functions had to be performed.

The first function was the need for adaptation in the co-existence between society and its physical environment in terms of the provision of food and material comfort. The second function was about goal attainment. This entailed the pursuit of agreed upon aims and objectives of society both ideational and material. The third function concerned integration or management of conflict. The final one concerned pattern maintenance and it refers to the preservation of social institutions and social order (Ibid).

Some criticisms have been targeted at the structural functionalists for their emphasis on consensus order and stability as the most important goals of a society. The critics posit that the emphasis renders the paradigm conservative and anti-change or development (Ibid;12; Fagerlind, 1983:15).

However, Turner's models have injected more dynamism into the structural-functionalist paradigm. In doing so he has explored more fully the cultural and historical context of symbolism by drawing examples from the Ndembu people of Zambia. He stresses the dialectics of ritual and its tensed unity (Shorter, 1972; 139-140 ff). Turner's models are appropriate for the current study because they offer relevant tools for the analysis of the various symbols contained in Tachoni initiation rituals.

The tools in the models are evident in Turner's four observable structures within ritual. These structures are as follows: the symbolic structure, the value structure, the telic structure and the role structure. Bearing all the four observable structures in mind, therefore, the meaning and development of social concepts contained in initiation rituals among Abatachoni can be discussed in a historical time-span. In the process of ritual analysis, Turner's 'field context' concept is very useful. The significance of the field context is to demonstrate that the rituals are not just a network of static social entities but a process and a configuration of changing and developing elements which generate a historical perspective (Ibid;140-141).

This study employs the two ritual categories of Turner. The first category is that of the life crisis while the second

one is the redressive ritual. He posits that life crisis rituals accompany every change of place, state, social position and age. This classification was influenced by Annold Van Gennep's work on rites of passage in which life crisis rituals are discussed. Hence Turner's discussion on rites of transition is marked by three stages, namely: separation, margin or limen and aggregate (Turner, 1967: 94 ff). The importance of these stages is to demonstrate that as individuals experience the symbolic transition, they also change their status and enter new ones which are usually higher than the previous ones (Ibid:95).

Life crisis ritual model is relevant to this study because it facilitates the analysis of movement of social concepts such as those embodied in initiation rituals. As initiates are transformed in the ritual process, concepts which come into contact interact and get cross-fertilised leading to a transformation of the entire society. This is because the rituals serve as transformation media not only of initiates but also adults who usher these initiates into adulthood. By interaction with other members, the entire society gets transformed.

Furthermore, life crisis rituals afford us a good model for the study of the transformation of the Abatachoni. Phase one of separation is akin to the Tachoni migration from their

various sources of origin. The liminal period coincided with the initial settlements and bantuisation of the community while the aggregation period was characterised by the final emergence of the community as an entity within the broader Abaluyia ethnic group.

Turner's redressive ritual model is equally useful to this study. According to this model a calamity or social crisis can be redressed to restore the stability of an individual or a group. Such calamities may be natural, affecting the entire society, or a sickness befalling an individual who thereupon becomes a symbol of tensions within the community. After a period of divination and details of micro-history established, a ritual is performed to make hidden tensions explicit and restore the normal condition of the victim (Shorter, 1972:41 ff). This model is used in Turner's contextual terms of a process.

Redressive ritual model enables this study to delve into the movement of the concepts of circumcision and smithing. Individuals who graduate into these two practices are usually seized by violent sicknesses that are redressed only after divination and initiation of the victims into their respective crafts. Thus, both life crisis and redressive ritual models are appropriate for the study. Their anthropological nature will be off-loaded and the inquiry cast in a logical

historical manner. This has been demonstrated by Shorter (1972) and Feierman (1974).

1.11 Research Methodology

This study analyses both primary and secondary data which I collected. Primary sources include oral interviews and archival material. In carrying out oral interviews I took great care in selecting elderly people who could recall the history of initiation rituals among Abatachoni. Special attention was paid to elders who took part in initiating the youth in the traditional way. Such elders combined the knowledge of what they heard from their ancestors with what they saw and did during their own time to ably respond to various issues that I raised in the interview.

Elders enabled me to know how concepts spread from clan to clan and from region to region in a time perspective. This study benefitted from interviews carried out in about all the clans of Abatachoni. It analyses and interprets data which I obtained from the interviews with informants.

Some clans are found in both Abatachoni and the neighbouring communities. Interviews were carried out in both communities to establish the direction of the movement of initiation concepts among the clans. Such clans include Abasonge, Abaengele, and Abaluu. Interviews which I carried

out here determined whether these clans have similar concepts about initiation. If so, the study delves into the origin and spread of these concepts among the clans from these different communities.

7 Questionnaires (see appendix iii) facilitated the conduct of my interviews. But these questionnaires' application was flexible depending on the knowledgeability of and the patience of response by the interviewees. Occasionally interviewees were led through the entire gamut of open-ended questions listed in the questionnaire. This approach, however, proved tiring to some informants. Indeed, in the field some interviewees requested me to end the interviews prematurely.

To off-set the above snag, an informal conversational approach was employed with respect to such informants. This approach was suitable when the conversation was tactfully directed to the area where the informants had more information in. To establish such an area, informants were first allowed to give a general account of their clan history. From it, probing questions were raised. I found results from this informal approach fruitful. Informants willingly gave information and where necessary demonstrated how certain concepts came about.

Archives were also useful in this study. Archival

materials kept in the Kenya National Archives had a lot of information on concepts in initiation rituals. Both administrative and missionary records kept were of great help to me in interpreting the colonial and Christian influence on Tachoni initiation. This enabled me to analyse both oral and archival data to determine the movement of initiation concepts among Abatachoni particularly during the colonial period.

To further facilitate the study, some basics of socio-linguistics were employed. This involved examining roots of certain terms connected with initiation ideas among Abatachoni to determine their origin. Such words include okhulichana, esitabicha and chebutalang'i.⁵

Secondary sources which I used included text-books, maps, radio programmes, seminar papers, magazines, journals, unpublished theses and dissertations. Thus, this study also made intense use of library work to augment the material procured in the field. Libraries at Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi coupled with those located in the city were indeed very useful to the study.

⁵Chebutalang'i: It is a ritual word which emerged from Abatachoni's distortion of Cheptailiel which in Kalenjin means God. In the ritual context, however, chebutalang'i signifies a lion. See chapter four below

1.12 Problems Encountered In This Study:

Several difficulties affect this study. The first one is in the realm of periodisation. This is especially in the pre - 1800 AD. During this period, it is difficult to establish accurate dates. Most informants on social concepts during this period only narrate events as they occurred without giving dates. Therefore, to obtain dates, earlier researches carried out in the same region by scholars like professors Gideon S. Were (1967b) Simiyu Wandibba (1985) and Christopher Ehret (1972) are consulted.

Between about 1800 and 1900 AD, age-sets and age-grades are used in periodising events.⁶ These age-set and age-grade dates are provided by elders who were born about the 1890s and later. Their periodisation is based on generalisation rather than accuracy and precision. The precision and exactness in dates emerged in the colonial era. Therefore, research in the colonial years has the advantage of ascertaining dates from the written documents.

The second problem emanates from the secrecy inherent in the initiation rituals. Some concepts are zealously guarded by initiation ritual custodians. These custodians prohibit discussions of such ritual concepts in public. Consequently,

⁶See Appendix four (iv) for information about the age-sets and age-grades in the above period.

some elders have only hazy ideas about certain initiation ritual concepts. This weakness was manifested in the field. Some informants evidently failed to explain terms like okhulichana and chebutalang'i. Indeed, in this study only one elder was able to clearly explain okhulichana and relate it to the ritual process. Consequently, I used his information to probe for more information from other informants.

This limitation tells a lot about the pre-colonial African rituals. Unless researches are carried out about them in good time, time will come when all who knew about them will die with the information. This was in fact experienced by this researcher. In one of his areas he was referred to an elderly informant who was actually on his death bed. Hence no interview was carried out on him. This kind of eventuality is a bad and terrible blow to the history of ideas.

The third problem concerns the memory of informants. None of them was born earlier than 1890. Therefore, for the period from about 1890 backwards, this study mainly counted on the information which was passed on to the informants by their ancestors who were long dead. Some of this information has become faint in the memories of the present informants. In certain cases it is absolutely forgotten. This draw-back negatively affects this study in certain concepts. The continued performance of the rituals, however, makes such

weakness be milder because what is ordinarily forgotten is salvaged in ritual songs.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 THE EMERGENCE OF ABATACHONI TO ABOUT 1750 AD

2.1 Introduction:

This Chapter traces the origin of Abatachoni and their concepts in initiation rituals. It will also analyse the impact the migration from Sirikwa to Mwalie had on these concepts. Thus, in essence its concern is to provide a foundation from which the later chapters will develop.

The chapter bases its theoretical assumptions on Victor Turner's model. As the chapter discusses the emergence of Abatachoni about 1750 AD, the developments are equated with the ritual stages of separation, liminality and aggregation.

2.2 The Origin of Initiation Concepts Among Abatachoni

This sub-section is predicated on the fact that concepts can not be treated in a vacuum. On the contrary, they are associated with humanity whose members are actors and vehicles for transmission and enlargement. Hence as it traces the origin of specific initiation concepts, this sub-section simultaneously ties such concepts up with the origin of the community. The locus for this sub-section is between Misri and Sirikwa as are reflected in Tachoni traditional accounts.

Abatachoni trace their origin from Misri. They claim further that this Misri is equivalent to the present day Egypt. From Misri, they went to Abyssinia (Ethiopia). While in Ethiopia, some members moved to Kadum, a place allegedly named after their leader. Whether this same Kadum is where the present Khartoum stands is not clear. What appears clear, however, is their encounter with Nubians in that direction. Thus, it can be safely deduced that Kadum was in the Nubian land. This group went further southwards into Congo before some of its members retreated to Ethiopia to rejoin their other kinsmen who were left behind. From Ethiopia, the entire group crossed into Kenya through Lake Maliki (Turkana) area, hence to Sirikwa and its neighbourhood where they stayed for long before dispersing (Wambasi, 0.1 1991; Laisikwa, unpublished text).

Before proceeding further with the oral testimony of Abatachoni, it is worthwhile to examine how various scholars consider the Misri origin. Were (1967b:62-3) dismisses the Misri origin as a myth emanating from the biblical influence. Instead of Misri, he suggests the present day territories of Karamoja and Turkana districts. But this dismissal does not seem valid. For as the oral accounts of Abatachoni trace their route from Misri through Turkana, it is difficult for one to allege that Abatachoni mistook Turkana or Karamoja for Misri. Furthermore, the custodians of these accounts were

mainly traditional believers who not only dissociated themselves from biblical influence, but were also illiterate. Therefore, to allege that they were mainly under biblical influence does not hold water.

The Misri origin is equally articulated by other Bantu and Nilotic groups (Were, 1967: 83-4; Ochieng, 1975a 48-54; and Diop, 1974:181 ff). Among these varied communities were committed traditionists, Muslims and Christians. That they all ascribe to Misri as their origin, therefore, connotes that seeking a mere biblical explanation is not enough. After all, there are many other significant places such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the Bible that could as well have been mentioned as original homelands. Yet these places were not mentioned at all.

Ochieng' (1975a:48ff) posits that Egyptians ordinarily refer to themselves as Misriyim and to their country as Misri. The name probably derives its origin from the descendants of Mizraim, one of the children of Ham. Ham, also known as Cham or Kam, therefore, originates in Egypt. It means black or burned in Hebrew (cf Diop, 1974:7ff). Thus, ancient Misriyim, were Black people from whom Abatachoni claim descent.

It is probable, therefore, that Abatachoni acquired the Misri origin independently of the Bible. The scarcity of rain

and water, poor sandy soil, poor harvests and constant starvation forced them to migrate from Misri (Were op cit: 62). These reasons may allude to the drought that emanated from the desiccation of the Sahara. The desiccation may have forced Abatachoni among other numerous black inhabitants to move southwards. Therefore, instead of dismissing Misri origin, it is fair that historians delve deeper into the history of ancient Egypt to examine the role it played in the peopling of Africa (Aseka, 1990:9). That, however, is beyond the concern of this study.

In the land of Misri, Tachoni ancestors acquired both male and female circumcision. Most oral accounts state that the first circumciser was a woman who used a stone to circumcise (Masibo, O.I, 1991). But how this woman went about the process is difficult to establish. What is stressed in the accounts, however, is that it was a very long time ago. Moreso, the accounts show that the first tools used for the ritual were crude ones.

Herodotus supports the antiquity of circumcision in Misri and Ethiopia. He posits that circumcision in Egypt and Ethiopia was practised from the very first (cited in Mwanzi, 1977:104-105). Here Herodotus' very first is interpreted to mean 'since the very beginning of mankind'. This view possibly supports Abatachoni's claim about the antiquity of their

initiation ritual.

Abatachoni, therefore, were initiating their youth all the way from Misri to Sirikwa, Mbayi and Sengeli. Their first age-sets were in Misri and subsequent ones took place en route to Sirikwa, Mbayi and Sengeli. But the age-sets in Misri seem not to have been cyclic. One informant (Namutala, O.I 1991) argues that the cyclic age-sets were first incorporated by the Tachoni ancestors around Ethiopia. This notion is bolstered by Ehret who postulates that in the middle pre-southern Nilotic period, about the first millenium before present, the southern Nilotes were directly in contact with Cushites who passed to them cyclic age-set systems, circumcision and clitoridectomy(Ehret, 1972:78;79). The above is further clinched by the Tachoni's historical links with the Kalenjin who in turn came from the southern Nilotes that Ehret tackles here. As for circumcision and clitoridectomy, the Tachoni ancestors were already practising them before their encounter with the Cushites.

The following section will examine the concepts which were initially in initiation rituals when the Tachoni ancestors were at Sirikwa, Mbayi and Sengeli. These three places are vital in the discussion of social concepts in initiation rituals. For it is at these very places that members claim to have started crystallising their initiation

concepts.

2.3 Sirikwa, Mbayi and Sengeli

The general location of these places is in the present administrative boundaries of the Rift Valley. Masibo (O.I, 1991) suggests that Sirikwa was in the present day Trans Nzoia while Sengeli and Mbayi were in the present day West Pokot districts, respectively. Wandibba (1985:20), on the contrary, posits that Sengeli was in the area around Chereng'anyi (Cherang'anyi) hills in Trans-Nzoia district while Sirikwa was in the area of the present Uasin Gishu plateau. These two versions demonstrate the difficulties in trying to pin-point with precision the areas where Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi were. These snags partly ensue from the fact that the places existed in the remote past. Thus, the ancestors who lived at the places are all dead and the living ones can only remember hazily what they were told about the actual locations.

The other difficulty connected with the above names is based on the source or origin. Some scholars argue that Sirikwa and Sengeli (Sengwer or Seker) were groups of people (Ochieng, 1975b:5;7). But who exactly these people were is not established. Equally enigmatic is the question of their origin. Mwanzi (1977:27) posits that the Sirikwa were originally Bantu speakers. Sutton, (1976:50-51), on the other

hand, emphasizes that the bulk of the Sirikwa was of the old Kalenjin who built 'Sirikwa Holes' This, he argues, does not mean that those scholars who associate the Sirikwa with the Maasai are wrong. Indeed, he agrees that some Sirikwa members were incorporated with the Maasai giving rise to those Maasai clans in both Kenya and Tanzania that claim a Sirikwa origin (Ibid). Sutton's admission about the closeness between the Sirikwa clan which is found in Tanzania with the Sirikwa of Uasin Gishu suggests that the two probably shared a common origin. But Makila (cf1978:55) holds that Silikwa (Sirikwa) was one of the sons of Mubukusu, the eponymous founder of Babukusu. However, Wandibba disputes this view (Personal conversation, 1992). Rather than accepting Makila's view, Wandibba argues that Sirikwa was a place where the Sirikwa people stayed before dispersing to various places. These different interpretations attest to the manifest difficulty in ascertaining the identification of the Sirikwa.

The differing interpretations of Sirikwa (Silikwa) notwithstanding, one fact stands out clearly. That most communities claiming a Sirikwa (Silikwa) connection once lived or still live in the general geographical area of present day Uasin Gishu plateau. For instance, it is probable that the ancestors of the Sirikwa clan among the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania lived here. The cradleland of the Sirikwa group from whence they migrated and settled in the general Uasin Gishu

Plateau still remains an intriguing issue among historians. Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding the Sirikwa's disappearance are not clearly understood. Be that as it may, this general area was a crucible which enabled the interaction of various communities of both Bantu and Nilotic origin resulting in a cross-fertilisation of social concepts. Some of the concepts that emerged ultimately influenced the world-view of Abatachoni.

Sengeli (Sengwer or Seker) also presents difficulties in its identification. While Ochieng', (1975b;57) posits that the Sengeli or Sengwer were a group of people whose identity is not clear, Wandibba (1985:19-23) demonstrates that the Sengeli were a group of Kalenjin speakers (Barwa Basengeli). His sources further state that Sengeli was the leader of the group that was at the place known as Sengeli.

It is only Mbayi that does not have many contradictions. It is just the name of a place. According to Makila (op cit:139), Mbayi was the name given to this place by Babukusu for their pastoralism (Babayi). The Tachoni oral accounts agree with Wandibba's sources which claim that Mbayi was a place where they settled for some time before migrating from it. Whether at Sirikwa, Sengeli or Mbayi, Tachoni ancestors spoke a Kalenjin language.

At the above places, Tachoni ancestors stayed for long. Their neighbours included the Pokot and Sebei in the north, the Keiyo and Tugen to the east, the Uasin Gishu Maasai to the south, the Kony to the west and Babukusu to the south west (Wandibba, op cit:25). The period referred to is probably between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries (ibid). By the end of the period, the Kalenjin speakers, including Abatachoni had completed the process of differentiating into various dialects.

During the differentiation into various dialects, the Tachoni ancestors maintained the eight cyclic age-set systems as they were practised among the Kalenjin neighbours. These age-sets are sawe, koronkoro, kipkoimet, kaplalach, kimnyekeu, nyonki, maina and chuma. Sawe was always the first in the cycle and chuma, the last respectively (Ehret, op cit:100). In Turnerian terms, this marked a liminal period, a period of instability, of ambiguity and of lack of structure (Shorter, 1972:142). Turner further posits that this stage marked the need for structure. It is that later structure that heralds the characteristics of Abatachoni.

Some of the thirty-nine clans of Abatachoni acquired the art of circumcision during this period of differentiation. They were Abahabiya, Ababichu and Abakamukong'i. The three obtained the art from the Kalenjin ethnic communities.

Abahabiya are more articulate about the exact origin of their art than the other two.

According to their account, Abahabiya's eponymous founder married three wives. Their names were Kolati, Muruli and Mumbwa. The last wife, Mumbwa, was a Tugen. Children born in her house were seized by the spirit of circumcision, omusambwa kwa obusebi.

These children were taken to the diviner who, after diagnosing them, advised that they be initiated into the art of circumcision. Since the art was still unknown among Abatachoni, the children were taken for apprenticeship among their maternal uncles, the Tugen. Thus, the movement of the art of circumcision reached Abatachoni at Sirikwa through the maternal line (Muse, Khakame, O.I 1991). The accounts of Ababichu and Abakamukong'i are similar to the one of Abahabiya. The only difference is that the two are not clear from which direction of the Kalenjin section these acquired the art. Before the emergence of these three clans as circumcisers, however, initiation candidates among Abatachoni were circumcised by Kalenjin experts.

The spirit of circumcision manifested itself when the victim fell violently ill and trembled convulsively on hearing the song that was usually sung when initiation candidates were

led to the homesteads for the actual operation. The patient was sent to the diviner, who after his diagnosis, declared his findings. If the ailment was due to the spirit of circumcision, the diviner said so.

Consequently, the affected person joined a team of circumcisers as an apprentice. He first applied powdered dust, lifū to the candidate's penis. After some time the apprentice got promoted to a holder, omutili, of the candidate's penis during circumcision. Finally the apprentice after having demonstrated good skillfulness and dexterity at his work got promoted to be the actual cutter, omusebi. (see appendix v). The omusebi was the chief circumciser and head of the team. Therefore, to become a circumciser one underwent three stages (Masinde, O.I, 1991). And this art cured the victim.

The above process from the attack by the spirit of circumcision to the apprenticeship is a demonstration of liminality in the redressive ritual. As the individuals affected undergo the instability and lack of structure characterised by mystical movements, rapid individual and social changes occur. The completion of such movements and changes restore stability to the society in general and individual in particular. It is this ultimate change that ushered in the art of circumcision among the above clans.

Directly connected with circumcision is the idea of smithing. For it was through smithing that tools used during circumcision rituals were obtained. Thus, it is crucial that this study traces how the concept of smithing spread among Abatachoni.

At Sengeli there was iron ore. Clans which stayed at the place for long smelted the ore and forged tools badly needed by members. Such tools included circumcision knives, amahalo or chinjembe, jingle bells, chinyimba and bangles, ebitili. Circumcision knives were used by the chief circumcisers during the actual operation. Jingle bells and bangles on the other hand, were used by the initiation candidates, abasinde, in readying themselves for the day of the final ordeal, the day when relatives and friends would come and witness as the candidates underwent circumcision.

Spears and arrowheads were also forged for the passing out ritual, okhwalukha. Therefore, iron smithing among Abatachoni started at Sengeli. In fact, the Tachoni name for iron slug, lisengeli whose plural is amasengeli was derived from the area.

The clans that claim having been at Sengeli include Abayumbu, Abamweya, Abameywa and the Abachikha cluster which comprises Abamuhongo, Abakobolo, Abachambayi, Abakabini and

Abacharia. These clans developed the art of smithing at Sengeli. This is confirmed by Wandibba (1985:19). According to him Abatachoni knew the art of iron smithing at Sengeli and were engaged in the manufacture of such implements as hoes, stabbing spears, necklaces, anklets, knives and bells. Thus, Seligman's (1939: 136) allegations that people of the Black race learnt the art of iron smithing from his mythical "Hamites" does not make sense among Abatachoni.

Abahabiya admit having acquired the idea of iron smithing from the Kalenjin of Chereng'anyi while Abaluu got it from the Abateremi section of the Kalenjin. This probably was as a result of interaction of different human actors representing different social categories (Shorter, 1972:140). Thus, the eponymous founders of these clans married wives from the Kalenjin of Chereng'anyi and Teremi, respectively. Children born of the marriage were attacked by the spirits of iron smithing, omusambwa kwa obwiranyi. The spirit manifested itself in the form of an ailment. Symptoms which were experienced included eyes smarting and shedding tears profusely, skin sores, violent dreams, lack of appetite, body weakness and general discomfort (Muse, O.I, 1991; Burt, 1980: 44). This condition, like that of the spirit of circumcision, ushered in ritual liminality with its characteristic lack of structure within the patient. Hence, need arose to consult the service of a diviner.

Diviners usually interpreted the ailments as proof that ancestral spirits were grumbling because the patients had ignored practising the craft of their ancestors (Burt, ibid:45). The diviners accordingly advised the next of kin of such patients to prepare them for the craft of iron smithing. That signified slaughtering bulls or ram to appease the ancestors, and making medicinal bracelet which was given to the afflicted patients. Finally, special hammers were given to patients to connote their acceptance of the art. Sometimes, just the possession of these working tools could cure the ailment and restore the patients good health.

However, in other cases, the spirits of smithing never got satisfied until patients took up apprenticeship. In such cases, the patients were taken to established smiths for training. The apprentices initially performed simple tasks like feeding the fire with charcoal, then working the bellows and finally forged implements (Nangulu, 1989 : 47 - 48). By the time an apprentice had mastered the craft, his ailment was already cured.

Once the apprentice qualified, a smithy, erumbi, was built for him by other iron smiths who also provided him with necessary working tools. Thus, the Abahabiya acquired the concept and art of smithing from the house of the second wife known as Muruli. This was a maternal influence. Though no

woman among Abatachoni practised smithing, their sons inherited the maternal idea and practised it without any inhibitions (Muse, O.I, 1991).

Abahabiya and the Sengeli clans acquired the concept of iron smithing at the same time during the period of differentiation. The root of the concept was at Sengeli. And as members of Abatachoni moved from Sengeli, Şirikwa, Mbayi and other areas, they interacted with other Tachoni members living in those areas with the result that the idea and concept of iron smithing also spread to new areas.

Smithing among Abatachoni did not originate or spread mainly due to the ritual of initiation. It was the urge to forge various implements of a wider utility that was the force behind the emergence of the practice. The manufacture of initiation tools among these people came in later. Before then, Abatachoni relied on circumcision tools of the Kalenjin.

Circumcision knives were very special. They had double razor - sharp edges and blunt tips. This model insured against unnecessary harm befalling the initiation candidates during the operation. Therefore, only clans recognised as custodians of smithing traditions and skills were entrusted with the responsibility of forging these knives (Khakame, O.I, 1991).

Another concept, embodied in initiation rituals, which emerged at the locations of Sirikwa, Mbayi and Sengeli was esitabicha. This was a sacred place at a swampy area, olurende on a perennial river. The selected place was cleared and arch - like huts built. Initiates circumcised two to four months earlier were passed through these huts in the final coming out ritual. Initiates were dipped into water adjacent to the huts in a process known as beating water, okhupa amachi. This was an equivalent of present day Christian baptism by immersion in water. At the end of the process but before leaving the place, an initiation ritual priest, omubiti crowned the occasion by counselling and blessing initiates and the entire community.

The omubiti commented on the weather and prognosticated its effects on vegetation, the impending relationship of Abatachoni and their neighbours, and on general conduct of the community as a whole. He admonished members against evil deeds, and prayed unto God, Cheptailel, to unleash wrath unto the perpetrators of evil. Above all, he prayed for good health of the entire community, the people's fertility in begetting children after marriage and for peace to prevail in their country.

To articulate the above ideas, a great deal of reflection on Tachoni cosmology was undertaken. To facilitate this

meditation on the eve of the passing out day, an omubiti and his aides were reserved a house where they spent the night meditating and making consultations among themselves (Waluchio, O.I, 1991). Thus, whatever the omubiti articulated at esitabicha had been analysed and abstracted to such an extent that only the relevant and useful information came out. His words governed the discipline which the esoteric knowledge meant to guide the members till the next initiation.

Exactly why esitabicha came into existence at Sirikwa during the period of differentiation is difficult to establish from the oral accounts. All the informants agreed, however, that the first omubiti, came from the clan of Abakusi. He was known as Vigeyo (Makhanu, O.I, 1991). It would appear that Abakusi developed this concept and are respected to this day for being its custodians. Whenever they enter esitabicha, other members give way for Abakusi to ritually counsel and bless the other members.

From Sirikwa the concept of esitabicha moved to Sengeli and Mbayi as the members of Abatachoni came into contact. At Sengeli there was a big esitabicha. It was allegedly bigger than the one at Sirikwa. Hence, this esitabicha at Sengeli¹

¹See Chapter four under the emergence of Sangaya between 1850-1895.

is remembered in songs of the passing out ritual (Masibo, O.I, 1991). All these early ebitabicha (pl.) were simple and uncomplicated.

The process of passing initiates, abafulu, through ebitabicha earned Abatachoni a name. The name came from the neighbouring Kalenjin communities at Sirikwa. Exactly what the name was, is difficult to establish. Some informants who form the majority claim that the name was Tabichan. One informant, however, claims that it was Kitabichan (Namutala, O.I 1991). According to both sources the name meant people of esitabicha. This argument is bolstered by the fact that both versions have had their root Tabichan. And Tabichan very closely resembles Tachoni, as it is today.

There is yet another source which posits that Tachoni was derived from Kalenjin words Tai Nyon. The words mean 'go and come back' (Laisikwa, unpublished text). This too was coined from the way Abatachoni left their homes in the morning for esitabicha and returned in the evening. Hence, it is suggested here that the name Abatachoni has its root in the ritual of esitabicha. This dates back to the sixteenth century when the Kalenjin community had differentiated into various groups like Bok, Bongomek, Kony and Keiyo.

2.4 The Migration From Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi to Mwalie and Its Environs:

When differentiation into various dialects was complete, Abatachoni started dispersing from Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi via different routes until they eventually reached Mwalie and its surrounding areas. This dispersal is equivalent to Van Gennep's view of ritual separation from the previous status (Shorter, 1972:141-142). In the case of Abatachoni, they were separating from their companions at the above places and going to other stations en route to Mwalie and its neighbourhood

Precisely when the dispersal took place is not established from the oral accounts. However, Were (1967a; 1967b) and Wandibba (1985:18-25) suggest the period between the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Were (1967b:62-63) posits that between 1598 and 1625, the earliest Kalenjin immigrants were already settled in Mt. Elgon district. He further argues that between 1571 and 1598 the advance party, chetoto, of Abatachoni had arrived in their present country. If by 'the present country' Were means the land around Mwalie, then it is possible to conclude that Abatachoni were not moving en-masse but in small groups. This is why the number of early settlers at Mwalie kept increasing gradually. This conclusion is supported by the oral accounts.

The accounts claim that from Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi

going towards Mt. Elgon, Abatachoni continued with concepts contained in initiation rituals as they were practised at Sirikwa. Places remembered to have been initiating grounds include Cherang'anyi, Kabusirwa (Moi's Bridge) and Chichitale (Kitale). The group which went there initiated over three age-sets before leaving (Nakitare, 1990:5). Taking one age-set to be equivalent to twelve years, one can conclude that Abatachoni stayed at Chichitale for over thirty six years before migrating.

From Chichitale, however, things changed. Some members of Abatachoni quarrelled among themselves causing Abahabiya clan to defect. The latter moved and settled at Kamasielo on Mt. Elgon. Other Tachoni clans that had hitherto moved with Abahabiya were, therefore, left without circumcisers (Muse, O.I, 1991).

The Abakamukong'i took a different route behind this group. The Ababichu, on the other hand, followed the route which passed through Nandi, Wanga, and crossed the river Nzoia before reaching Mwalie. In their group were Abakusi, and Abasamba. These two groups continued the practice of circumcision (Masinde, O.I, 1991). But for Abakamukong'i, the knife of their circumciser broke its handle before they reached Mwalie. Hence, they too lacked circumcisers for a short distance to Mwalie (Manyorore, O.I, 1991).

Taking the period from Sirikwa, Sengeli, and Mbayi to Mwalie to be about three centuries, it is possible that the former Abahabiya group reached Mwalie when no living member was initiated. Clans that are remembered to have been in the group include Abarefu, Abakafusi, Abasioya, Abaluu, Abayumbu, Abamakhuli, Abatulu and Abachikha cluster. Some of these clans on dispersing from Chichitale moved to Kinyorus and entered Eastern Uganda. They moved along the Uganda side of Mt. Elgon.

Those members of Abatachoni who followed the Kenyan side of Mt. Elgon reached Mwalie after passing through Kamukuywa, Chesamisi, Kimilili, Kibingei, Kabuchai, and eventually Mwalie. It is possible that this group was the one which reached Mwalie before the rest. Thus, they were there as early as the latter half of the sixteenth century (Were, 1967b:63).

Abameywa and Abamweya remained on Mt. Elgon for a much longer time than the rest. While on Mt. Elgon, they were still one clan (Ndala, O.I, 1991). Their stay on Mt. Elgon had vital consequences on the concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni. These consequences, however, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Abaengele, Abachemai, Abalukulu and Abachibino approached

Mwalie from the Uganda side. Abalukulu, in this group, were practising initiation rituals en route from Sirikwa. Their circumciser was from the clan of Bamanga. This clan is found among Babukusu and Bakisu communities. Therefore, the Abalukulu's connection with Bamanga confirms Wandibba's (1985:27) view that the former hived off from Bakisu of Uganda. Since Bamanga never reached Mwalie, Abalukulu most probably had their concepts ingrained in initiation rituals interrupted for a while.

The group of Abaengele, Abachemai, Abalukulu and Abachibino reached Mwalie after some of the former Abahabiya's group. Later on they were joined by Abakamukong'i, Abakamutebi and Abachebukwa. Though the last three knew about circumcision they were not familiar with esitabicha (Khatete, O.I, 1991). Therefore, these clans had a different origin from that of the clans which practised esitabicha from Sirikwa.

What emerges in the foregoing paragraphs is that migration had side effects on concepts transmitted in initiation rituals. It led some clans of Abatachoni to lack circumcisers. Hence, most members grew old and even died without getting initiated. This sad affair affected the early inhabitants of Mwalie and its environs.

About the same general period, ancestors of the same Abatachoni were settling in the neighbourhood. Among the remembered places are included Mwibale (Lichina Samo) and Sang'alo hill (Lumbanya). At Sang'alo were found Abasang'alo, Abakubwayi, Abasonge, (who later went to Mwalie) and Abawande.

At Mwibale, on the other hand, were found Abasamo, Abachewa, Abachikha, Abamarakalu, and Abachimuluku. These clans reached both Sang'alo hill and Mwibale from Uganda via Busia. This confirms Wandibba's sources that some clans were together with the Kabras (Wandibba, op cit, 27). Like their brothers at Mwalie, this group stayed for long without having circumcisers. This means that they were not practising these concepts as articulated in initiation rituals.

Abachimuluku's attachment to the concepts contained in initiation rituals was slightly different. Coming from Ngaro Narok, Abachimuluku claimed a Maasai origin. Thus, the concept of esitabicha was foreign to them throughout their migration from Ngaro Narok through Nandi, Tiriki, Wanga up to Mwibale (Simiyu, O.I, 1991).

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 THE MOVEMENT OF INITIATION CONCEPTS INTO MWALIE AND ITS ENVIRONS

3.1 Introduction:

This chapter tackles various issues related to the movement of social concepts in initiation rituals and their introduction into Mwalie and its environs. Included are a brief survey of the areas of Mwalie and the environs, the introduction of circumcision, age-set systems and the concept of the leopard, yingwe. Furthermore, the contribution of smithing and of the communities that Abatachoni came into contact with, to the initiation rituals will be discussed.

In discussing the concepts identified in the Tachoni community while in Mwalie and its environs in this chapter, we employ the theoretical abstraction of symbolism as articulated in the structural functionalism. Under this framework, Victor Turner (1972:140) contends that symbols offer a bunch of keys which facilitate the understanding of our societies. Furthermore, the paradigm has other observable structures like those concerned with values, purposiveness and roles. All these observable structures are fundamental in analysing the social concepts of Abatachoni.

3.2 The Location of Mwalie and Other Tachoni Settlements:

Before tracing the movement of social concepts as reflected in initiation rituals at Mwalie, it is necessary to describe where the regions in this chapter are found. Mwalie stands out in this chapter as having been the first place where Abatachoni settled in Bungoma district. According to Wandibba (Personal conversation, 1992), it covered the area of the present shopping centre of Malakisi and the surrounding areas. At present, the name Mwalie is survived by a mere sub-location of South Malakisi location. But in this discussion, the name will be used to refer to the general area dominated by the Mwalie hills. In the present administrative area, it is found in Sirisia division.

Other areas that will stand out in this chapter are Sang'alo hills, Mwibale and Sibembe. All these names still survive. They form part of the present Kanduyi division of Bungoma district. Sirisia and Kanduyi are both on the Kenyan border with the Republic of Uganda on their west. It was in these two divisions that the first group of Abatachoni first settled after their long migration. Of interest will be how the initiation concepts moved into these two divisions between about 1750 and 1850 AD.

In the previous chapter it was discussed that some of the early Tachoni clans reached Mwalie by following the Kenyan

side of Mt. Elgon through Chesamisi, Kimilili, Kabuchai and then to Mwalie. Others reached Mwalie using the eastern side of Uganda via the present Bugisu district. Both groups were identified in Chapter two. Once at Mwalie, these two groups interacted to such an extent that concepts from either side blended to form a common background for the entire community. The blending concretised Victor Turner's view of structural aggregation. The resultant process brought about new values, symbols, purposes and roles among some sections of Abatachoni while other sections adjusted slightly. All this was articulated under the structural functionalist paradigm. This new group identified itself as Abamwalie, derived from the name Mwalie.

Several theories exist about the root of the name Mwalie. According to some oral sources, Mwalie originated from the appearance of the hills around which Abatachoni settled. The hills had brown lines similar to the lines, emialie, on newly moulded pots which were in the process of being hardened in fire. Thus, Mwalie referred to the hills of emialie. At the same time, the name was used for the inhabitants of the area. This version is held by the majority of the informants.

Another source (Masibo, O.I, 1991) argues that Mwalie emanated from the first settlers' leader at Mwalie hills. In this case, Mwalie meant those ruled by omwami, (ruler) Mwalie.

Makila (1978:157) partly subscribes to this source. The difference, however, is his view that Mwalie was the ruler of Bagisu in Uganda. But this does not explain why the Abatachoni who were not under the suzerainty of Bagisu should claim association with him.

There is yet another source (Masinde, O.I, 1991) which argues that Mwalie originated from initiation rituals of Tachoni inhabitants at Mwalie hills. According to this source, Mwalie was a combination of two Tachoni verbs, Mue (give him/her) and alie (to eat). This is alleged to have happened when Abatachoni at Mwalie held their initiation rituals. Every person whether belonging to the community or to the neighbouring communities was invited to share in the feasting. Since initiation rituals were under normal circumstances carried out annually¹, neighbours found the repeated invitation a unique characteristic of the group at Mwalie. Hence Babukusu referred to them as Mwalie, signifying the generous people.

Masinde's information implies that the name Mwalie emerged soon after the other name of Abayumbu. This is because when the first Bukusu people interacted with

¹Sometimes the occurrence of long drawn droughts, famine and wars with other communities disrupted this annual practice. In this case initiation could take as many as three years before the next initiation period.

Abatachoni at Mwalie, the former called Abatachoni as Abayumbu. The name of Abayumbu belongs to one of the Tachoni clans that were at Mwalie (see section 3.5 below).

Be that as it may, Masinde's claim attests to the importance of Tachoni initiation rituals to the entire community. This importance continues to this day. The Mwalie group always include initiation ritual concepts in their praise names. Hence, it is suggested here that the word Mwalie has a linguistic similarity in meaning with Mwari (Ranger, 1974:5). This is because, Mwari is equally connected with initiation concepts among many African communities such as Abagusii, Taita and Shambala. As for Abatachoni, their initiation concepts will be discussed later in this chapter and those that follow it.

Other Tachoni settlements around the same period included Mwibale, Sang'alo hills and Sibembe. Those of Sang'alo hills and Mwibale were discussed in the previous chapter. Some members from these two places and others from Mwalie migrated between 1750 and 1850 to Sibembe and other places which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Abawanga were on the western side of the above three settlements of Abatachoni. This means that Abatachoni were on the eastern side of the former. Hence Abawanga referred

to them as Abekwe, meaning those of the east. But in the fourth chapter, the concept of the 'east' will be analysed because of its association with initiation rituals.

While at Mwalie, Mwibale and Sang'alo settlements, early Tachoni occupants were ignorant of each other. But when each group went out hunting wild game, they encountered each other as they spoke a similar dialect. Consequently, they established bonds and visited each other's chingoba (forts). By that time the process of bantuisation which started much earlier than 1750 was incomplete. They still talked olurwa, (a Mt. Elgon Kalenjin dialect).

During the interaction of the various groups of Abatachoni in the above areas, they discussed the misfortunes which had befallen them. These misfortunes included wars and cattle raids from the Iteso, Nandi, Maasai, and Abawanga (Wandibba, 1985:22-32). In addition, Abatachoni's cattle had died of cattle diseases and there was a high rate of infant mortality. This situation constituted a crisis among the members who desperately looked for possible remedies.

The elders consulted diviners in the community who instructed them to resume their age-old initiation rituals that had been abandoned for a long time. Since these elders were desperate, they made arrangements to look for a

circumciser (Waluchio and Khakame, O.I, 1991). As was discussed in the previous chapter, there were no circumcisers at the above settlements. The circumcisers were left at the Mt. Elgon settlements when other Tachoni groups used different routes during their migrations.

3.3 The Arrival of Abahabiya and Ababichu

The Abahabiya and Ababichu were similar because of their provision of circumcisers for Abatachoni. Therefore, their late arrival at Mwalie was detrimental to the Tachoni staying in the settlements mentioned above. Thus, when diviners advocated for the revival of the initiation rituals, it was also a way of urging for circumcisers to be brought to Mwalie and its neighbouring settlements.

To get these circumcisers, elders are claimed to have gone to the slopes of Mt. Elgon. At the mountain, members of the Abahabiya had already settled themselves around Kamasielo hill where they were known as Abakoyonjo. After messengers from Mwalie presented their cases, the Abahabiya elders gave out a circumciser to go to Mwalie. His name was Lubale. He, therefore, became the first circumciser at Mwalie (Muse, Ndala and Masibo, O.I, 1991).

Wandibba (1985; 22-32) argues that Ababichu were among the first to settle at Mwalie. But as the above paragraph

indicates, they had not arrived at Mwalie when Abahabiya were requested to go and circumcise the Abatachoni initiation candidates at Mwalie and other settlements. It appears that Ababichu arrived when circumcision was already introduced at Mwalie. This is supported by Ababichu's informants. They claim that they followed the direction of the smoke at Mwalie before arriving there. And on arrival they found that earlier settlers were already circumcising and carrying out post-circumcision initiation rituals (Masinde, O.I, 1991).

Ababichu, therefore, on arriving at Mwalie joined the rest in the initiation rituals. Their circumcisers helped Abahabiya in circumcising initiation candidates, while their leader, Namukongo assumed political leadership of the area and consequently participated in the arrangement of initiation periods.

Abahabiya and Ababichu circumcised at Mwalie, Mwibale, Sang'alo and Sibembe. At Sibembe, the two circumcising clans encountered Abamachina, a clan of Abakabras living among Abatachoni. These Abamachina were also circumcisers. Thus, the three clans of circumcisers formed a team and jointly circumcised initiation candidates of Abatachoni in all their settlements.

At the settlements discussed above in the period between

1800 and 1850, therefore, the concept of circumcision was introduced by clans whose skills had started elsewhere. No new clans took up the profession. This made all other clans identify Abahabiya, Ababichu, and Abamachina as their only circumcisers. And in appreciation, the three circumcising clans incorporated the concept of their profession into their praise names. For instance, Abahabiya's praise names include chematwa, while Ababichu's include machembi and mutiro marisio.

Abahabiya's chematwa was a Kalenjin derivative. It means those who circumcise (Waluchio, O.I, 1991). This Kalenjin derivative might further imply that they adopted the skill from the Kalenjin. The Ababichu's machembi evokes the use of circumcision knives, chinjembe (also known at present as amahalo). Mutiro marisio signifies the frightening stampedes made by circumcisers when possessed with the circumcision spirit, omusambwa kwa obusebi. Furthermore, mutiro marisio attests to the fact that circumcisers originally dressed in a frightening manner when in the process of circumcising initiation candidates (Masinde, O.I, 1991).

3.4 Age-set Systems at Mwalie and Its Environs

The concept of age-sets was introduced into the previous chapter as having existed even before the ancestors of Abatachoni were at Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi. And it appears

that it was not only at these areas where age-set systems were observed. The present experience shows that they operated in a broad area in Kenya, and to some extent, Uganda. For instance, the age-sets of maina, chuma and sawe are found among Abakuria, Agikuyu, Akamba, Aembu, Ameru, Kalenjin and Bagisu (Mwanzi, 1977:109). They are also found among Babukusu, Abakabras and Abatachoni. But whether they were derived from the same source, or whether they have the same importance in these communities is not the concern of this study. It may, however, signify the assimilation, intermingling or integration of various peoples in the peopling of present day Kenya.

Among Abatachoni, age-sets had important functions to serve in the pre-colonial period. As was discussed in the above chapter, age-sets were eight in number. They unified and classified members based on initiation rituals. Age here by itself was less significant. There were those circumcised at the usual age of about twenty years comfortably classified with those who got circumcised at thirty or more years of age into one age-grade (this is a sub-division of an age-set).

At Mwalie and other Tachoni settlements, the eight age-sets got adapted to the Bantu dialect. Thus, instead of the Kalenjin form, they became kolongolo, kikwameti, kananachi, kinyikeu (here Babukusu pronounce it as kinyikewi), nyange,

maina, chuma and sawa. Of particular interest are koronkoro which became kolongolo, kipkoimet which became kikwameti, kaplalach became kananachi, kimnyekeu became kinyikeu (or kinyikewi among Babukusu), nyonki became nyange, and sawe became sawa. The technical linguistic intricacies involved are issues which may be investigated in another study. But it is vital to note that change in word articulation took place at Mwalie and its neighbourhood when Abatachoni acquired a Bantu dialect. This adoption might be due to numerous Bantu communities that came into contact with Abatachoni in the latter's migration to Mwalie (Wandibba, op cit).

When all the eight age-sets were finished, one cycle was gone. The cycle lasted about a century. After such a cycle another was started. Thus, the eight age-sets were cyclic in nature. Each age-set was divided into grades, chimbaka. The grades were based on even years though in times of peace circumcision was carried out annually in the entire nineteenth century (Muse, O.I, 1991). Also see chapter five of this study for the analysis of the concept of esikumenya.

Two consecutive grades in an age-set were paired so that members of the pair became known as coevals, abaya. There were three such pairs in an age-set. Whenever a member in the pair

circumcised his son, he gave his coevals gifts, chimbaka.²

Abaya later changed to bakoki. This change resulted out of more interaction between Abatachoni and other Bantu communities. The change took place towards the 1850s. It is, therefore, bakoki and not abaya that is used upto date.

Having examined the concept of age-sets in general, it is perhaps apt to bring out the age-sets that were initiated at Mwalie and other Tachoni settlements before 1850. The very first age-set that is claimed to have taken place at Mwalie was kolongolo. This is generally believed to have been about 1800. This age-set lasted up to 1810.

Kolongolo age-set is connected with a legendary serpent locally known as bebe. This serpent was claimed to have killed numerous people and domestic animals. The deafening sound and the havoc it caused filled the members of Mwalie with terror and horror. They moved around covering their heads with huge stone blades for protection. In memory of this serpent and its destruction, the elders named the first kolongolo age-grade at Mwalie and the neighbouring settlements after it. But instead of naming the grade kolongolo bebe, they named it kolongolo khururwe. Khururwe was to commemorate

²It appears that the noun chimbaka whose singular is olubaka has two meanings. The first meaning refers to an age-grade while the second one denotes presents or gifts from coevals.

the dragging and destruction caused by the serpent. It stems from the Tachoni verb okhukhurura which means 'to drag a heavy object'.

Thus, the kolongolo concept which had moved into Mwalie and the environs as a result of the Tachoni migration got adapted to the local environment. It also got enlarged in scale so as not only to relate to the initiation activity but also to evoke the historical destruction of the serpent locally known as bebe. And this expanded meaning spread throughout the whole of the kolongolo period, that is, between 1800 and 1810.

Apart from kolongolo age-set, others that were initiated between 1800 and 1850 include kikwameti, kananachi, kinyikeu and part of nyange. Unlike kolongolo, these later age-sets are not associated with historic events. This does not mean that there were no such events. Rather, it means that the events in these age-sets were not to the magnitude of the bebe. Thus, once a few years elapsed and the elders who witnessed the events passed away, only age-set names remained. This is one of the weaknesses of oral sources; that elders can recall mainly what made a big impression on their minds.

3.5. The Esitabicha At Mwalie, Sang'alo and Mwibale

The concept of esitabicha among the ideas ingrained in

initiation rituals follows the circumcision one. It is usually held between two to four months after circumcision. This is because within that time, initiates, abafulu, are believed to have healed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the first ebitabicha were at Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi. In all these places, the Abakusi clan members were the initiation ritual priests of those ebitabicha. But during the migration from the three regions to Mwalie, Sang'alo and Mwibale, Tachoni elders used different routes. Therefore, for the clans that continued with circumcision during their migration, there was need to have new initiation ritual priests because Abakusi were not in every group that migrated.

In a bid to have initiation ritual priests perform their roles at the ebitabicha, clans that maintained the practice of circumcision chose from their groups people whose mothers were Abakusi. This meant that the maternal links of such initiation ritual priests to the Abakusi gave them the legitimacy to bless and counsel the community at the ebitabicha. The clan of Abalukulu acquired ritual priesthood, obubiti, in this manner (Khatete, O.I, 1991). Other clans whose ababiti were based on maternal links with Abakusi included Abameywa, Abamweya (the two were once one before the migration into Mwalie), Abamakhuli, Abasianiaka and Abamalicha. All these clans presided at various ebitabicha at Mwalie before the arrival of Abakusi. When the latter finally

arrived, they joined these new clans in the office of initiation ritual priesthood (Makhanu, O.I, 1991).

Not all the above clans started initiation ritual priesthood at the same time at Mwalie. It is claimed that Abameywa were the first. But when a member of Abameywa was performing his functions at the esitabicha, there was a thunder-clap. This event was seen as an ill omen. In the crisis that ensued from this interpretation, Abameywa were stopped from presiding over the ebitabicha. Instead, Abasianiaka, and later Abamalicha were tried (Kibeu, O.I, 1991). Gradually, the number of initiation ritual priests increased.

In the general area of Mwalie, the concept of esitabicha of Abatachoni was very pronounced in the period between 1800 and 1850. The ebitabicha were prepared at specially selected spots on river banks of perennial rivers. Initiates were taken to such places once annually to be ritually blessed and counselled, okhubitwa.

The annual exercise made certain places where the ebitabicha were prepared become permanently associated with these features. Even long after the period of 1850, these places continued to be known as Sitabicha. Esitabicha is a singular form of ebitabicha. Therefore, Sitabicha as a name

of a place was derived from the existence of the esitabicha in the neighbourhood of the area. One still survives to this day as a sub-location. It is Sitabicha sub-location in South Malakisi location of Sirisia division in Bungoma district. At this Sitabicha, Abasianiaka were among the group of the initiation ritual priests that presided over the esitabicha in the period between 1800 and 1850 (Wanyama, O.I, 1991).

Another place still remembered in the name that could be said to be commemorative of the esitabicha is Munami village in West Wanga location of Kakamega district. Munami borders both Busia and Bungoma districts. Though found in Kakamega, Munami is a historical neighbourhood of Mwalie and forms a vital link in the discussion of the concept of esitabicha.

According to one source (Sikwata, O.I., 1991) Abatachoni had their esitabicha at Munami. Around this area also lived the other Luyia community of Abatura. These people did not use circumcision in initiating their youth.³ So, on the day of esitabicha, they were forbidden to move near it. Abatura, therefore, became afraid of moving near the place during or after the ritual of initiation ritual blessing and counselling, okhubita. The Abatura referred to where the

³At present, some members of Abatura living in Bungoma and amega practise circumcision as a way of initiating their youth to adulthood.

Tachoni esitabicha was located as 'Munami mwa Abayumbu belamilanga, (a sacred place where Abayumbu "Tachoni" went for worship). Finally, the long sentence got shortened to Munami.

With time Munami lost the sacredness attached to the Tachoni ideas of esitabicha when the latter community moved away and consequently stopped using it for the initiation rituals. But the place still has the name Munami to refer to a region. Munami as a name dates after the Kolongolo period, that is, after 1810. This fact is based on Abatura's use of Abayumbu in referring to Abatachoni. For the Babukusu who first referred to Abatachoni as Abayumbu did so when circumcision was already practised at Mwalie. It could be during the Kolongolo age-set or later (KNA/DC/EN.3/2/4, 1959).

Initially, the ebitabicha at Mwibale and Sang'alo were presided over by the initiation ritual priests from Mwalie. But later on, the clans at Mwibale and Sang'alo appointed their own initiation ritual priests from Abachewa clan. Here, maternal links with Abakusi were confirmed first (Makhanu, O.I, 1991).

Some sources (Kerre and Wanyonyi, O.I. 1991) claim that Abamuhongo acquired obubiti at Mwibale. The same sources also claimed that Abasang'alo became initiation ritual priests by having maternal influence from Abamuhongo. It appears,

however, that Abamuhongo only presided over the esitabicha of Abachikha cluster of Tachoni clans. These included Abamuhongo, Abakobolo, Abachambayi, Abakabini and Abacharia. The initiation ritual priesthood of Abamuhongo despite being confined to the Abachikha cluster was short-lived. By the time they reached Sitikho, the office was no more.

At Sibembe, Abasioya clan members emerged as good initiation ritual priests. Exactly when they inherited initiation-ritual priesthood is not clear. Some claim that it was early in the first Kolongolo period when the clan members were at Mwalie (Sirandula, O.I, 1991). Others claim that the clan members acquired the initiation ritual priesthood status at Sibembe (Ndala, O.I, 1991). Whatever the case, the two sources agree that Abasioya were best remembered as initiation ritual priests at the latter place. They also agree that the initiation ritual priesthood was due to the maternal influence.

But again from where the maternal influence was derived is still arguable. Some people (Ndala, O.I. 1991) point to the maternal links with Abameywa. They claim that Nengo, Kapchanga's daughter, married among Abasioya and her son became the first initiation ritual priest in the clan. This source is bolstered by Abasioya's praise name of 'Nengo Sebulo,' a reference to the above daughter of Kapchanga.

Other sources (Kerre, Makhanu, O.I, 1991) argue that the first initiation ritual priest among Abasioya had maternal links with Abakusi. These sources, however, do not provide the name of the mother. Still there are others who claim that Abasioya's initiation ritual priesthood stemmed from their maternal links with Abasang'alo. This latter view quoted the house of Masinde of Abasang'alo as the one from which a daughter married the Abasioya to give rise to the first initiation ritual priest among the clan. This view was widespread in Webuye division during the Tachoni initiation rituals carried out in 1990.

The discordant views above, therefore, make it difficult to lay a finger on one maternal line as having yielded the first initiation ritual priest among the Abasioya clan. It is only logical to conclude that in the period between 1800 and 1850, the Abasioya members who blessed and counselled initiates at various ebitabicha had maternal links with any one of Abakusi, Abameywa, and Abasang'alo clans. This is because all of these clans had initiation ritual priesthood status during that time.

Abakafusi were yet another clan with initiation ritual priests. The clan acquired the status of initiation ritual priesthood after Abasioya. But whether this acquisition was at Mwalie or Sibembe is as debatable as the Abasioya's case.

Furthermore, though the sources agree that the office of initiation ritual priesthood among Abakafusi was through the maternal links, it is difficult to establish the exact links. Some sources (Kibeu, O.I, 1991) simply deny having any knowledge about the maternal line of the first person in the clan to bless and counsel the initiates and the entire Abatachoni at the esitabicha. But another source (Ndala, O.I., 1991) claims that the maternal line was from the Abameywa clan.

The ebitabicha in Mwibale, Sang'alo and Sibembe were on River Nzoia, also known as Kiboran. This river has continued in providing ideal sites for ebitabicha in the post-circumcision initiation rituals among Abatachoni. The big size and permanence in the voluminous flow of this river during most of the year, in a way symbolises the elders' plea for constant good health, prosperity and fertility of the initiates and the entire community.

It is clear, therefore, that basing on the maternal descent from the Abakusi, other Tachoni clans acquired initiation ritual priesthood. Given that the way they acquired it was by intermarriage, clans which inherited the practice from Abakusi would not preside over any ebitabicha in the presence of the latter. The same was true for Abakamukong'i who got initiation ritual priesthood from

Abalukulu (Khatete, Kibeu and Makhanu, O.I, 1991).

Thus, in the presence of Abalukulu, Abakamukong'i gave way for the former to bless and counsel the community of Abatachoni. By such clans as Abakamukong'i giving way for Abalukulu or all other Tachoni initiation ritual priests giving way for Abakusi, it did not at all imply that the clans did not know how to perform their roles properly. It was in line with respect for seniority. The Abalukulu were senior to Abakamukong'i while Abakusi were the most senior in the practice of initiation ritual priesthood.

The clans which acquired initiation ritual priesthood in the absence of Abakusi retained it due to the increased demand for initiation ritual priests. This demand stemmed from the numerical increase of Abatachoni community. Firstly, more children were born into the community. Secondly, other clans from the neighbouring communities got accommodated into it. This entailed increase in number of ebitabicha and consequently the initiation ritual priests.

Those clans from other communities who were incorporated into Abatachoni included members of Babukusu, Abakabras, Abawanga, Abasamia and Abanyala. From Babukusu came the clans of Abaengele, Abasonge, and Abachibino. Such clans have members in both Abatachoni and Babukusu. The cases of

Abaengele and Abasonge are sufficient for demonstrating how these clans were brought under Abatachoni.

A case in point are the Abaengele as explained by Kwanusu (O.I, 1991). He claims that initially all Baengele were Babukusu. The ancestor of this clan had two wives. One of them was Misanga from the Mwalie group of Abatachoni. The other was Kibondo of the Babukusu community. As time progressed, children began identifying themselves with their mothers. Thus, there was Baengele Bamisanga and Baengele Bakibondo.

It would appear that many misfortunes such as high infant mortality rate and numerous infertility cases among the section of Bamisanga forced their elders to consult their diviners. On the diviners' advice, Bamisanga took up their maternal initiation rituals that included sending their initiates to the ebitabicha to be dipped in water and also be initiated into the leopard, yingwe, ritual. With time, this section started openly using the Mwalie praise name. Some even adopted the Mwalie dialect. The Bakibondo retained their former values. Thus, the Baengele Bamisanga became known as Abaengele and spoke Olutachoni.

The second example is the case of Abasonge as explained by Walubengo (O.I, 1991). It appears the story of Abasonge

closely resembles that of Abaengele, for Walubengo explains that Abasonge were initially one group. But their eponymous founder had several wives. One of them came from Abatachoni. Descendants of the Tachoni mother suffered high infant mortality rate causing unhappiness to the entire family. This unhappiness resulted in a crisis that necessitated the consultation of a diviner.

Consequently, the Tachoni section of Abasonge took up Tachoni initiation rituals. It appeared the Tachoni initiation rituals adopted curtailed the high infant mortality rate among this section of Abasonge. Hence, this section moved and settled among the Mwalie group of Abatachoni. This was how they eventually became Abatachoni.

It is apparent that through the influence of maternalism the Tachoni community increased in number. Furthermore, the movement of Tachoni initiation concepts such as going to esitabicha broadened their meaning. They not only signified preparing initiates to be adult members but also served as a panacea for high infant mortality rate and infertility among members.

The Bukusu section which became part of Abatachoni did so after Kitimule had established links with Abatachoni at Mwalie. Before his visit to Mwalie, Babukusu and Abatachoni

lived in isolation. No side knew much about the other. But with Kitimule's adventure and his consequent intermarriage with a girl from the Abayumbu clan of Abatachoni, the two communities increased their interaction. Also going by the fact that he had married a girl of the Abayumbu clan, Kitimule referred to the entire Tachoni community as Abayumbu (KNA/DC/EN 3/2/4 of 1959). The name continued until the colonial days when it was left only to refer to a clan of Abatachoni.

This interaction could have taken place within the first two age-sets. Thus, it was between 1800 and 1822. For it is believed that when Kitimule came, Abatachoni at Mwalie were already initiating their youth. This, therefore, means that it was after 1800. But it could not have been later than the kikwameti age-set (KNA/DC/EN 3/2/4 of 1959). As a matter of fact, the interaction that ensued led to the two communities influencing each other. Perhaps for future researchers, it will be interesting to see scholars examine how the Babukusu got influenced by Abatachoni as this is beyond the scope of this study. Hence, suffice to say the above clans that were formerly in the Babukusu side got accommodated into the Abatachoni section from the time Kitimule visited the Tachoni settlement at Mwalie.

Apart from Babukusu, those from Abakabras, Abawanga,

Abasamia, and Abanyala did not form new clans among Abatachoni. They were absorbed into the already existing ones. The Tachoni clans mostly affected were those at Mwibale, Sang'alo and Sibembe. As the new communities joined these clans, the former acquired the Tachoni initiation concepts. Consequently, in their new forms, the new members lost their previous initiation values. This was especially true of the Abawanga, Abasamia and Abanyala for they did not previously practise circumcision and post circumcision initiation rituals (Wanyonyi, O.I, 1991).

As the Abatachoni increased, the influence was two-sided. While the new members took up the Tachoni initiation concepts they in turn further influenced the dialect of Abatachoni. It took a Luyia form. But it did not become Olutachoni immediately. The change was a gradual process. In the regions discussed in this chapter, Abatachoni spoke the dialect that was known as Olumwalie, probably so named because the majority of Abatachoni belong to the Mwalie group. To date, the Olumwalie is spoken by very few members. Otherwise it has given way to Olutachoni.

Therefore, the increase in number of Tachoni clans affected several dimensions of the community. It led to the increase in the number of ebitabicha and the initiation ritual priestly clans. Linguistically, it led to the emergence of

a Luyianised dialect known as Olumwalie. The name stemmed from the fact that most of the Tachoni clans belonged to Mwalie group and also because sometimes all Tachoni clans were classified as Abamwalie.

3.6 Concepts by Initiation Ritual Priests, Ababiti, At Mwalie and Its Environs.

At Mwalie and the surrounding areas, Abatachoni's interaction with other Luyia communities resulted in the former's acquisition of new concepts from the latter. Some of the concepts were connected with agriculture. Included were the names of farming implements, good planting seasons and the types of crops which were conducive to the seasons. These concepts as will be made clear below became gradually incorporated into the initiation rituals. To symbolise their values, samples of farming tools such as jembes, crops such as eleusine and sorghum were placed inside the structures at ebitabicha during the post-circumcision initiation ritual functions. Hence, when initiates were taken to the ebitabicha, their initiation ritual priests for the first time emerged as repositories of agricultural values.

In essence then, initiation ritual priests at Mwalie and its neighbourhood were preoccupied with concepts about peace, about means of preventing hailstones from the neighbourhood as well as with the concept about a prosperous and fecund

progeny for the sustenance of the community. The initiation ritual priests were also concerned about the prosperity of livestock and crops. These cosmological abstracts of the Tachoni may be compressed into the social, military and economic specificities. Thus, Tachoni initiation ritual priests represented a whole world-view of the community. Each of these is discussed briefly below so as to see how it was incorporated in the initiation rituals.

3.7 The Socio-Military Concepts In Tachoni Cosmology

There was a very close relationship between the social and military concepts among the Abatachoni as reflected by the perceptions of initiation ritual priests. Socially, they wanted peace to prevail. This wish arose because of the danger that threatened the community. For instance, there were various military incursions into the Tachoniland by the Iteso, Nandi, and Maasai groups mainly between 1750 and 1850. The military confrontation which ensued caused many people to die. The loss of people's lives affected the community of Abatachoni in a negative sense. They, therefore, wished to do away with violence because it led to their people dying. Some of the avenues through which the Abatachoni expressed their concerns for peace included the articulations of initiation ritual priests.

The following quote illustrates how this concern for

peace was articulated by initiation ritual priests:

Initiation ritual priest: Let our people live in peace!

Other elderly members chorus: Let there be peace!

Initiation ritual priest: Let our people live in peace!

Other elderly members' chorus: Let there be peace!

Initiation ritual priest: Let danger, Obusuku, never
befall us!

Other elderly members' chorus: Let there be no danger!

Initiation ritual priest: Let our youth marry wives and
bear many children!

Other elderly members' chorus: Let them marry and have
many children!

(Kibeu, O.I., 1991).

As the above quote indicates, there was also a concern for the youth to get married and have children. This concern had both social and military connotations. Socially, it aimed at replacing those who died in the confrontations and also at increasing the numbers of Abatachoni at the same time. The increase in numbers was perceived to be effected through biological multiplication. Thus when the youth married, they were naturally expected to bear children. The foregoing underscores the world-view of Abatachoni about the essence of marriage. It was aimed at increasing the number of the community. Any couple which never bore children was considered useless to the society. Numerous efforts including

divinations were employed to ensure that each couple had children.

Militarily, the anticulations by ababiti aimed at raising enough warriors to defend the community in the face of danger. This fact was enhanced by the need to procure the military paraphernalia required. They included shields, bows, arrows and swords. These paraphernalia formed ritual apparatus at ebitabicha. Incorporation of these weapons into initiation rituals symbolised that the newly graduated warriors, abatembete, would defend the community using similar weapons. Also implied in the use of these weapons was the fact that the newly graduated warriors learnt how to handle similar weapons in the just ended process of initiation (Masinde, O.I, 1991).

The military preoccupation among Abatachoni were detected in initiation candidates, usually aged twenty years, before being allowed to prepare for circumcision. Their parents subjected them to mock fights. In a mock fight, no dangerous weapons were employed. Both the intending candidate and the parent took two fighting sticks, chindabusi, each. One stick was used as a shield while the other was used in the actual beating. The assessment took into consideration the manner in which the young intending candidate avoided blows from his 'enemy'. If he ably ducked and staved off many blows, the father or whoever the 'enemy' was became happy. And more

happiness was experienced when the prospective candidate landed a few blows on his 'enemy'. At such a time, the 'fight' was stopped. The victory of the prospective initiation ritual candidates in the mock fighting enabled them to prepare for circumcision. But defeat meant that the supposed initiation candidates were to wait for another year when they were to go through similar tests (Wangila, O.I 1991).

In determining the capacity of the intending initiation candidates, no elaborate arrangements were undertaken in preparation for the mock fights. Nor were the mock fights to involve a large group of people. In most cases, mock fighting was a family affair which involved two people. The one intending to be circumcised and either his father or any other male adult in the family. It was generally believed that all initiated male adults among Abatachoni were good fighters who could be relied upon to test the intending candidates.

Even the actual circumcision marked a step towards militarism. The initiation candidates' courage to endure the pain meant that they were able to defend the community. But any flinching brought a disgrace because it was taken to mean that the initiates were cowards who could not resist any enemy attacks (Wangila, O.I, 1991). However, whether it was true that only those who never flinched during the time of their being circumcised made dependable soldiers could not be

empirically established. Yet as a source of inspiration, unflinching courage during the initiation of any candidate was a value which was widely held in high esteem among Abatachoni.

The pronouncement of initiation ritual priests and the symbolism at the ebitabicha, therefore, marked the climax of militarism which started before the circumcision of the initiation candidates. When the newly graduated warriors came out, they were organized in military groups under their leader, laitirian. The laitirian was usually older in age. He led the new warriors out for hunting wild game and also on cattle raids. The first herd of cattle successfully raided were given to the parents of the warriors. But the newly initiated warriors, abatembete, never stayed together in what one would call a military camp. The newly initiated warriors joined the rest of the community. They only assembled together when outside danger threatened the community or when they went to raid. How these young warriors and their leaders organised themselves during raiding or during war battled with their enemies is beyond the scope of this study. It suffices here for us to stress that militaristic concepts and manifestations that were observed and articulated during initiation rituals reflected a broader world-view among Abatachoni.

3.8 The Economic Concepts In Tachoni Cosmology

The economic concepts expressed by initiation ritual priests relate to the specificities of agriculture, pastoralism and smithing. Abatachoni's preoccupation with agriculture started before 1800. They planted sorghum and eleusine during both the long rains and the short rains. The crops planted during the long rain season were harvested in July and August, while those for the short rains were harvested in November and December. Such harvests were used for preparing food and brewing beer during initiation ritual activities which had their significant roles to the Tachoni social order. Hence, the success of these activities depended on the absence of hailstones. The presence of hailstones usually caused damage to crops and marred the initiation ritual festivity among Abatachoni.

Livestock was kept by Abatachoni even before their migration from the legendary Misri. Pastoralism was thus an old activity. Cattle were vital to Abatachoni in various ways. For instance, they were slaughtered for meat during circumcision rituals and the rumen contents were applied to the chests of initiation candidates. During this process, initiation candidates were encouraged to be brave and unflinching when being circumcised. Furthermore, during marriage ceremonies, cattle were paid as bride price. Consequently, when initiation ritual priests expressed the

wish to have the number of livestock increased among the community, they were underscoring the importance of cattle in the lives of Abatachoni. These initiation ritual priests were doing so as important repositories of the community's esoteric knowledge.

As discussed in the previous chapter, smithing among Abatachoni started from Sengeli. At Mwalie and the surrounding areas, it was the scale that was broadened. For in addition to forging weapons, smiths also forged agricultural implements. These implements included various types of hoes classified in Tachoni dialect as ebisili (pl) and chimbako⁴ (pl) for digging and sickles chinjeso⁵(pl) for harvesting. All these implements, ebisili, chimbako and chinjeso were incorporated into the ritual apparatus at ebitabicha. It would appear the latter, ebitabicha, played an invaluable role in legitimising productive implements.

At Mwalie, the experts who forged implements such as ebisili, chimbako and chinjeso were from the Abasamia sub ethnic group. They made use of rich iron ores around Mwalie

⁴Ebisili is a plural form of esisili which is a type of hoe. It was small with a narrow blade which was used for weeding eleusine. Chimbako is also a plural form of yimbako which is another type of hoe that is slightly broader than esisili. It was used for digging and weeding crops.

⁵Chinjeso is a plural form of yinjeso. This is a sickle which was used in the harvesting of sorghum and eleusine

(KNA/PC/NZA/1;/7 of 1912). When Abatachoni interacted with Abasamia, there was a cross-fertilisation of ideas between the two communities. As a result, Tachoni smiths learnt how to forge the above agricultural implements. Thus, the Tachoni view of Smithing was broadened. The smiths not only forged warfare weapons and initiation implements but also made numerous agricultural tools. This newly acquired technology gradually influenced Abatachoni's way of life. Agriculture started assuming more importance among them than before.

The importance of agriculture was manifested in the Tachoni diet. At Mwalie, instead of wholly relying on meat, milk, honey and blood, these people included, ugali⁶ and beer which were prepared out of sorghum and eleusine flour, into their diet. Furthermore, initiation dates were based on the harvesting seasons of sorghum and eleusine. Thus, in August when there was the first harvest, circumcision took place. And in December, when there was the second harvest, the post-circumcision initiation ritual took place. This was because being months of harvesting, August and December provided food enough to feed the members of the community and the visitors who were invited to attend the rituals (Muse, Waluchio, Khakame, O.I. 1991).

⁶Ugali is a Kiswahili word for posho. The type prepared from eleusine is known in olutachoni as bwa obule whereas that prepared from sorghum as bwa amabele, respectively.

3.9 The Concept of Leopard, Yingwe

The yingwe concept and its association with initiation rituals is found among many sections of the Abaluyia of Bungoma and Kakamega (Merrit, 1976). But how each of these sections acquired the concept is beyond the scope of this study. However, as concerns the yingwe of Abatachoni, it originated from the Sabaot living around Mt. Elgon.

Yingwe forms the core of the secrecy in the initiation rituals of Abatachoni. Its composition is difficult to establish because of the informants' reluctance to discuss the issue at length. But they are willing to discuss the symbolic importance of this yingwe. They argue that it is brave and courageous despite its smallness. Once it is provoked, it acts swiftly against its predators. Whenever it struck, the predators sustained serious injuries. Hence it was introduced into Tachoni post-circumcision initiation rituals to harden and inspire the initiates to always face future challenges bravely (Khakame, O.I, 1991).

Whether the above interpretation also underlies ritual practice among the Sabaot is difficult to establish. But it is evident that the Sabaot confined their yingwe (which they call merindo) to female initiation rituals. Men were only initiated into it if they were abatelwa (those born alone without any other brother(s) or sister(s)] in their homes.

The Abameywa (Abamweya) who were previously one clan received the concept because of maternal links with the Sabaot (Ndala and Mulama, O.I, 1991).

When Abamweya and Abameywa reached Mwalie, they introduced the yingwe concept in its original context among the Mwalie section of Abatachoni. It was thus incorporated into the post-circumcision female initiation rituals which took place at night before the coming out. By the end of kologolo age-set, that is by 1810, the concept was also incorporated into the post-circumcision male initiation rituals.

At first only a few clans such as Abakusi, Abasianiaka, Abahabiya and Abamalicha experimented with yingwe in the females' and abatelwa's post-circumcision initiation rituals. After three successful attempts, other clans took up the concept also on an experimental basis. Such clans included Abalukulu, Abarefu, Abakamutebi, Abakamukong'i and Abachebukwa.

Gradually, yingwe found acceptance among all Tachoni clans at Mwalie. This process took place during kologolo and kikwameti age-sets, that is from 1800 and 1822. Hence, through the migration of Abameywa and Abamweya from Mt. Elgon area to Mwalie, the concept of yingwe also moved from Mt. Elgon to Mwalie. As a result of these two clans interacting

and intermarrying with other clans at Mwalie, the yingwe concept spread to the other clans.

Initiating Tachoni youth into yingwe ritual was known as okhulichana. The root of the concept is difficult to establish from most elders. Some informants simply claimed okhulichana was a Tachoni tradition. But asked to give the actual semantics, they quickly denied having any knowledge of it. This lack of knowledge was partly due to the ritual secrecy and concealment that every Tachoni elder was called upon to uphold. There were, however, some sources which argued that okhulichana is a Tachoni noun derived from a verb lich which means tie. The prefix okhu plus lich thus mean 'to tie'.

In the ordinary sense, if one was told okhulicha a cow or a goat, it meant one was to tie a cow or a goat. By extension, therefore, okhulicha yingwe literally means to tie a leopard. This image is interpreted to mean taming the leopard, yingwe, that was used during the post-circumcision initiation ritual. As to what this yingwe was or even now is, still remains a puzzle as discussed above. But of more importance is the fact that the concept received a lot of value acceptance among the clans of Abatachoni at Mwalie.

The initiates after undergoing okhulichana were believed

to have acquired the endurance, bravery, courage and fierceness of the leopard, yingwe. This belief was reinforced by the fact that before the day of okhulichana, initiates were subjected to heavy tasks and drills. Some of the activities involved walking long distances without resting and running hard to escape rain which was always supposed to get them in their seclusion huts, amakombe. Besides, initiates were expected to endure great suffering the way they resisted the pain during circumcision. Thus, yingwe the image also referred to newly graduated warriors, abatembete. Yingwe's meaning was, therefore, enlarged in scale. It did not only refer to the leopard but also to newly graduated warriors who were ready to defend the community should need arise.

When most of the clans at Mwalie had successfully adopted the okhulichana, other members at Sang'alo and Mwibale learnt of it. They experimented on it three times to judge whether or not the concept could be accommodated. However, the experiments were unsuccessful. This experimentation seems to have taken place towards the end of kolongolo and early kikwameti periods, that is between 1810 and 1816. The dating is based on the fact that it was only after many clans at Mwalie had succeeded in okhulichana before they went to introduce the same concept at Sang'alo and Mwibale. The clans at Sang'alo and Mwibale were always attacked by enemies and cattle raiders during the time of okhulichana. These enemies

might have been from the Iteso, Nandi and Maasai in the company of some Abawanga and Abakabrasi neighbours (Muse, O.I, 1991). As a result of the attacks, many people on the Tachoni side were killed. This discouraged the Tachoni at Sang'alo and Mwibale from carrying out okhulichana which always took place at night. The following testimony sums up the above view:-

'when we were at Sang'alo, we tried the ritual of okhulichana. When the initiates were introduced to the leopard, yingwe, at night, enemies attacked and killed many of our men including the initiates. When we tried the second time, the same misfortune befell us. And when we tried it the third time with similar misfortunes, our elders advised us to stop the ritual of okhulichana because it took place at night. We felt that if this ceremony was taking place during day time, we could be spotting enemies in advance and then taking necessary precautions. So we stopped initiating our youth in the night leopard, yingwe, (Ndombi, O.I, 1991).

This testimony by a descendant of those Abatachoni who stayed at Sang'alo is similar to other experiences by the inhabitants at Mwibale. This similarity in account might be due to the proximity of the two settlements to each other. Thus, the enemies who attacked one settlement might have moved to the next because okhulichana took place on the same days in both settlements. Whether these attacks were deliberately planned to take place on the night of okhulichana or were just a coincidence, they discouraged the Mwibale and Sang'alo groups

from okhulichana.

There accordingly, emerged two groups of Abatachoni in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The group which carried out the rituals of esitabicha and yingwe and the one that carried out the former without accompanying it with the latter. The first group was characterised by the Mwalie group while the second comprised the Sang'alo and Mwibale group. Indeed, priding themselves on their success in the yingwe ritual, the Mwalie group often praised themselves as abaliche or mulicha ngwe which meant the ones who were initiated into the leopard, yingwe, ritual. This praise name has continued to this day.

The difference brought about by okhulichana sparked off a conflict between the two groups. The Mwalie group felt they had undergone more rigour in their initiation because of the ritual of yingwe than the other group. This conflict reached a climax at Sibembe where these two groups met before 1850. There emerged some conflicts which eventually led to a physical confrontation that caused a split in the two groups during the period for going to the ebitabicha. The ones initiating their youth into the yingwe ritual went to their own esitabicha while those without went to a different one. It was during this time that the group without yingwe appointed Abachewa clan members who had maternal links with

Abakusi to become their initiation ritual priests.

From the above paragraph, it should be noted that the yingwe ritual which was used to initiate women in their post-circumcision initiation rituals eventually found its way into the male post-circumcision initiation rituals. In the latter rituals, the men used it so much that they overshadowed women from whom the concept actually originated. These men furnished the concept with more apparatus and imposed heavy discipline among any members who divulged the contents. Hence, those initiated into yingwe ritual boasted of having more knowledge about the entire community than did those not initiated into it.

Here, the movement of the leopard, yingwe, concept acquired more meaning. In addition to the courage and boldness it was meant to instil into the abaliche, it also generated fear and horror into those not initiated into it and even those abaliche who went against the doctrine of the yingwe institution. In other words, yingwe value expanded from a concept into an institution with its own rules and organisation. It was this latter level that the research could not break through because the informants were reluctant to discuss the issue of the yingwe institution at a greater length.

Finally, yingwe concept spread its sphere to encompass even the ebitabicha. How this was done is difficult to establish. But it is claimed that the custodians of yingwe at Mwalie introduced it into the ebitabicha so as to heal the chasm that existed between the Mwalie group and the one of Sang'alo and Mwibale.

As a consequence, yingwe was used in two contexts. There was the day-time yingwe and the night-time variant. Therefore, the concept of okhulichana was broadened to cover the entire process from the time initiates were taken to ebitabicha up to the night of the coming out day (Ndala, O.I, 1991).

This broadening of the concept did heal the chasm. At least both groups started cooperating by going to similar ebitabicha with initiation ritual priests from either group being free to preside over any esitabicha. But this did not make those not initiated in the night yingwe to start praising themselves as abaliche. It is in the latter meaning of yingwe and okhulichana operating at both day-time and night-time contexts that exists today.

3.10 Post-Initiation Nomenclature At Mwalie and Its Environs

The idea of people taking on new names as a mark of identity with a new group, social status or new faith, is

found in many parts of the world. At present, it is mostly pronounced when one becomes a religious convert. But even in politics one can take a new name that identifies one with one's ideology. This characteristic is not new in history.

Among Abatachoni, the idea of taking on new names after initiation dates from time immemorial. In this section, however, the concern is to discuss post-initiation ritual nomenclature at Mwalie and the surrounding areas. Here, the conviction is that post-initiation ritual nomenclature among Abatachoni marked a change in status from childhood to adulthood. Thus, here the nomenclature was symbolic.

In the period between 1800 and 1850, there was a change in address from arabi to se. Both arabi and se meant son of, while arabi was Kalenjin in origin, se was a Tachoni translation. As to the origin of arabi, the sources do not provide any answers. But they recall that at Sirikwa it was already in use.

At Mwalie the use of se emerged in the course of the historical process of bantuisation. Se symbolised that newly graduated warriors were mature men. They left names given to them by their mothers at birth and adopted others which reflected their adulthood. Thus, they took the new names and

added se, before their fathers'¹ names. Se, therefore, stood between the adults' names and their fathers' (Namutala, O.I, 1991).

Names like Sitati, Murumba, Sibuli, Toili, Situma, Nabwera and Marango were taken. These names reflected behavioural tendencies of the individuals. For instance, Sibuli implied militancy, Murumba derived from the Luyia name for the Mvule tree implied strength while Sitati alluded to toughness. This last name was derived from chisitati sticks which made good canes that hardly broke when under use in beating people. These names demonstrate that new adults internalised concepts of militarism which they received during initiation rituals.

Toili implied a tall man, Situma a short and stout man while Marango a man with big thighs. All these names had veiled in them a show of strength and masculinity. In essence, whoever acquired such names was often aggressive and militant in character. Kibeu (O.I. 1991) states that those aggressive adults enjoyed fighting others who were considered weak and cowardly. Sometimes the militant characters falsely accused their victims as having insulted them. The accusations

¹For instance, newly graduated warriors chose names like Murumba and followed them with se before ending with their fathers' names. In this case the father's name was Sifuma. The full names were, therefore, as follows:- Murumba se Sifuma.

were in an endeavour to justify the beating to be meted out. Mainly, the aggressors triumphed in the fight. Such victories spurred them on to continue despising and fighting weak and cowardly men. This aggressive behaviour which cannot be praised in our era was highly valued in the period under study. Aggressive and militant men were considered good protectors and guardians of the Abatachoni against external foes.

Nabwera, on the other hand, implied a neat and tidy person. Thus, the bearer of such a name demonstrated how to maintain cleanliness around him. Such were character traits for leaders among the community. This means that not all the initiated always behaved violently and aggressively. There were those that were polite and clean in behaviour. Therefore, the nomenclature of the post-initiation rituals of Abatachoni between 1800 and 1850 and beyond was very symbolic.

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the movement of social concepts such as circumcision, okhulichana, initiation priesthood and smithing. Concepts of nomenclature and maternalism have been discussed as they facilitated this movement into Mwalie, Sang'alo, Mwibale and other Tachoni settlements between 1800 and 1850. Here, the impact of language on the Tachoni and their age-sets has been underscored.

Furthermore, the whole issue of Tachoni interaction with the Bantu communities has been tackled. This interaction caused the increase of Tachoni clans and consequent increase in the number of clans of initiation ritual priests and circumcisers. The concepts about agriculture and agricultural tools have been discussed as having acquired currency from the above interaction at Mwalie and the environs. The value of militarism has also received attention here. What all these values point to is a cross-fertilisation of ideas that have come into interplay when these various communities interacted. In the next chapter, we discuss how the above concepts moved into other areas of Bungoma and Kakamega districts. We will in particular focus on the movement into Webuye and Kimilili divisions in Bungoma and Lugari division of Kakamega districts, respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 THE MOVEMENT OF INITIATION RITUAL CONCEPTS INTO WEBUYE, KIMILILI AND LUGARI DIVISIONS (AD 1850 - 1895)

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter discusses the movement of initiation ritual concepts into areas of the present Webuye and Kimilili divisions of Bungoma district and Lugari division of Kakamega district, respectively. The movement includes its effect on the practices of circumcision, counselling, and smithing, and also the effect of the concepts on the neighbouring people. Furthermore, the role of the natural environment on initiation concepts will be examined. Finally, this chapter will analyse how the human agency facilitated the spread of the initiation ritual concepts in the areas under study.

To guide in the analysis of these concepts will be the structural functionalist framework. Under this framework, the position of symbolism and other concepts will further be examined. As the processes of historical development unfold, some initiation ritual concepts will simultaneously undergo changes both structurally and semantically. Pressure that is responsible for the changes is subsumed in the theoretically redressive, life-crisis and liminal rituals on the one hand, as well as human agency and natural environments on the other.

4.2 The Dispersion Into Webuye, Kimilili, and Lugari Divisions

As the previous chapter indicated, at Mwalie, Sang'alo and Sibembe, Abatachoni had developed the concept of okhulichana by combining the concept of yingwe with the esitabicha and the night initiation rituals. When around 1850, some of these members were on the move due to clashes with their neighbours (Were, 1967b:92-3; Wandibba, 1985:23), they moved with the concept of okhulichana as well as with other concepts such as circumcision and the consequent age-sets. All the oral accounts interviewed supported the above view.

The movement of these social concepts took several directions. Firstly, there were those clans which moved from Mwalie to the hills around Kibabii and later proceeded to Bokoli location (also known as Sitabicha), Kibingei, Matili and Kamukuywa. Bokoli, Kibingei, Matili and Kamukuywa form part of the present Kimilili division. Included here were the clans of Abakamukong'i, Abanyangali, Abachebukwa, Abarefu, Abakusi, Abakibeti, Abasituyi, Abalukulu, Abachibino, Abamalicha and Abatulu. These clans were later joined by some of the clans that were at Mwibale, Sang'alo and Sibembe (Waluchio, O.I, 1991).

Secondly, other clans from the Mwalie, Sang'alo, Mwibale

and Sibembe settlements moved to Mabanga, Mwiya, Sitikho, Miilo, Chalicha (also known as Khaweli), Matulo, Malaha, Chebosi; Kituni, Maraka and Mahanga exported initiation concepts to the new areas (Waluchio, O.I, 1991). Mabanga, Mwiya and Chalicha are located in Kanduyi division, while Sitikho, Miilo, Matulo, Malaha, Chebosi, Kituni, Maraka and Mahanga are in Webuye division. Clans which took this direction included Abahabiya, Abasamo, Abasang'alo, Abachikha cluster, Abayumbu, Abalukulu, Abasonge, Abasioya, Abangachi, Ababichu, Abasamba, Abatulu, Abakubwayi, Abachimuluku, and Abakafusi. There were yet other clans that moved from Mwiya and other settlements and crossed river Nzoia into parts of Lugari division of Kakamega district. The clans involved were Abasamo, Abawande, Abahabichwa, Abamarakaru, Abasang'alo, Abachikha, Abachewa and Abaluu (Waluchio O.I 91). This movement of people demonstrates that some clan members crossed into Kakamega district while leaving their other clansmen in Bungoma. This shows that the migration was not a monolithic process; but that it was one of small groups moving to places of their choices.

As the above clans moved to occupy new areas, they left some of their members in their old settlements. Those left behind later interacted with clans from other communities and either side got affected. Such is the case for most Tachoni clans currently found in Sirisia and Kanduyi divisions. They

adopted the Bukusu dialect but still retained their concepts in initiation rituals. More interaction through intermarriage also led some Babukusu to initiate their youth into Tachoni initiation values. This was done when the Bukusu based their initiation on the maternal aspect. Hence after 1850, the concepts of yingwe, esitabicha and okhulichana further reached more neighbouring communities whose members intermarried with Abatachoni. Unlike among Abatachoni, however, members from Tachoni's neighbours could initiate their youth into Tachoni initiation ritual values of yingwe, esitabicha and okhulichana either at the homes of Abatachoni where the mothers had come from or at the neighbouring communities' homes where the mothers are married but under exclusive supervision of Tachoni elders (Munyasia, Makhanu, Kwanusu, O.I, 1991).

Tachoni clans who moved to establish new homes in Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions interacted with other members from the neighbouring communities. These communities included Abakabras, Abanyala (Nabakholo) Babukusu, and Abarwa (the Sabaot). Interaction of Abatachoni with these various communities left an impact on the movement of Tachoni initiation concepts. This impact will be discussed in appropriate sections of this chapter.

4.3 Concepts of Circumcision and Age-sets Between 1850 and 1895

In this sub-section, I demonstrate that the manner of interaction among various Tachoni clans influenced the movement of the concept of circumcision. With Abahabiya, Ababichu and Abamachina's interaction with other Tachoni clans on the one hand, and Babukusu and Abanyala on the other, the concept and practice of circumcision was undertaken among other Tachoni clans. Some of these clans included Abaengele, Abayumbu, Abasonge, Abalukulu, Abasang'alo and Abangachi.

Abasonge and Abaengele claim that their circumcision tradition started at Mwalie (Walubengo and Kwanusu, O.I, 1991). But the exact source from which these clans and others above acquired the practice is difficult to ascertain. Two cases can illustrate this. Walubengo (*Ibid*) claims that circumcision as a specialised practice among Abasonge came from a Bukusu clan of Babichachi. However, exactly when this was is difficult for the informant to establish. Others claim that the practice of circumcision by Abasonge can be traced from their interaction with Abahabiya (Muse, O.I, 1991). This conflict in information makes it difficult to ascertain the source of the practice of circumcision, obusebi, among the first members of Abasonge.

On the side of Abangachi, it is alleged that they picked

up the practice of circumcision when they were staying at Chalicha with both Abahabiya and Ababichu. But from which of the two clans of circumcisers the Abangachi's first circumciser acquired the practice is difficult to determine. It is even more complicated by claims that the first circumciser among Abangachi acquired the practice from a Bukusu clan of Baechalo who in turn are said to have received it from Abahabiya (Kerre, O.I, 1991). This is claimed to have been during the initiation period of the maina age-set, that is between 1864 and 1874.

Muse (O.I, 1991), on the other hand, suggests that the first Abangachi circumcisers started the practice in the period of sawa age-set. This was between 1888 and 1898. According to this source, the acquisition was from Abahabiya. This information notwithstanding, Wanyonyi (O.I 1991) argues that the first Mungachi(s) circumciser got the practice from Babichachi during the chuma age-set, that is between 1876 and 1886. This was the time when some Abangachi were staying at Muchi village in Webuye division.

However, the seemingly contradictory information above attests to one fact. This fact is that the first Abangachi circumcisers acquired the practice of circumcision when they had reached Webuye area. Furthermore, the information confirms that the first circumcisers from Abangachi had their

roots in their maternal influence of various origins.

Therefore, the maternal influence is responsible for the dispersion of the concept of circumcision, obusebi, among many clans of Abatachoni between 1850 and 1895. During this period, most of the clans that had circumcisers acquired the skill because of intermarriages with either other Tachoni clans or the neighbouring communities that had circumcisers. Such neighbours included Babukusu, Abakabras, and Abanyala (Nabakholo). Here the art was manifested in the form of a disease which seized a person. The patient trembled profusely on hearing the singing of circumcision songs. But once allowed to practise the art, the patient became cured.

As a result of the number of circumcisers increasing, the practice of circumcision became more regular on an annual basis than before. It was often carried out during the July-August harvesting season in all the settlements of Abatachoni. This same period was the time when the neighbouring Babukusu circumcised their candidates. Hence, the events which happened during the time of circumcision were reflected in the age-sets of the two communities in a similar way.

The period between 1850 and 1895, therefore, witnessed the initiation of about three and a half age-sets. They were nyange 1852-1862 Maina 1864-1874, Chuma 1876-1886 and sawa

which started in 1888 and continued to 1898. During the lifetime of these age-sets several events which occurred were reflected in the nomenclature of the age-set sub-divisions. For instance, the age-set of chuma was subdivided into chonge-nabiri 1876, wa ngwelo 1878, sia ng'iniesi 1880, maasai 1882, machukhu 1884 and nabitandanyi in 1886¹ (Mulama, 0.1. 1991).

Each of the above six sub-divisions was named after an event that stood out in importance over all others. Chonge Nabiri was a leader of Abalaku (Bok) who frequently attacked Abatachoni. So Abatachoni and Babukusu are said to have teamed up against him and eventually killed him. His death heralded the end of an epoch of harassment from the Bok community. To mark the end of this era, both Abatachoni and Babukusu named the circumcision period which immediately followed Chonge's death after him (Kofulo, 0.I, 1991). This information is corroborated by Simiyu's (1982:5) view which states that at Chonge's fort there were bitter battles. Furthermore, that the name by which Chonge's fort was known to the Bukusu was Mungachi, is a pointer to the fact that some of the Tachoni members who fought in those wars came from the Abangachi clan.

¹Though the sub-divisions are based on even years, this was as a result of the pairing for convenience. Otherwise, oral sources confirm that initiation during those years was carried out annually. It was only from 1942 that initiation rituals among Abatachoni were performed during even years.

Wa ngwelo literally means at Ngwelo's. This name has at present taken ground as a name of a place in Webuye division. As to what sparked off this name and its association with the above circumcision age-set sub-division, no informant among those interviewed could tell. But certainly, whatever that event was, it must have arrested the attention of most people of the contemporary.

Sia ng'iniesi literally means of the star. Professor Wandibba argues that it was named after the morning star (personal communication, 1992). This implies that such morning star during the above sub-division caused fear, confusion and anxiety among the viewers. As a result of these various reactions, elders named the sub-division after it.

Maasai sub-division probably referred to the Uasin Gishu Maasai who made frequent raids against the Abaluyia in the nineteenth century. It is claimed that the period preceding the circumcision sub-division known as maasai, the Maasai attacks against Abatachoni and Babukusu were resisted with decisive firmness and victory. Almost the entire Maasai raiding unit was annihilated (Kofulo, O.I, 1991). This view is further supported by Were (1967b: 147-8) who argues that most of those Maasai raiders were either drowned in Kuywa river by Babukusu or decimated by the Tachoni warriors. The routing was so phenomenal that the Tachoni and Bukusu elders

of the time called the sub-division maasai as a way of commemorating their victory (Kofulo, O.I, 1991).

Machukhu was coined from contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia which killed large numbers of livestock during the period generally referred to in the age-set. When the dead cattle were skinned, they were found to have swollen lungs, amachukhu. The pleuro-pneumonia scourge was not limited to Tachoni and Bukusuland. It covered the entire western Kenya and even beyond. Van Zwanenberg (1970:85) argues that the scourge was introduced into East Africa through South Africa about the 1840s. He further argues that the disease spread through commerce, transport and consequent increased demand for meat.

It is argued that the disease wiped out so many cattle that the initiation rituals during that period were performed with less festivity and jubilation. Some parents initiated their youth without slaughtering any bull, ox or goat for meat. Not even maternal uncles had any animals to slaughter for their nephews. Hence the circumcision period was characterised with food scarcities. It was this difficulty that caused elders to brand the age-set sub-division as machukhu, an abbreviated form of the Tachoni way of calling contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, olumbe Iwa machukhu. Thus, the sub-division is commemorative of an economic disaster.

Nabitandanyi, referred to mumps. The word was derived from a Bukusu noun butandanyi, meaning mumps. Mumps was a disease which afflicted a lot of children in the initiation period known as nabitandanyi. Elders, therefore, reflected the worries, anxiety and concern they had over the survival of their children by calling the age-set sub-division initiated during the epidemic as nabitandanyi (Mulama, Kofulo, O.I, 1991).

Sub-divisions in chuma age-set are an illustration to demonstrate how Tachoni members used age-grades to reflect environmental peculiarities. While age-sets were, and even now are still, cyclic and repetitive, the age-grades were, as they are now, linear and non-repetitive. This was true for most of the other age-sets apart from the only exception that will be discussed in the next chapter. Furthermore, the above sub-divisions reflect the similarity in naming between Abatachoni and Babukusu. Here it is probable that environmental similarities affected the designation of their age-sets and age-grades.

The above designation grows fainter as one moves from the Tachoni neighbourhood with Babukusu towards their neighbourhood with Abakabras. This difference in the names of age-set sub-divisions might have stemmed from the influence of these neighbours as they interacted with Abatachoni. For

Abakabras, their initiation took place in December while the other two stretched from August and finished with post-circumcision initiation rituals in December. This variation in the actual period in which the rituals were performed probably accounts for the absence of such names in the subdivisions of Abatachoni bordering Abakabras. In this case the influence of Abakabras is reflected in Tachoni initiation values.

Circumcision and age-sets were vital guides in showing past settlements of Abatachoni. For instance, Chetambe se Yifile was born at Sibembe about 1818 and was circumcised at the same place during the age-set of kinyikeu sia nayeya in about 1838 (Makila, 1982:16) and his first-born Kakai born about 1845 at Sibembe was circumcised when his parents had migrated from Sibembe to Matulo. Thus, Kakai's age-set, maina nakhoba in 1874 was initiated when most of Abangachi and other Abatachoni had moved towards Webuye.

A similar illustration of using circumcision and age-sets to indicate the settlements of Abatachoni is provided by Munyasia (O.I,1991). He recalls that during the kinyikeu age-set, between 1830 and 1840, some groups of Abatachoni clans such as Abahabichwa, Abamarakaru, Abawande, Abasamo and Abasang'alo were at Sitikho. When the nyange and maina age-sets were initiated between 1852 and 1874, the group had

crossed River Nzoia and were settled in Bunyala (Nabakholo) area. By 1895 the group had passed several areas and were staying at Kulumbeni in Lugari division.

In this sub-section, therefore, circumcision and age-set concepts have spread into areas of Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions. Also another dimension of the two concepts has emerged. Both these circumcision and age-set concepts serve as historical guides. It is through them that people recall distant past settlements and events which took place among of Abatachoni.

4.4. The Concepts of Esitabicha and Okhulichana Between 1850 and 1895

Like the concepts of circumcision and age-sets, those about post-circumcision initiation rituals continued in all the new places various clans of Abatachoni settled in. The new settlements were in Webuye, Kimilili, and Lugari divisions. Several ebitabicha were established along the river banks. The greatest number was located on the banks of River Nzoia. Here ebitachicha were located at Nzoia village, Kakimanyi area and Nabuyole area. There were also many others on streams nearest to places where Tachoni clans had settled. The overriding principle behind the numerous number of ebitabicha was to ensure a short distance which enabled elders to take initiates for the ritual counselling and

blessing and return without being rained on on their way home (Waluchio, O.I. 1991).

The increase in ebitabicha and the variety of areas settled by Tachoni clans necessitated an increase in the number of ababiti. Among the clans that moved towards Kibabii area, the Abanyangali clan members emerged as ababiti while at Sibembe, Abatulu acquired the same status. At Bokoli, Abakusi officiated at the post-circumcision initiation rituals. In the latter's esitabicha many initiates were sent for ritual blessing and counselling. As a consequence of the importance ascribed to the Bokoli esitabicha, that general area of Bokoli was known as Sitabicha (Namutala, O.I, 1991). The existence of this name as a reference to Bokoli area is further supported by Were (1967:91). Indeed, there is even today a region within Bokoli location that is still known as Sitabicha.

Furthermore, clans of Abasamba and Ababichu acquired obubiti after leaving Mwalie. They were most probably influenced by Abakusi with whom they had moved up to Mwalie (Masinde, O.I,1991). These two clans presided over ebitabicha that were on River Nzoia (Masinde, O.I. 1991). The inheritance of this concept of obubiti was always as a result of interactions among Tachoni clans that had initiation ritual priests (ababiti) with those without. No clan of initiation

ritual priests among Abatachoni traces the source from another community as the case for circumcisers was.

Both the new and old clans of initiation ritual priests continued presiding over ebitabicha. But in an esitabicha where a number of Abakusi was sent for initiation, it was often an Omukusi (s1) who ritually presided over it. Gradually, certain clans which had initiation ritual priests distinguished themselves as initiators. Their distinction was associated with the general prosperity, peace, fertility and good health of the members. Such clans included Abakusi, Abameywa, Abamweya, Abalukulu, Abasioya, Abanyangali, Abasamba and Abasianiaka. All the informants acknowledge the above clans as the leading in the performance of initiation ritual priesthood, obubiti.

As for Abamuhongo, their initiation ritual priesthood vanished when they were at Miilo. The loss was attributed to a physical conflict between members of Abamuhongo and those of Abasoko clan (Abakabrasi) which resulted in Abamuhongo killing a man from Abasoko clan. In this way, the initiation ritual priesthood of Abamuhongo was defiled. So they could not proceed with it (Wanyonyi, O.I. 1991).

Values which preoccupied initiation ritual priests during this period depended on the events of individual circumcision

seasons. For instance, during the chuma age-set which took place from about 1876 to 1886 as we have discussed in section 4.3., the nomenclature of age-grade sub-divisions reflected many military confrontations and diseases which afflicted people as well as livestock. These events conditioned initiation ritual priests to pray for the eradication of such misfortunes, for peace to prevail, for the prosperity of their livestock and for the good health of their children (Kibeu, O.I. 1991).

And, depending on the specificity of other local events and resourcefulness of individual initiation ritual priests, those initiation ritual priests commented on several other topical issues. In those comments, the initiation ritual priests always aimed at ensuring that the Abatachoni received good fortunes whether in their livestock, their crops or their families. If there existed bad people, people who caused suffering and premature death especially among the children and youth, such people were cursed. The curse directed against evil people was articulated as demonstrated below:-

Initiation ritual priests: Let evil people be thoroughly bent, bekanye.

Other elderly people's chorus: Let them be thoroughly bent, bekanye. (Kibeu, O.I. 1991).

To 'be thoroughly bent' literally implied that the evil people should be deformed, because of their malpractices against fellow Abatachoni. Okhwikanya, to be deformed as a concept usually sent cold shivers down most people's spines. The concept helped in discouraging as well as scaring away some evil minded people. Hence, the articulations of the priests were immensely useful. It, therefore, follows that whatever received particular attention from the ritual priests was dictated by the overriding social and natural environmental factors impinging upon the community.

4.5 The Ritual of Okhulichana Between 1850 and 1895

The manner in which various clans interacted between 1850 and 1895 and after affected the movement of concept of okhulichana. Of importance here was the spread of the night yingwe into more clans. When several clans stayed together at Mabanga, Sitikho, Matulo, Bokoli and Mahanga, for instance, their members interacted with one another. Some of those from the clans which initiated their youth into values of the night yingwe intermarried with others who did not have that concept. Consequently, some children of such couples caused values of the night yingwe to reach clans which previously never initiated their youth into the concept. The choice was made either voluntarily or due to misfortunes befalling a member of such families. In the case of misfortunes, it was often after consultation with elders or diviners that the victims

were initiated into the night yingwe. And if the misfortunes were caused due to the need for the person to be initiated into the night yingwe, the person eventually got cured. This was how clans such as Abakubwayi, Abachikha cluster, Abasamo, Abamarakaru, Abawande, Abasang'alo, Abachewa, Abamakhanga, Abachimuluku, Abaluu and Abahabichwa inherited the values of the night yingwe.

Exactly when each of the above clans received the night yingwe varied. For instance, Abawande claim to have received it during the chuma age-set, that is, between 1876 and 1886. During that time they were with Abangachi at Matulo (Yinungilo, O.I, 1991). Abasang'alo claim to have received it at Sitikho where they lived with such clans as Abangachi, Abahabiya, Abasioya and Abakafusi (Chetambe and Wanyama, O.I, 1991). This was claimed to be during the initiation period of kinyikeu and nyange age-sets. This period was, thus, between 1840 and 1862.

By the end of 1895, most Tachoni clans had, therefore, received values contained in the night yingwe. But where the acquisition was by maternal influence, not all members were initiated into it during this later period. The acquisition meant that the members' interaction had legitimising impact on the concept of yingwe among the clans which had newly joined other older ones. Unlike the first time when such

clans merely aped others in initiating their youth into yingwe, this time there were no misfortunes. Hence the dispersion of the night time yingwe values into more sections of Abatachoni continues using the maternal influence upto now.

The maternalism that enabled such acquisition received a distinguishing term. In Olutachoni it was known as yingwe ye bunyina, meaning the yingwe from the maternal side. With this concept, the gap that was felt, and which at one time led to the two sections of Abatachoni going to different ebitabicha was bridged. For, on either side, values contained in the night yingwe were experienced.

It would appear that during the period between 1850 and 1895, this phenomenon of okhulichana received more attention from Tachoni neighbours. They even referred to Abatachoni as abaliche or baliche depending on the dialect of the neighbours. Abaliche, meant people who usually initiated their youth into the concept of yingwe. Places where Tachoni clans settled were referred to as Chalicha, a reference to the okhulichana ritual.

Gradually, Chalicha as a name gained currency until to this day there is a place known by it. The place is found around Nzoia Sugar Factory in Kanduyi division. The area was previously known as Khaweli. But when various Tachoni clans

such as Abangachi, Abasioya, Abahabiya, Ababichu, Abalukulu and Abasianiaka occupied that general area, the area became associated with the ritual of okhulichana. Continued annual initiation rituals of okhulichana featured around Khaweli so much that the former name was overshadowed by the new name of Chalicha.

The nature of the movement of the concepts of esitabicha and okhulichana was greatly dependent on the number of Tachoni clans. Where they were many, they influenced some members of the neighbouring communities to also initiate some of their children into values of Tachoni initiation rituals. This was the case in Webuye where some Kabras clans of Abamachina, Abamuchembi, Abachibusia and Abasiu were initiated into Tachoni rituals. And to this day, some of these clans are considered as Abatachoni. Where Abatachoni were few, however, they were adversely affected in the movement of their concepts embodied in initiation rituals. Such clans included Abaluu, Abawande and Abasamo. These clans are found in Lugari division.

When Abaluu crossed River Nzoia, they lived among Abakabrasi. And during initiation season, the Kabras community found Tachoni values in esitabicha and okhulichana very strange. Abakabras attacked Abaluu who were busy initiating their youth. As a result many Abaluu members were

killed. Hence some Abaluu members recrossed River Nzoia and continued with their initiation practices. Those who remained in Kabras dropped their rituals. The latter section consequently became part of Abakabras (Mumelo, O.I. 1991).

Some Abawande and Abasamo also dropped Tachoni initiation practices and took up those of Abakabras. But the cases surrounding these two clans change of values differ from the one of Abaluu. For instance, when Abasamo went to Kabras, they were too few to continue with their practices of esitabicha and okhulichana. They, therefore, gradually dropped these concepts in favour of Kabras ones. With such change, this section of Abasamo became known as Abakhusia (Chetambe, O.I, 1991). The name was derived from a Luyia verb Khusia, which means bring up something or someone. Hence Abakhusia means those who were brought up. And in this case, the Abakhusia were brought up by Abakabras. Indeed, this section is found around Lukume in Malava division where they are an enclave of Abakabras.

The spread of concepts in Tachoni initiation rituals around Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions also penetrated their neighbours. This penetration was brought about by interaction through intermarriages in a way similar to what took place at Mwalje, Sang'alo, Mwibale, and Sibembe between 1850 and 1895. The part of the Mwalie areas was discussed

early in this chapter. The same processes took place among the communities of Abakabras, Abanyala (Nabakholo) and Babukusu between the same period.

4.6 Contribution of Smithing to the Movement of Initiation Values and Rituals Among Abatachoni Between 1850 and 1895

In this sub-section, the practice of smithing is discussed to show how it permeated into new clans which did not have it before. The manner of acquisition of the art by certain clans is seen to depart from the usual approach of one falling sick and later being advised by diviners to take up the profession of smithing. Furthermore, the tools used in the rituals of initiation are shown to have been manufactured with a better skill than before.

The period between 1850 and 1895 witnessed an increase in the number of clans that practised smithing among the Tachoni community. For instance, Abangachi and Abasang'alo acquired smithing during this period. Some informants claim that Abangachi started smithing during the maina age-set, that was between 1864 and 1874 (Muse and Wanyonyi, O.I 1991). In this period the clan was settled in the present Webuye area. But the famous Chetambe fort had not been constructed. About Abasang'alo, only one source claims that they acquired their smithing practice during the chuma age-set that lasted between 1876 and 1886 (Wanyama, O.I. 1991). This clan was also staying

within Webuye by that time.

As to the origin of smithing among Abangachi, the sources give conflicting information. Muse argues that the first smith among Abangachi was Wekulo whose wife was a Kabras. Her clan was known as Abamuchembi. According to this informant, Wekulo's wife went to her parents' home and returned with the bellows, omukuba, to her home. Wekulo took possession of it and gradually taught himself how to forge tools. Here the informant discounts the thesis of always a person suffering from the smithing spirit, omusambuwa kwa obwiranyi, first before he is advised to accept the practice.

Wanyonyi (op. cit), however, argues that Abangachi's first smith was known as Muyekho. According to this informant, Muyekho inherited the practice from the maternal side. She came from Abamakhanga. Here, the argument is that the process of intermarriage was a contributory factor to the introduction of smithing into the clan of Abangachi. This method of acquisition is what enabled most of the clans discussed above acquire smithing, circumcision and obubiti.

The above contradictory views confirm that Abangachi acquired smithing in different ways. One of the ways was through the personal initiative of Wekulo. The other was through the maternal influence from Abamakhanga. To this day

the descendants of Wekulo are still famous smiths among Abatachoni of Ndivisi location. Some of them are a Mr. Nabwera's² sons. They live and practise their skills around Ndivisi secondary school.

Once the initiative matured into producing a skilled smith, other members went to buy his products. Wekulo's descendants are an example. They represent a people whose ancestor learnt on his own how to forge tools. They are now the leading smiths in Ndivisi area.

The success of smithing in this period between 1850 and 1895 depended on the availability of iron ore. And just like at Mwalie, iron ores were available in Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions. Because of this availability, the manufacture of tools improved. For instance, at about the time of the nyange age-set, that is between 1852 and 1862, the residents of Mabanga manufactured barbed arrows. Previously such tools were obtained from Abarwa, Kalenjins (Muse, O.I 1991).

The above claim is supported by Masinde (O.I, 1991). He maintains that knowledge about the effectiveness of arrows arose from the Nandi attacks on Babukusu. According to this

²Nabwera was a famous iron smith in Ndivisi in the 1960s and s.

source, while the Babukusu warriors used spears and shields, the Nandi employed their bows and arrows with devastating losses inflicted on the Bukusu side. Abatachoni, who had abstained from the war, took note of the impact of the bows and arrows. They befriended the Nandi who taught them how to manufacture such arrows. Since then bows and arrows were incorporated into the paraphernalia used at ebitabicha in greater numbers than before.

Increases in the number of smiths among Abatachoni meant that the members had a variety from whom to obtain services. This variety implied competition and the smiths were consequently forced to improve workmanship in their products. Thus, jingle bells, chinyimba, bangles, ebitili, circumcision knives, amahalo, spears and swords were dexterously improved upon in the manufacture.

4.7 Concept of the East, Yikwe

As stated in the previous chapter, the spread of values to do with initiation rituals has mainly demonstrated an easterly trend. That is, with a few exceptions. Members of Abatachoni have been developing their values as they moved eastward. Those that strayed westwards from Mwalie eventually got assimilated into other communities such as Babukusu, Abawanga, Abamarachi, and Abakhayo (Wandibba, 1985:29-30; KNA/DC/NN/1 of 1902-1916; Wambasi, O.I, 1991).

The members of Abatachoni who, however, continued moving in a general easterly direction took the concept of east, yikwe, symbolically. This symbolism of the east is also found among several other communities. Included here are the Kipsigis, Nandi, Sabaot, Abakabras and some Bukusu clans. What east symbolised or symbolises and its historical origins among the communities is beyond the scope of this study. Among Abatachoni, on the other hand, the symbolism was manifest in their initiation rituals. Whether in circumcision or esitabicha, all Tachoni clans faced an easterly direction.

In the case of circumcision, the male initiation candidates often stood facing the east, yikwe, with their hands raised and bent at the elbows grasping special sticks, emisukuni (pl) across the backs of their necks. They stood in that position until the process of circumcision was over (see appendix V). This position was widely believed to enable witnesses observe whether or not the candidates withstood the circumcision pain. It was contrasted with lying down facing upwards that was allowed for girls. But if the male candidates showed fear they too were forcefully pinned down facing upwards. Sometimes, such cowards were tied with leather straps. The last group of the maina age-set, initiated in 1874, had many of its initiation candidates circumcised when tied by such straps, known in Olutachoni as olukhoba. Hence the age-set sub-division was known as maina

nakhoba. The standing position continues to be practised to the present (Waluchio, O.I, 1991).

The easterly direction symbolised where Abatachoni got their circumcision from. East also referred to the origin of most of the Tachoni clans. Thus, when they faced eastward, Abatachoni symbolised their continued practice of initiation rituals which started in the east before the people's migration.

Furthermore, facing the east signified Abatachoni's obedience to their diviners. According to some sources, it was the diviners and counsellors who instructed other members never to go beyond Tololo (Tororo) in Uganda, but instead to reach Tololo and then return eastward to where they came from. Such diviners were Chengoli of Abakamukong'i clan (Manyorore, O.I, 1991) and Kamukuta of Abahabiya clan (Muse, O.I. 1991). Therefore, during circumcision, facing east symbolised Abatachoni's journey back to their original homeland. This interpretation implies that the east as a concept in circumcision started at Mwalie. Yet other communities such as the Sabaot with whom Abatachoni claim similar historical origins, face the east even when they never migrated beyond the Mount Elgon area. Hence this latter interpretation must have emerged in recent times when Abatachoni had embarked on their eastward migration.

Apart from the above historical link with the concept of yikwe among Abatachoni, the concept was further closely tied up with the entire cosmological view of the community. It referred to where the sun rises from, to the source of light and was also associated with good luck (Masinde and Namutala, O.I, 1991). For instance, the morning sun, kwa yisenyi was believed to shower blessings and also give strength to the people, as contrasted to the evening one, kwa abamakombe, that was assumed to be for the dead. In fact the word abamakombe referred to ghosts. Hence the evening sun was avoided while kwa yisenyi was favoured (Namutala, O.I. 1991). It was believed to be a source of life and family heads always spat first in that direction every morning praying to God for peace, good health, fertility and prosperity in the family. They also spat in the west praying for all evil to remain there.

Yikwe, where the sun rises, the spring of good fortune, therefore, had a religious value. Hence when initiation ritual candidates stood facing the east in the morning ready for circumcision, they symbolically received the knowledge of circumcision, energy, strength and blessings from God. Connecting yikwe with God lends credence to the view that at the intellectual level, the Tachoni yikwe symbolised the indefinite. For no one could locate God's abode (Namutala, O.I, 1991). This view seems to have been strongest prior to

1895.

The above, therefore, demonstrate that yikwe had both historical and cosmological values. When Abatachoni referred to themselves as Abekwe (those of the east) they simultaneously evoked both historical and religious values. And clans from other communities that took up concepts of esitabicha and yikwe were at once accepting a new symbolic identity as they also helped to enlarge the meaning of the concept. For instance, when people from Abawanga, Abasamia and Abamarachi with their historical origins traceable from the west of their present area broadened the symbolic value of yikwe on accepting the concepts of esitabicha and yikwe. To such people, yikwe symbolised the maternal importance. Thus, in time perspective, the cosmological view of yikwe kept on changing.

But maternal influence was also signified in another way among Abatachoni. In their migration to Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari areas, Abatachoni interacted with their neighbours. As a result, some of the Tachoni youth were initiated into their maternal values of the west, Mumbo. Mumbo was a general direction where initiation candidates of Babukusu and Abanyala (Nabakholo) faced during circumcision. In this way, maternalism has a double role in the movement of initiation values among Abatachoni. It reinforced the concepts of yikwe

and esitabicha, on the one hand, and also allowed other values from the neighbouring communities to penetrate into the Tachoni fabric, on the other.

4.8 The Emergence of Sangaya Between 1850 and 1895

During initiation rituals, the concept of sangaya was reflected in the post-circumcision initiation ritual songs. Thus, in this sub-section, it behoves us to trace sangaya's origin by tracing the development from its earliest time. From the outset, sangaya connotes a journey motif. This is because it was often sung when people were moving, either going to esitabicha or back. When going to the esitabicha the elders sang and danced as they moved towards their sanctuary which was in an easterly direction. In the middle of the ranks of the singing elders, initiates who were arranged in a single file based on the seniority of clans in relation to obubiti, majestically marched. The same arrangement was followed when the elders returned initiates home. This trend which was witnessed at Mwalie from the early part of the 19th century continued up to Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions. It is still practised today.

Disagreement, however, exists about the original words of the song which the elders sang. Most informants claim the song was called Sengeli in commemoration of the big esitabicha at Sengeli where Tachoni members went for their ritual-

counselling and blessing before the members set out on their migration from there. Others claim that the song was originally known as Sengweri (Wekesa, O.I, 1991). This was a reference to the Sengwer or Seker community. Yet others maintain that the content of the song was Sengeret (Namutala, O.I. 1991). This too, like Sengeli, referred to the place where the big esitabicha was before the migration from the region of Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi. In this way, it is probable that Sengeret was the same place as Sengeli (see chapter two above).

Be that as it may, both the general area of Sengeli and the community of Sengweri were found in the general area of West Pokot, Trans Nzoia, and Uasin Gishu districts. Looked at from this angle, the Sengweri, or Sengeli are in the east of the location inhabited by Abatachoni. Thus, if the song was a symbol to commemorate the big esitabicha at Sengeli, the members then have a historical importance attached to it. In this case, the journey from where initiates assembled to the place where they went for their ritual blessings and counselling symbolised going back to Sengeli. In this later dimension, the Sengeli song is a psychological and emotional revival of the post-circumcision initiation ritual.

Gradually, the meaning of the actual words contained in the song was lost. Even the key word, whether it was Sengeli,

Sengeret or Sengweri changed into Sangaya. This change most probably took place as Abatachoni were moving from the areas of Mwalie to the areas of Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions. This change was not deliberate. It was part of the whole process of cultural growth as the values embodied in initiation rituals among Abatachoni expanded in their territorial and ritual scale.

The above view was attested to by Hoebel (1966:80). He argues that in cultural growth, forms of traits or complexes could remain the same while the meaning and perhaps the use and function altered. In the case of sangaya, its transformation from Sengeli or Sengweri hardly affected the use and function. Instead, its meaning was the one affected. This effect arose from the interaction of people with different values. The final product, sangaya, contributed to the cultural growth which translated the place name Sengeli or people's name Sengweri to a mainly ritual name sangaya.

The implication of the change was that the historical Sengeli or Sengweri waned in importance. In its place the general ritual of post-circumcision initiation emerged. This view prevailed among most informants who were asked about the meaning of sangaya. They alleged that it signified the day of happiness, festivity and satisfaction when initiates were sent to abitabicha before the final coming out. This

interpretation was probably derived from a Tachoni verb sangala which means be happy or merry. The similarity in form between sangaya and sangala, therefore, reinforced the interpretation.

4.9 The Emergence of the Concept of Chebutalang'i in Initiation Rituals Between 1850 and 1895

The emergence of the term chebutalang'i seems to have its roots in the ritual of esitabicha. Its history dates from the era when the Tachoni ancestors were still a mainly Kalenjin speaking community. During that time, therefore, before the seventeenth century, the Tachoni God was known as Cheptailel (Laisikwa's unpublished text). It was to this Cheptailel that the community prayed for blessings and protection as they went to the esitabicha where the initiates were passed through arch-like huts and then dipped into water as a further process of initiation.

The concept of Cheptailel among Abatachoni, very much resembles the one of the Kipsigis (Mwanzi, 1977:118-119). But unlike the Kipsigis, Abatachoni did not seem to ascribe any gender to their God. Yet the ritualistic description of Abatachoni's conduct as they went to ebitabicha closely resembled those described by Mwanzi. Thus, the Tachoni rigorous dances, their men's wearing of female clothing and their general simulation of women's conduct resembled the

Kipsigis conduct of the initiates. For the Kipsigis, Mwanzi states that the male initiates wore female clothes, decorated themselves and generally behaved like girls during the seclusion period (Mwanzi, Ibid: 103).

The notable difference in the feminine simulation between the two communities are that among the Kipsigis it was the male initiates who acted during the seclusion period, while among Abatachoni it was male adults on the day when they guided initiates to the ebitabicha. Mwanzi connects the conduct with the matrilineal concept of the Mwari cult. But for Abatachoni, the origin is traceable to their stay at Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi. At Mwalie, therefore, the practice was already established. Whether the two communities received the idea of males' simulation of feminine behaviour in initiation rituals from the same source in the remote past is probable but beyond the scope of this study.

Cheptailal's connection with water and feminism in post-circumcision initiation ritual was a symbol of production, prosperity, fertility and good health. When Cheptailal was sung and addressed to during the day of esitabicha, therefore, all the above values were connoted. This articulation and the values continued up to Mwalie.

But at Mwalie and the surrounding areas, the linguistic

mechanisms which took place as discussed in the previous chapter, ultimately affected the articulation of Cheptailé. As elders who were conversant with the concept died and were replaced by younger descendants who spoke a Luyia dialect, the articulation of Cheptailé gradually changed and became chebutalang'i. A source (Wekesa, O.I. 1991) claimed that when Abatachoni were settled in Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari divisions, the conceptual change was already manifest. Thus, by this period between 1850 and 1895, Cheptailé was already changing in form to chebutalangi. Just like sangaya, chebutalang'i was equally reflected in songs sung en route to ebitabicha and back from there.

Semantically, chebutalang'i resembles a Luyia noun etalang'i that means a lion. The change reflects to a large extent the Bukusu interaction with the Tachoni community. For it is Babukusu and not Abatachoni who refer to the lion as etalang'i. This point is corroborated by Simiyu (1985:7) who argues that themes of the lion, etalang'i, are very central among the Bukusu and Bakisu. Abatachoni, on the contrary, referred to the lion as enyatuni. Hence their interpretation of chebutalangi' as referring to the lion stemmed from the interaction of Abatachoni with Babukusu. This change in word articulation and meaning is still alive today.

The above interpretation found credence in the process

of okhulichana. Thus, after initiating the youth into the ritual value of yingwe, elders finished the process by initiating the same youth on the same night into the ritual value of etalang'i (Muse, O.I., 1991). Hence, the lion concept came in as a later and mature stage of this okhulichana. This later appearance has a symbolic importance. It signified that initiates were being prepared to be mature, firm and responsible leaders of the community (Khakame, O.I., 1991).

As to when the lion concept was added to that of yingwe is not clear. But it should probably be when Abatachoni had been at Mwalie for some time. This is due to the fact that before Mwalie, the lion concept was practised at Mt. Elgon area where it was used in the male post-circumcision initiation rituals. And in those rituals, yingwe, was completely excluded. Thus, the fact that the two concepts of yingwe and etalang'i were merged at Mwalie by Abatachoni must have been in the early part of the nineteenth century.

And with the importance of etalang'i in the post-circumcision initiation rituals, the concept of chebutalang'i assumed a predominantly ritually bound dimension. It became associated with the stately and authoritative qualities of a lion instead of the supernatural and religious qualities of God. As a consequence, in the nineteenth century, and especially the later part of it, the concept of God among

Abatachoni was expressed in the name of Were and not Cheptalel. But unlike the latter, Were was not incorporated into the post-circumcision initiation rituals.

Thus, by the time Abatachoni were living in Webuye, Kimilili, and Lugari divisions, the movement of initiation concepts had undergone several changes in both form and scale. It is the task of the next chapter to discuss how the colonial climate affected this movement. The period that will be the concern of that chapter is between 1895 and 1946.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 THE NATURE OF SOCIAL CONCEPTS IN INITIATION RITUALS
DURING THE COLONIAL ERA.5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the discussion will mainly be on the enlargement in scale of concepts as a result of the colonial situation. This situation dates from the July of 1894 when Abatachoni and the entire Abaluyia fell within the administrative boundaries of the British Uganda Protectorate. Under the Protectorate, Abaluyia, Luo, Nandi, Kipsigis and Abagusii formed the Eastern Province whose administrative base was established at Mumias. Colonel Colvile was appointed the first commissioner of the protectorate while his representative in the Eastern Province was Sir Frederick Spire (Were, 1967b:155-158; Esese, 1990:191).

On the first of April, 1902, the Eastern Province of Uganda protectorate was transferred to the British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya), [KNA/DC/NN/3/1]. This change meant that Buluyia¹ also changed its colonial allegiances from the Uganda Protectorate to the East Africa Protectorate. At first this change had little impact on the movement of values.

¹The land of the Abaluyia community

inherent in the initiations of Abatachoni. But as years passed and the colonial situation took root, the impact became more increasingly felt. Hence, the concern of this chapter, which covers a period of between 1895 and 1946, will be to demonstrate how some of the concepts were affected by the colonial situation. The chapter contends that administrative and religious factors played a key role in influencing values in the initiation rituals of Abatachoni.

To facilitate in the analysis is Victor Turner's articulation of structural functionalism (Shorter, 1972:139-140). Under his perception, initiation rituals can be best studied when one analyses the four observable structures contained in rituals. But of the four; symbolic, value, purposive and role structures, the last one is crucial in demonstrating how the colonial influence led to change as well as enlargement in the scope of concepts and values in initiation rituals among Abatachoni. Indeed, the role structure states that ritual is the product of the interaction of different human actors who represent different social categories. In this chapter, these categories include Abatachoni, their neighbours and the colonial administration together with Christian missionaries.

5.2 Colonial Administration and the Movement of Initiation

Concepts: 1895 - 1946

The previous chapter discussed the dispersion of social concepts in the initiation rituals of Abatachoni between 1850 and 1895. The factors that caused this dispersion were quite different from the ones which caused the movement between 1895 and 1946. Whereas the former was caused by the pre-colonial African situation, the latter emanated from the colonial situation. In 1895 colonial forces fought against the Bukusu resistance causing Babukusu to seek refuge at Webuye where a big and more spacious Chetambe fort stood. Chetambe se Yifile, a Tachoni leader, was the owner of and ruler in the fort (Makila, 1982:17; Nangulu, 1986:51-61; Were, 1967b:166-167).

In the fort, Babukusu and Abatachoni combined forces and for six days strongly resisted the colonial forces and their allies who comprised Nubians, Baganda, and Wanga soldiers. In the Wanga camp there were also the Maasai mercenaries (Makila, 1982:208; Kibutuli; O.I 1991; Kapchanga, O.I, 1991). The colonial forces fearing to lose in the battle sought for more reinforcement from Mumias.

At Chetambe, on the other hand, some Abatachoni, including their leaders withdrew from the war. According to them, there was no reason in fighting in a war which was not

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At Chetambe, on the other hand, some Abatachoni, including their leaders withdrew from the war. According to them, there was no reason in fighting in a war which was not

theirs (Nangulu, op-cit; Kapchanga, 0.1, 1991, Kibutuli, 0.1, 1991). This withdrawal had various consequences such as the eventual defeat of Babukusu. It also led to the migration of some Abatachoni to other areas which included Mihuu, Magemo, Misikhu and Lugusi all in Webuye division, and Kibisi, Naitiri, Ndalul, Mabusi and Tongaren in Tongaren division. Some Abatachoni went to join their brothers in Lugari and Kimilili divisions. A few others returned to Chetambe after the war; Chetambe himself was among the latter group.

When Tongaren became a colonial settlement in 1913, Abatachoni who had occupied this area were forced out and some became squatters in both Tongaren and Lugari divisions (Kapchanga, 0.I, 1991; Namutala, 0.I, 1991; Wafula, 1981:32; Aseka, 1989:252). Thus, by 1946 Abatachoni were staying as far apart as in Sirisia, Kanduyi, Webuye, Kimilili, Lugari and Tongaren. But the majority were, as are now, found in Webuye division.

With the migration of Abatachoni to new areas, Tachoni initiation values also reached those new areas by the same migrants. For instance, new ebitabicha were established in Tongaren and Lugari divisions. Two of them established during the kolongolo age - set of between 1900 and 1910 were known as Mayakalo (Mbakalu) and Lunyu. Both are situated in Tongaren division. Like in the other areas, more ebitabicha

were established on the banks of river Nzoia. In these ebitabicha, various Tachoni clans sent their neophytes for initiation ritual blessing and counselling. The initiation ritual blessing and counselling as well as the initiation ritual priests were affected by certain colonial values as will be seen below.

During the colonial period, especially from the 1930s, the colonial money affected the performance of initiation ritual priesthood. Instead of beer and meat gifts which were given to initiation ritual priests in the pre-colonial period, money was given in appreciation of their duties. Money gave rise to rivalry among initiation ritual priests. They struggled to initiate more numbers so as to make more money. Even individual members in clans possessing initiation ritual priests differed among themselves when appointing an initiation ritual priest, for taking up the office became not only associated with the previous ritual powers but also with monetary benefits (Kibeu, O.I, 1991).

The introduction of money into values of initiation ritual priesthood coincided with the introduction of Western education among Abatachoni by Christian missionaries. The missionaries taught young boys and girls the elementary knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetics. The pupils sat in mud and thatch churches which also acted as schools. The

new brand of education was introduced among Abatachoni in 1913. Kitosh (Lugulu) station was the main base and Dr. A.B. Astock was its first missionary (KNA/PC/NZA/1/9; KNA/DC/NN/3 KNA/E.A.Y.M/157/80, Makila, 1982:210)². By 1945 many other educational schools were built.

The name Kitosh was not primarily applied to Lugulu station. Kitosh had a broader application. It referred to the people who occupied the general area of today's Webuye, Kimilili, Sirisia and Kanduyi divisions of Bungoma district. This area was inhabited by among others Abatachoni and Babukusu. During colonialism, Kitosh area was divided into North Kitosh and South Kitosh, respectively.

Historically, the root of the name Kitosh is problematic. Sometimes, it is associated with the Kitoki group of the Highland Nilotic speakers who left Mount Elgon in about the sixteenth century and disappeared southward. The disappearance probably suggests that the Kitoki were assimilated by the ancestors of Abatachoni and Babukusu. Therefore, when the two groups were referred to as the Kitosh, this historical link was implied.

²Wandibba (personal conversation, 1992) argues that Lugulu primary school started in 1912. This, however, does not agree with my findings which point out that by the end of 1912 there was no mission activity in Kitosh (KNA/PC/NAZ/1/7).

There is yet another version which is captured by Nakitare (1989:2). He argues that Kitosh was a colonial distortion of a Maasai word olg-Tacho which meant 'those of the other bank of the river'. Going by this view, Nakitare argues that at some time in the pre-colonial period, the Maasai who dominated most of the present western Kenya were separated from Abatachoni by River Nzoia. It was, therefore, this separation which gave rise to the name Olg-Tacho. If this version is correct, then it is probable that the origin of the name Kitosh dates from the first half of the nineteenth century when Maasai dominance in Western Kenya was at its peak. Be that as it may, in the colonial period, Kitosh was not only applied to people but also where they inhabited. Kitosh station was one such place.

Elementary schools influenced the thinking of Abatachoni. Elders began associating school education with employment. Hence, when initiation ritual priests were initiating neophytes, they articulated a need for the youth to obtain Western education and employment (Kibeu, O.I, 1991). In this way, values of Western education and employment got incorporated in initiation concepts among Abatachoni.

5.3 Decline of Military values in Initiation Rituals Between 1895 and 1946

The first half of the period between 1895 and 1946

witnessed continued display of militarism in initiation rituals. These military values were manifested during circumcision, sangaya and okhulichana as was discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, military values were observed on the days when initiates came out of seclusion, okhwalukha, during the age-sets of sawa, kolongolo and kikwameti, that is, between 1895 and 1922.

On the days of okhwalukha in the above age-sets, neophytes went to the river, washed themselves clean, had their hair shaven and were finally given a spear and a shield each. More blessing and counselling were given to the initiates by their elders. Elders impressed on them the need to be courageous, brave and responsible men who were ready to defend the community in the face of danger. It was these militaristic values that were symbolised in the above spears and shields (Namutala, O.I, 1991).

The neophytes received the above inspirations and instructions while standing straight in a warrior style. Their right hands held spears and in their left hands were shields. They wore skin clothes made from goat skins or from skins of wild animals such as deer and antelopes. On their

heads, each donned a cap, ekutwa³ (Kusimba, O.I, 1991). Thus, the days when initiates came out of seclusion signified passing out parades of new warriors into the community. As already discussed in section 3.7, the new warriors after the passing out parade went to their individual homes where they participated in ordinary daily activities. Usually they looked after cattle or occasionally organised themselves to go and raid other communities' cattle. During their free times, the warriors went out in small groups for hunting as well as fishing. However, when their community was faced with danger, the warriors of all categories regrouped and defended the people. The intricacies involved in regrouping and fighting techniques are beyond the scope of this study.

From 1918 to 1920, the years which marked the last age-grades of kikwameti, however, militarism started declining. This was manifested in the decrease in the use of spears and shields by the new warriors on their days of okhwalukha. Even the wearing of skin clothes gradually decreased. In place of the above items, Western clothing emerged. Thus, the new warriors were increasingly putting on Western clothing, Amerikani sheets or blankets during the final stages of okhwalukha.

³the caps which were given to the newly initiated warriors were symbolically significant. They symbolised a change of status by the initiates from childhood to adulthood.

Western clothing was introduced by colonial administrators in conjunction with missionaries. They discouraged Africans from wearing the traditional attire and encouraged the use of the Western one. This Western attire appeared in Western province, then known as North Kavirondo, much earlier than 1918. As early as 1912, the colonial administrators had recorded that Africans were beginning to wear clothes (KNA/PC/NZA/1/7).

The change by newly initiated warriors from wearing the traditional attire on the days when they came out of seclusion was gradual. In the initial years, neophytes received their instructions while wearing indigenous attire and holding weapons as discussed above. But soon after the ritual, initiates went home and changed into Western attire (Mumelo, O.I, 1991).

Eventually, initiates received their instructions when wearing Western clothes, although they still held spears and shields. These weapons, however, were more for defensive purposes than for offensive ones as the case was in the pre-colonial days. With decline in the use of skin clothes and weapons, hunting wild game for skins also decreased (Waluchio, O.I, 1991). Thus, militarism in initiation values among Abatachoni declined in the colonial era because the community adapted their initiation to the colonial situation.

New values gradually replaced militarism. For instance, there was a new concern for the youth to acquire Western education and money. Hence between about 1924 and 1946, during the initiations of *kananachi* and *kinyikeu* age-sets and beyond, elders stressed more on Western education and money than on the need for warriors. This was because Western education, that time obtained only from mission schools was, as Ogot (1972:133) puts it, the only sure way of social, economic and political advancement. The elders witnessed the advantages in educating their children in mission schools. For instance, they saw that the early graduates of missionary education among *Abatachoni* were employed as teachers and clerks in mission schools while others served as mission interpreters in church functions. Because of the salary they received, these mission employees and their families gradually changed their lifestyles. They dressed in good clothes, shoes and socks. They also constructed corrugated iron-roofed houses. Therefore, other parents also wanted their sons to receive mission education so as to be able to bring similar changes in their families. This shift was reflected in the articulations of initiation ritual priests as discussed above.

5.4 The Colonial Situation and the Adaptation of the Age-set Nomenclature Systems

Just like in *ebitabicha* and militarism, values propagated in age-sets were affected by the colonial situation in the

period under review. But the effect was not felt in the nomenclature of age-sets themselves. Their names and cyclic nature remained as in the pre-colonial period. Affected were sub-divisions within each age-set. Some names given to various age-grades clearly reflected the dispersion of colonial values among Abatachoni.

An examination of the sub-divisional nomenclature of sawa (1888-1898), kolongolo (1900-1910) and kikwameti (1912-1922) will demonstrate the dispersion. Sawa, which in this chapter starts from 1895, has the following sub-divisional nomenclature: nambusi 1896, misiko 1898; kolongolo's sub-divisional nomenclature was nandemu khururwe 1900, nabiswa 1902, bisuche 1904, manyonge 1906, biketi 1908 and khaoya 1910. Kikwameti's age-grades were namiranda 1912, muchele 1914, matifari 1916, keya 1918, sipande 1920 and machungu or mabachi 1922. Some of these names reflected the pre-colonial nomenclature. They include nambusi, nandemu khururwe, nabiswa, bisuche, khaoya and namiranda.

Nambusi 1896, is semantically a reference to goats. During this period it is argued that many cattle were killed by drought. Therefore, goats were used in performing rituals such as initiation (Kofulo, Waluchio, O.I, 1991). Nandemu khururwe 1900, on the other hand, was a reference to the legendary serpent, nandemu. Though this age-grade resembles

the one in the early part of the nineteenth century which is discussed in chapter three, it is believed that the serpent in 1900 was different (Wandibba, personal conversation, 1992).

Nabiswa 1902, is an allusion to hills, ebiswa. It also alludes to white ants, chiswa. In Tachoni dialect, a place where white ants emerge from the underground is known as esiswa (pl. ebiswa). From oral sources, during this initiation period there were lots of white ants. It seems the soldier ants that always accompany white ants caused a big damage to property in the areas inhabited by Abatachoni. This damage most probably negatively affected the lives of the community. Hence elders preferred the above name to characterise the period. Such ebiswa should have been so widespread to induce the entire community to accept this naming.

Bisuche 1904 refers to wolves. It is claimed that during this initiation period there were numerous wolves, ebisuche, in the areas inhabited by Abatachoni and Babukusu. These wolves often assaulted, mauled and even killed people and their domestic animals. It was probable that cases of violence from rabid wolves' human and animal victims were many in the area in that period. As a result, the sorrow, suffering, loss and fear which characterised the period most likely prompted the elders' choice of the above name. And, like the others

already discussed, the name bisuche spread and covered most areas occupied by Abatachoni (Waluchio, Kofulo, O.I. 1991).

Finally, in this category were the age-grades of khaoya 1910 and namiranda 1912. The term khaoya means rinderpest. This disease decimated cattle population in the areas inhabited by Abatachoni between 1910 and 1912. Rinderpest seemed to have sparked a lot of concern among the people during the 1910 initiation age-grade. Therefore, this age-grade was christened, Khaoya. In this nomenclature it was the disease which was foregrounded.

Khaoya, the epidemic, continued raging even after 1910 to the effect that it equally decimated many cattle during the 1912 initiation. Yet rather than call the age-grade khaoya, elders resolved to characterise the period by the plethora of cattle carcasses, namiranda. Thus, the concepts of khaoya and namiranda were basically the same because they both referred to the existence of rinderpest. But their difference was a demonstration of the mental processes that fits what Ogot (1982:37) terms as reclassification or redrawing conceptual lines and boundaries. These conceptual lines and boundaries are represented by the concepts of khaoya which foregrounded the rinderpest pestilence itself while namiranda, the consequences of the same scourge, respectively.

Rinderpest, the source of khaoya and namiranda concepts, was not unique to the areas inhabited by Abatachoni. It was experienced in the entire Buluyia in particular and East Africa in general between 1809 and 1935 (Van Zwanenberg, 1975:85; Esese, 1990:218 and 264). Thus, that Abatachoni named only the initiations above after rinderpest and not earlier or later indicates that the strongest impact of the pestilence struck in the above initiation periods but not any other time.

Looking at the concepts discussed above, it becomes seemingly evident that the colonial situation did not absolutely disrupt the movement of social values in the systems of initiation nomenclature¹. The following sub-divisional naming systems, however, clearly introduce a new dimension. Names ushering in this dimension included misiko 1898, manyonge 1906, biketi 1908, muchehe 1914, matifari 1916, keya 1918, sipande 1920 and machungu or mabachi 1922. These names and values arose from the people's reaction to the colonial situation.

The concept of misiko characterised the 1898 initiation. Misiko is derived from a Kiswahili noun, mizigo meaning

¹The concept of khaoya was caused by a virus which came into East Africa from outside about 1840s. Van Zwanenberg (1975:85) cites North-East Africa as the entry point of that virus.

'luggage'. In this context the concept alludes to the activity of portering. Indeed, in the early years of the colonial period, Africans were coerced to carry goods for Europeans who were opening up present day Trans Nzoia district. This coercion was experienced in the entire Nyanza province which spread over what is now Nyanza, Western and part of Rift Valley Provinces (Kofulo, Wanyonyi, O.I, 1991; also Wandibba, personal conversation, 1992). Furthermore, it is documented (Were, 1967b:144) that during the same period, Africans were forced to carry goods for Arab and Swahili traders who plied between Mt. Elgon and Mumias areas.

Frederick Jackson argues that Arab and Swahili traders harassed the people he termed as Ketosh (Abatachoni and Babukusu, see section 5. 2) very frequently. On such occasions, especially when these traders failed to get ivory, they enslaved some Africans and made them potters (Were, Ibid). Therefore, the misiko age-grade of 1898 probably evokes the portering service of the Africans to the Swahili, Arabs and Europeans.

Another concept which was connected with the Swahili and Arab traders was manyonge 1906. This concept was introduced into the area occupied by Abatachoni through trade. Kofulo (O.I, 1991) argues that bangle ornaments, amanyonge, were brought into Buluyia by Swahili and Arab traders. But Pascal

Nabwana holds that the amanyonge were used by Abamarachi in exchange for food from Babukusu (de Wolf, nd). Both accounts demonstrate that trade was instrumental to the emergence of the concept of manyonge. Since the 1906 age-grade among Abatachoni and Babukusu is known as manyonge, it can be argued that the perception and practice of exchanging these particular ornaments was so widespread in the area as to warrant the name finding its place in the initiation age-grade. Thus, misiko and manyonge demonstrate the cognitive and speculative abilities of the elders of Abatachoni. This is because while the two concepts emanated from trading activities, the nomenclature signified the people's reaction to such activities in time perspective. Whereas in misiko, it was the idea of bulky goods that was the issue, in manyonge it was the strangeness of the bangles that mattered.

In the initiation of 1900 a new concept emerged to characterise that period. It was known as biket, a Luyia distortion for ticket. This concept originated from the receipt, esiket (pl. ebiket) which every adult male received on paying hut and pole taxes during the colonial period. It is also probable that the concept emanated from the labour that Africans offered in order to get money for the payment of the above taxes. Such labour was referred to among Abatachoni as etiket, another corruption of ticket (Kerre, O.I, 1991). Furthermore, it is recorded that when Murunga was

Chief in the then North Kitosh Location (present area of Kimilili and Webuye divisions) evading taxation was difficult. His early years in office, 1907-1908, were very trying to members of the area then called Kitosh (de Wolf, 1977:136). This very likely explains why the initiation of the time was christened as biketi.

Though the idea of taxation was introduced in 1902, not much effort was employed by leaders of Abatachoni in its collection. This is demonstrated by the way area colonial administrators complained about what to them was Sifuma's and Lumbasi's⁵ inefficiency (KNA/DC/EN.3/1/3). Therefore, when Murunga was brought to be chief in the area, his highhandedness in tax collection was bound to raise an impact. It was this impact that is manifested in the concept of biketi.

Since the term was derived from a foreign language, it fits for us to argue that it was introduced by the agents of taxation. To this extent, the concept of biketi was not confined to Abatachoni. It was also reflected in the 1908 initiation period of Babukusu (de wolf, op cit). In Maragoli

⁵Sifuma was a Tachoni leader in the region of the present Webuye division while Lumbasi ruled in the present Lugari division during the early colonial period. But the posting of Murunga as chief of the then north Kitosh reduced Sifuma to an assistant chief's status. The same affected Lumbasi in the then Kabras location.

language⁶. However, it is not established why muchele was used to designate the above initiation among Abatachoni. This is so especially when it is known that rice is not conducive in the present areas of Abatachoni. One may consequently conclude that muchele as a concept in the initiation nomenclature spread into the Tachoni community from the area of its neighbours. These neighbours could most probably be Babukusu because the same name is used to designate the 1914 age-grade among the Bukusu people (Waluchio, O.I, 1991).

The matifari age-grade marked the time when some Abatachoni were employed by colonial administrators and settlers to make bricks. This experience also affected the Babukusu neighbours because their 1916 age-grade is similarly designated. Brick laying by Africans on settler farms was widespread throughout the colonial period. Even in 1920, Pascal Nabwana (de Wolf, nd) is documented to have worked on General Hoey's farm as a brick layer. Thus, that 1916 was named after the brick phenomenon and not any other date, probably means that the concept created the first profound impact among Abatachoni and Babukusu during that initiation.

Keya 1918, was a reference to the Kings African Rifles (K.A.R.). This was a colonial military which, between 1914

⁶To this day rice is known as omuchele or kumuchele while bricks as amatafari or kamatafari in Luyia language.

and 1918, fought in the First World War. Many Africans were recruited into the war as carrier corps. Recruitment reached a crisis in 1917 when John Ainsworth was appointed as military commissioner for labour at the rank of colonel.

Between 1917 and 1918 he recruited 162,000 Africans for the military labour corps out of whom 24,000 died (Mungeam, 1980:52). This exercise which was conducted country-wide adversely affected Buluyia. According to Pascal Nabwana (de Wolf, nd) people were rounded up at markets and catechumenates. Father Stand (cited in de Wolf, nd) adds that African catechumens as well as catechists were also forced to join the carrier corps. As a result many able men were taken away from Buluyia leaving behind mainly aged men, women and children. Thus, there was family privation and tribulation among the Luyia communities.

It was due to such suffering and deprivation caused by the recruitment of strong and energetic men in Buluyia which induced the elders of Abatachoni to refer to the 1918 initiation as Keya. In this case, keya did not refer to the military men but it became a reminiscent term connoting the people's memories of suffering, privation and loss of the loved ones during the war. The same term with its connotation was found in the initiation rituals of Babukusu denoting the 1918 period. Among Abawanga the concept of keya was used to

distinguish the 1918 famine (Esese, 1990:200). The famine was also experienced among Abatachoni and Babukusu during the same period (Muse, O.I, 1991; de Wolf nd). Hence, the spread of the concept of keya in Buluyia has a lot of historical implications that were psychological, social, economic and political.

Sipande 1920, stemmed from a Luyia distortion of the Kiswahili word kipande for identity card. The kipande concept in the history of Kenya is traceable from 1915 when the registration ordinance was passed. This ordinance, which aimed at obtaining a steady flow of labour to Europeans, constant payment of taxes by Africans, apprehension of Africans who refused to work on European farms and of ordinary criminals, required every male African of sixteen years and above to carry a kipande wherever he went.

That kipande was by law, required to be kept in a container and tied around the neck of the holder at all times for identification. Failure to obey the requirement meant a stiff punishment to be meted out to the victim. This ordinance, however, was ineffective until 1919 when the Governor's labour circular urged government officials up to the level of chiefs to compel Africans to work for whites. These 'Northey circulars', a joint product of the then colonial governor Sir Edward Northey and the then Chief Native

Commissioner John Ainsworth, sparked off a widespread storm of protests, both locally and in the metropolitan United Kingdom between 1919 and 1920 (Bogonko, op cit 2-4; Mungeam, op cit: 52-53; Abuor, 1977: 21-22; Ochieng', 1985:106-107).

It is evident that the 'Northey circulars' were unwelcome among the Africans in the entire country. They detested the colonialists and the kipande laws. When initiating their youth in 1920, Abatachoni sang songs in defiance of the kipande laws; their initiation ritual priests condemned kipande laws and generally the prevailing attitude was against the kipande. Hence the attitude was reflected in the naming of the 1920 initiation age-grade after the kipande.

In its distorted form, kipande became sipande. And as sipande, it survived as a concept commemorative of the 1919 and 1920 colonial days. Its position as a name of an age-grade serves to demonstrate the collective suffering which was endured during the above initiation. The same concept of sipande is found among Babukusu who shared a lot of experiences with Abatachoni.

Machungu or mabachi 1922, was a reference to the existence of rats. During this period there was an influx of strange rats into the country from India (Kerre, O.I, 1991). These pests inflicted suffering, loss and damage to people and

their property. To combat the rat menace, the colonial government ordered Africans to kill the rats and sent a specific number of rat tails to the administrators as proof of carrying out the orders. Among Abatachoni, the rat menace appears to have been intense probably during the last age-grade of kikwameti. Hence the term machungu or mabachi was given to the 1922 initiation in cognition of the phenomenon.

The rat phenomenon was not confined to Abatachoni alone. Rats were a nuisance in many parts of the country in the colonial period. As early as 1909, plague was reported among the diseases which killed many people in the then Nyanza Province. To eliminate it, the then Provincial Commissioner, John Ainsworth, in conjunction with the Provincial Medical Officer, launched a campaign against rats (Mungean, op cit:47). And in 1912, Lord Cranworth complained about the abundance of rats in the country (Kimenyi, 1988:60). According to Cranworth, the Indian Community was responsible for the introduction of those rats. This latter claim tends to confirm Kerre's evidence above.

The above names of age-grades demonstrate that pre-colonial systems of nomenclature were adapted to the colonial situation. Thus, certain values which were introduced among the Africans and had long lasting effects on the way of life of Abatachoni were commemorated in their initiation age-grade

nomenclature. At this level the previous events were abstracted to leave concepts without the actual events. It was these concepts that spread in all sections of Abatachoni.

Values introduced by the colonial agents and adapted to the intellectual, social, economic and political life of Abatachoni were also reflected among Babukusu. Such presence in the two communities of the above concepts denoting similar initiation age-grades indicates that both Abatachoni and Babukusu shared identical experiences and had a lot of interactions. Hence, movement of the above concepts which designated specific age-grades stemmed from such interaction and adaptation processes.

Of importance in this nomenclature is the denotative value. It perpetuated the pre-colonial system of identifying time into the first two decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the sub-divisional names of age-sets were used to denote the age of individuals and also the time when certain events happened. But towards the end of the second decade of the century things changed. These changes were reflected more in the kananachi and the subsequent age-sets.

The sub-divisional age-sets of kananachi and those which followed were often identified by Christian calendar years more than by age-grade names. This was evident among most

informants. They could not identify most kananachi sub-divisional names as they could those of the previous age-sets. On kananachi, informants mostly cited calendar years between 1924 and 1934. Such change reflects the impact of Western education. For most of the elders initiated during that age-set and later had attended elementary classes. They learnt how to read letters inscribed on cloth material.

Thus, the introduction of Western education gradually changed the indigenous way of designating age-grades with names of specific events. Instead, calendar years took up the place of such names. However, the cyclic nature and names of the age-sets remained unaffected.

5.5 Colonial Situation and Post-Initiation Nomenclature

Like age-grade nomenclature, post-initiation nomenclature was equally affected by the colonial situation. Names which the initiates adopted after initiation rituals cognitively and speculatively reflected the movement of new values into initiation rituals and the entire community of Abatachoni. The first influence came from Swahili and Arab traders, then later from the Christian missionaries as well as the colonial settlers. Post-initiation nomenclature for sawa 1896 - 1898 and kolongolo 1900 - 1910 reflect mainly the Swahili impact.

Names like Murefu, Kila Muntu, Kampini, Kabuteni,

Sindani, Injini, Sicharani, Siboko, Rayisi, Wayiti, Meneja, Sokisi and Taulo were embraced by newly graduated warriors. These names signified values which newly initiated warriors wished to be associated with. For instance, those who deemed themselves strong adopted Injini (from engine), Siboko (from kiboko, a Kiswahili noun for a whip in English) and Sindani (from a Kiswahili noun, sindano, which means needle in English). Those who put much premium on leadership christened themselves Kabuteni (from Captain) and Meneja (from Manager). There were those who valued cleanliness and adopted names like Wayiti (from white) and Taulo (from towel).

While the above nomenclature could be explained, it is difficult to find reasons for the ones who took names such as Kila Muntu (a Luyia distortion of two Kiswahili words kila mtu that translates as everybody or everyone in English), Kampini (another derivative of a Kiswahili word, Kambini, which means in the camp) and Sicharani (a Luyia distortion of a Kiswahili word, cherahani which means sewing machine). The names certainly meant a lot to those acquirers. Therefore, the foregoing names have one thing in common. They encapsulate values packaged up in Kiswahili and introduced among Abatachoni in particular and Abaluyia in general in the early part of the colonial period.

That initiates acquired certain values from machines,

materials, ranks, colours and measurements during colonial days is a testimony that such materials had reached the region of Abatachoni. And when the values were turned into names for the newly graduated warriors, they became idealised. In the latter form, the ideas moved among the entire community and even beyond.

From the end of kikwameti age-set, that is from 1922 onwards, some newly initiated warriors accepted Christian names after initiation. This practice stemmed from the Christian influence. Names such as Filipino, Yakobo, Petero, Yohana, Isaya, Shatur'aka, Sakaria, Rasto and Isakia were popular among the initiates of kikwameti and kananachi, between 1922 and 1934. Gradually, this form of nomenclature drew more following than the indigenous one (Kerre, Muse, Wangila, O.I 1991).

It is noteworthy to state that those initiates who chose Christian names were not often Christians. But they equated their initiations with that of the Christian baptism by water. Hence, in the colonial period, and especially from the kinyikeu age-set in 1936, the process of initiating neophytes in the ritual water at esitabicha acquired another term okhubatisia⁷. This term was derived from the concept of

⁷Okhubatisia is a Luyia distortion of the christian verb to baptise.

baptism (Muse, O.I, 1991; Ndala, O.I. 1991).

Furthermore, streams at which ebitabicha were constructed were symbolically known as Yorudan (Jordan). The two concepts of okhubatisia and Yorudan (a reference to biblical River Jordan) were therefore, incorporated into concepts of Tachoni initiation rituals. Hence, most elders of Abatachoni after undergoing the rituals of esitabicha regarded themselves as baptised and declined calls from Christian missionaries for a church baptism (Namutala, O.I. 1991).

The Christian nomenclature, therefore, was another form of intellectual abstraction of Christian or biblical ideas by Abatachoni. They adapted such ideas to the functions of their initiation rituals. For instance, the idea of holiness and ritual sanctity contained in the biblical Jordan was translated to places where Tachoni ebitabicha were. Christian names, on the other hand, denoted newly graduated warriors' change of status from childhood to adulthood. This process of abstracting the above ideas started with the members' interaction with colonial settlers, soldiers in the two World Wars, traders, Christian missionaries and their agents. From these contacts, Tachoni members spread the acquired ideas to other parts of the community (Mwasame, P. O.I. 1991).

5.6 Concept of Esikumenya

Esikumenya concept refers to people initiated during odd years. Those odd years were associated with misfortunes like death befalling neophytes (Kerre, Waluchio, O.I 1991). Esikumenya was also believed to cause confusion in the naming of age-sets. It did not allow even a year to expire before a new initiation period or age-set started (Muse, O.I, 1991). These bad attributes of esikumenya spread to the entire Abatachoni and Babukusu. Hence it is claimed that under Sudi Namachanja of Babukusu, both Abatachoni and Babukusu resolved against initiating their youth in odd years. This resolution consequently ended the hitherto annual nature of initiation (KNA/PC/NZA.3/31/1/1). Since then initiation occurs only in even years.

All people previously initiated in odd years were grouped together with those of even years. For instance, 1899 and 1900 combined into 1900 age-grade while 1901 and 1902 formed 1902 initiation age-grade. And from 1942 onwards, initiation seasons took place only in even years. This resolution passed by Tachoni and Bukusu elders permeated to all areas where their people stayed. Hence, initiating the youth during odd years ended in 1942 and subsequent initiations were performed in 1944, 1946, 1948 and proceeded in that order of even years.

Thus, the entire community had conceptualised initiation

in odd years as a taboo that could not be accommodated. The conceptualisation in a way affected odd numbers in general. For instance, when bride price was sent to the bride's home, elders mostly encouraged their people to send cattle whose number was even. Indeed, if they totalled seven in number those cattle would be rejected because seven as a number is the most unaccepted odd number among Abatachoni. However, other odd numbers outside initiation were not connected with the embodiments of esikumanya. Hence on some occasions they were as are now accepted without any ill feelings.

Equally affected in fixing initiation periods were months. While previously it was the availability of food that determined, from 1942 the presence of Western education became another determining factor. The month of August became set aside for circumcision and December for okhulichana. This rationale stemmed from the fact that April, August and December were school holidays. Abatachoni accordingly used April for planting and weeding crops which were used for food during initiation months. Such schedule of initiation continues to this day.

5.7 The Art of Smithing in the Colonial Period: 1995 and 1946.

Colonialism adversely affected concepts contained in smithing among Abatachoni. Colonial administrators

established markets where industrially manufactured goods were bought (KNA/PC/NZA/1/7). Such goods included hoes, knives and machetes. These goods so much attracted African customers that the indigenous smithing industry suffered from the loss of buyers (Yinungilo, O.I. 1991). Hence the number of smiths declined as the demand for factory products grew. Markets for the factory products appeared at Malakisi in 1909, Kimilili in 1929, Bungoma in 1926 and Broderick Falls (now Webuye) in 1928 (KNA/DC/NN.3/4/3; Makila 1982:210).

People frequented the above markets to purchase hoes for digging and weeding crops which included maize and other exotic crops introduced by colonial administration. Those hoes had broader blades than those of indigenous chimbako and ebisili. Knives were used in the cutting of meat, slaughtering and skinning of animals while machetes were used for cutting trees and clearing bushes. These implements were, therefore, widely useful in facilitating farming and other domestic activities.

However, factory products did not find acceptance into initiation rituals easily. Indigenous smiths continued manufacturing implements used in ritual performance. Thus, circumcision knives, amahalo; jingle bells, chinyimba; types of hoes, chimbako and ebisili, arrow points and sickles, chinjeso, still dominated in the initiation rituals. Here it

would appear that values pertaining to ritual performance not only ensured continuity in indigenous smithing but also symbolised some form of resistance against Western values between 1895 and 1946. But as argued earlier, militaristic values during this period were on the decline.

Furthermore, smiths started charging money for their products. Instead of barter which had prevailed in the pre-colonial era (Wandibba, 1985:31) money gradually became the main means of exchange. Thus, indirectly the Western value of currency became the driving spirit in the manufacture for initiation rituals.

With the introduction of machetes and hoes, elders found it easier to clear bushes creating room for farming, homesteads and pathways providing accessibility between significant areas of village life. Some routes led to the sanctuaries of ebitabicha. Such routes enabled elders to choose central places for their ebitabicha which accommodated greater numbers of people at one session than before. In essence, more clans joined together for the initiation of ritual counselling and blessing than in the pre-colonial period. Hence, there proportionately emerged fewer ebitabicha accommodating more clans at single sessions than before. Consequently, the need for smithing products in initiations also relatively decreased.

5.8 Tachoni Concept in the Colonial Period

A combination of factors during the colonial era drove Tachoni elders to insist on being identified by the colonial administrators as an entity with their own chief. One of them was the colonial behaviour in appointing chiefs from other communities to rule over the Abatachoni. Similarly, other neighbouring communities like Babukusu and Abakabras were petitioning the colonial administration to appoint their own chiefs instead of being ruled by those drawn from Wanga (KNA/DC/NN.3/3/1, Were, 1967b:177-183). Also, there was reawakening of the people's sense of unity. Many clans usually assembled together in their functions of initiation ritual counselling and blessing. The elders now argued that all those clans who went to be initiated in esitabicha should be granted their own location known as Tachoni (Wekesa, Masinde, O.I, 1991).

To pursue their demands, the elders drew members from Webuye, Kimilili and Lugari who formed what later became the Tachoni union. Their argument was that all people who initiate their youth in esitabicha should get a location to be presided over by a chief appointed from the community. Here, as argued in the other chapters, the name Abatachoni was preferred because of its association to esitabicha and not to the dialect of Olutachoni. But in the early years of colonialism, the argument was rejected (KNA/DC/EN.3/1/2;

KNA/DC/EN.3/5/1). Hence, the demand continued up to 1960 when a location was created under the name of Ndivisi which covered what is now known as Webuye division. However, it was made clear that the appointments of assistant chiefs were not to be based entirely on Abatachoni. This location, though, left out those Abatachoni in Tongaren, Lugari and Kimilili areas.

Perhaps the point of misinterpretation on the side of the colonial administration lay on the word Tachoni. Right from 1934 up to 1960, it appears the administrators saw Abatachoni only from a linguistic point of view. In that case, the term Abatachoni was used to refer to those who spoke Olutachoni. But as this researcher found out, there were, as it is the case today, those who spoke mainly Lubukusu and yet considered themselves as Abatachoni. Here, therefore, the concept of Abatachoni transcends the frontiers of dialects and focuses on the functional significance of initiation rituals. There are the cognitive and speculative values embodied in these ritual practices which take overriding importance in determining who Abatachoni were or are.

5.9.0 Role of Christianity on Movement of Initiation Ritual Concepts Between 1895-1946.

Christianity among Abatachoni was first introduced by the Friends Africa Industrial Mission (F.A.I.M) in August 1913.

Lugulu, then known as Kitosh was its first station (KNA\DC\NN\3\1). Dr. A.B. Astock and Mr. J.W. Ford were pioneer missionaries at Lugulu between 1913 and 1920. About this same time, the F.A.I.M established another station at Malava in Kabras. At this latter station Mr. Chilson was among the pioneer missionaries. These two stations later contributed to the inception of others at Bokoli and Kamukuywa in Kimilili division as well as Lukhokho in Lugari division.

Though set to disrupt African culture as little as possible, the F.A.I.M missionaries role in Buluyia caused a lot of interference in the cultural way (Mwenesi, 1980:163). As the following discussion demonstrates, the F.A.I.M missionaries were partly instrumental in the introduction of Western values into Tachoni ritual concepts as was the case with the other communities of the Abaluyia in general. In going about this, the F.A.I.M missionaries employed Christianity and Western education as the main vehicles for transmission.

One of the values condemned by missionary teaching was the indigenous method of initiation. It was denounced as bad and sinful (KNA\E.A.Y.M.F\170\80; KNA\E.A.Y:M\20\80). Hence missionaries disregarded it and urged young boys who were ready for initiation to go to hospital for circumcision.

5.9.1 Olupao

Olupao in Luyia language usually means timber. But starting from about the age - set of kikwameti 1912 - 1922 onwards, it acquired another meaning which was linked with initiation among Abatachoni and other Luyia communities. It symbolised a special form of circumcision in Buluyia. Centres responsible for the rise of this concept in Buluyia were mainly at Lugulu and Kaimosi.

Oral accounts of Abatachoni maintain that early converts lived at Lugulu (also known then as Wa Ford, after the second missionary at the station). They included Petero Wanyama and Yohana Wandabwa. Through these early converts, Christian missionaries encouraged young boys to shun the indigenous circumcision and accept the hospital one. Those who heeded the message were taken to either Lugulu or Kaimosi where they were circumcised by Dr. Band. He was the only doctor who circumcised all those initiation candidates who went to either Lugulu or Kaimosi. His station was at Kaimosi. In order for him to circumcise at Lugulu, special arrangements were made (KNA\EAYMF\163\80).

Among the Abatachoni, it was claimed that the first initiation candidate was circumcised in hospital in 1914. Between that year and 1917, a few others followed suit. The initiation candidates lay on a wooden table and faced upwards

before the doctor circumcised them. The doctor cut off only a small portion of the prepuce contrary to the traditional expectation (Kusimba, O.I,1991).

Generally, hospital circumcision appeared as a disappointment to the stalwart supporters of the indigenous values during that second decade of this century. In the first place, it violated the standing position which was approved for brave men and instead allowed boys to be circumcised when lying down like women or cowardly men. Secondly, the area where the prepuce was cut off seemed to fill up again slowly. This development was embarrassing to both the victims and their parents. Hence, as a form of initiation, hospital initiation was despised (Kusimba, O.I; 1991).

To crown it all, the name olupao was coined to designate those circumcised in hospital. Whenever it was used, it smacked of disgrace and condemnation. Consequently, there emerged a conflict between the indigenous method of circumcision and a hospital one. As Ogot (1972:134) argues, whenever such conflict arose, the indigenous method won. So in 1918 the victims of hospital circumcision once again joined the uncircumcised and prepared for circumcision in a traditional way. When this was taking place, there was nobody who went to Lugulu for circumcision. All initiation

candidates seem to have opted for traditional circumcision without exception (Kusimba, O.I, 1991).

As a consequence, pioneer converts went to Kaimosi to demonstrate to Dr Band what they termed as the Luyia way of circumcision. Soon after, other initiation candidates went to Lugulu and Kaimosi for hospital circumcision from 1920 onwards. During that time, it is claimed that boys began standing when being circumcised. Furthermore, it was stated that the area where the prepuce was cut off became proportionately larger than in the previous years. Thus, no portion of the foreskin attempted to once again cover the glans. Hence from 1920 onwards, those people among Abatachoni who were circumcised in hospital did not experience the stigma of being circumcised twice (Kusimba, O.I, 1991).

Even with the above modification, the concept of olupao did not disappear. Instead it spread to all areas of Abatachoni and other Luyia communities. This, however, did not deter converts from going to hospital for circumcision. Indeed, an increasing number went to both Lugulu and Kaimosi for the rite. As a result, there emerged two ways of initiation among Abatachoni. The ones circumcised traditionally were identified as those of home, ba yingo, while those who went to hospital as those of 'timber', ba olupao, respectively.

Whereas yingo symbolised a brave and manly manner of circumcision, olupao, on the other hand signified a cowardly and womanly one. For choosing hospital circumcision, those of olupao could not be initiated in the concepts of esitabicha and yingwe. Elders who were custodians of the above values refused the olupao neophytes such initiation. To this extent, Abatachoni who were circumcised in hospital were, in the colonial days, considered as second rate⁸ (Kerre, O.I. 1991).

Some Tachoni converts, on the other hand, voluntarily rejected initiating their sons in the rituals of esitabicha and yingwe. They contended that these traditional values were sinful and unprogressive (Yinungilo, O.I. 1991). Consequently, such members were eschewed whenever important matters arose among the community. This was because it was the conception of many elders that people who were circumcised in hospital could not competently address a gathering of elderly men. In the eyes of these elders, those of olupao were considered uninitiated, abasinde (Mulama, O.I. 1991).

Furthermore, people who were circumcised in hospital were barred from preparing uncircumcised boys for indigenous circumcision. This attitude emanated from the belief that the

⁸But from the 1960s onwards, custodians of the two concepts produced a fine to be paid by those who were circumcised in hospital before being initiated into those values. This, however, did not end the stigma of olupao. It trailed one into old age.

role of hospital initiates would instil fear and cowardice in the initiation candidates who would eventually flinch during the actual circumcision. However, whether such prejudice stemmed from historically proven incidents could not be confirmed. Therefore, one can argue that the conflict of the two camps was a crystallisation of two different world-views. One section demonstrating a traditional African world-view and the other a world-view which was tinged with Western values.

It appears that it was not only among Abatachoni where those circumcised in hospital were treated with contempt. The same concept of olupao was experienced in many other communities of Buluyia (Nandwa, 1983:86). Even in Zambia, among the Ndembu people, Turner (1967:102) states that men who were circumcised in hospital and not fully initiated in orthodox bush seclusion ritual were chased away.

In conclusion, the colonial situation created an environment in which colonial administrators, Arab and Swahili traders, Christian missionaries and their agents introduced new concepts that spread into initiation rituals of Abatachoni. These values led to an enlarged scale in the usage of esitabicha, age-grade, initiation nomenclature systems and the art of smithing. Furthermore, the concepts of olupao and esikumenya greatly influenced the thinking of Abatachoni during and after the colonial era.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION

In concluding this work, we shall give an overview of the preceding chapters and eventually end with some recommendations for a further undertaking. Throughout the study, the theoretical paradigm of structural functionalism has been profoundly useful. This is because its tenets, especially those postulated by Victor Turner, afforded us with apt models well equipped to analyse initiation ritual concepts. Victor Turner's approach of studying rituals by observing the four observable structures has been crucial. For, as the study unfolded, each of the four structures; symbolic structure, value structure, purposive structure and role structure were harnessed to unravel the history of the dispersion of social concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni.

In specific situations such as in the detection of the spirit of circumcision, obusebi, and that of smithing, obwiranyi, the observable structures were analysed under the category of redressive ritual model. When the changes occurred mainly in the various initiation ritual stages, however, the life crisis ritual model became useful. Therefore, by tactfully relying on either redressive or life crisis ritual models, we have analysed the historical dimensions of concepts

articulated in initiation rituals.

Working within the framework of the models, we have argued that concepts ingrained in initiation rituals among Abatachoni played a central role in shaping the community's world-view during the period under study; 1750 and 1946. The history of these concepts dates from time immemorial. For instance, the concept and practice of circumcision is claimed to have started when Tachoni ancestors were in Misri. Gradually, the concept developed both in the manner of ritual practice and perception. Instead of the crude implements which were used in the initial period, the subsequent years ushered in better and more suitable tools of ritual operation.

The study has demonstrated that when members of Abatachoni inhabited general areas of Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi, the practice and perception of initiation was broadened. For the Tachoni ancestors not only underwent circumcision but also acquired the art of being circumcisers. The first clans to have circumcisers among Abatachoni were, therefore, Abahabiya, Ababichu and Abakamukong'i.

Furthermore, the concept of esitabicha was introduced at Sengeli from where it spread to the general areas of Sirikwa and Mbayi. In all the ebitabicha (pl) at the above places members from the clan of Abakusi provided initiation ritual

priests, ababiti, to preside over the ceremonies. We have argued that the introduction of ebitabicha provided a name to the Tachoni community who were still a Kalenjin speaking people. Consequently, the concept and practice of esitabicha greatly influenced the world-view of Abatachoni during the period under study and beyond.

Concerning the concept and practice of okhulichana, the study has demonstrated how it started and developed when Abatachoni were at Mwalie and its environs. Members from the clans of Abameywa and Abamweya introduced the concept of the leopard, yingwe. Yingwe was initially used in the post-circumcision initiation rituals of female neophytes. Among male initiates, however, only those born singly, abatelwa (pl) without any sisters and brothers were initiated into it as a way of insuring their future prosperity. It was the process of initiating the youth into yingwe that was known as okhulichana. From being a preserve of females and a few males, the concept later spread also among general male post-circumcisions initiation rituals. Those who underwent this final ritual acquired a new status of adulthood and more responsibilities.

It has also been shown that the okhulichana which was originally carried out at night ultimately covered both daytime rituals and night ritual functions in the homes. This

spread of okhulichana was a way of healing rifts that emerged when those who underwent okhulichana looked down upon others who stopped after the rituals of esitabicha.

Smithing was discussed as it contributed to the dispersion of initiation ritual concepts. The study posits that several clans of Abatachoni picked up the art of smithing when they were at Sengeli and spread the practice to their kith and kin. Notable smithing clans identified included Abahabiya, Abaluu, Abayumbu, Abawande and Abachikha cluster. They forged implements such as circumcision knives, amahalo; jingle bells, chinyimba; bangles, ebitili; arrow-heads and spears, all used mainly during initiation rituals.

Additionally, we have argued that the concept of circumcision, esitabicha, yingwe and okhulichana are symbolic. The symbolism engrossed the initiates' sense of militarism. This militarist value was experienced in the ordeals an initiation candidate incurred, the pain the initiate felt during the actual operation and the rigour and torture he was subjected to during the entire period between his circumcision and the final process when the initiate came out of seclusion. Furthermore, agricultural, pastoral and reproductive values were symbolised in both ebitabicha and okhulichana. Here, Turner's theoretical paradigm with its symbolic and value structures was very useful. Through such paradigm, the

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centrality of the above symbols in deciphering the pre-colonial world-view of Abatachoni has come out.

On age-sets, we have argued that Abatachoni borrowed the entire eight from the Kalenjin community and adopted them to the Luyia language at Mwalie and its environs. The koronkoro, kipkoimet, kaplalach, kimnyekeu, nyonki, maina, chuma, and sawe were transformed to kolongolo, kikwameti, kananachi, kinyikeu, nyange, maina, chuma and sawa during the process of bantuisation. In essence, the interaction of Abatachoni who were mainly a Kalenjin speaking community with Bantu groups such as Babukusu, Abasamia, Abawangá and Abakabras was responsible for the above linguistic changes. Herein lies the role of neighbours to the spread of concepts in initiation rituals. Age-sets and age-grades were not only useful in guiding us about pre-colonial dates, but also provided very important landmarks to past historical events. For instance, their historical dimension is evident in the kolongolo khururwe age-grade which evokes the legendary and destructive bebe serpent that terrorised people and animals in the early part of the nineteenth century.

The linguistic change not only transformed age-set and age-grade nomenclature but also other cosmological concepts such as sangaya and chebutalang'i. These two concepts had their semantic and symbolic structure affected. As it has

been elaborated in the study the original concept of God, Cheptail, was transformed to that of lion, etalang'i. We have argued that the change probably emanated from the Bukusu influence on Abatachoni.

Moreover, the interaction between various Tachoni clans on the one hand, and their neighbours, on the other, was responsible for the dispersion of concepts wrought in initiation rituals. Such concepts as the art of smithing, the art of circumcision, initiation ritual priesthood, obubiti, the concepts of esitabicha, yingwe and okhulichana spread as a consequence of the interaction of various groups within Abatachoni and even to their neighbours.

Human agency has been crucial in facilitating the movement. When members from one region moved to settle in another, they introduced their values in those new areas. But where they were a minority, their values were lost due to the influence of the neighbouring communities. Some sections of Abaluu and Abasamo have been adduced as examples of those clans of Abatachoni who lost the practice and perception of certain values in initiation ritual concepts because they were a minority group among Abakabras.

The study has illustrated that the easterly direction which characterised the Tachoni migration and their

geographical locus from Abawanga also earned Abatachoni a name; Abekwe. Abekwe means those of the east. The east as a concept is profound in the Tachoni initiation ritual practice and perception. Therefore, the east in the cosmology of Abatachoni is vital. By this demonstration, the study clearly vindicates the premise relating to the role of the human and natural environment in the movement of values reflected in initiation rituals of Abatachoni.

The facet relating to the enlargement of scale came out in this study. For instance, the notion of the east, yikwe, not only referred to the direction of the Tachoni movement, but also connoted the historical connection with Abatachoni's previous habitation at Sirikwa, Sengeli and Mbayi. In addition, yikwe cosmologically reflects the members observance of their initiation rituals whose origin is in that easterly direction.

We have argued that the colonial situation led to some of the values contained in the initiation rituals being distorted. White missionaries discouraged Abatachoni and their neighbours from initiating the youth in the indigenous manner and advocated for a Christian and Western style. This entailed taking initiation candidates to hospital for circumcision. To achieve their goal, missionaries coerced

those male¹ pupils who enrolled in their schools to be circumcised in hospital and receive Christian post-circumcision initiation rituals if they were to continue learning in those schools. As a result of the new crop that was circumcised in hospital, there emerged a term olupao, to designate them.

Age-set and age-grade nomenclature did not escape Western influence. It has been articulated that with more impact of Western formal education, the indigenous classification got distorted by the resultant usage of Christian calendar years to denote people's dates of initiation. Furthermore, age-grade nomenclature reflected colonial activities. For example, 1898 was known as sawa misiko to evoke the African oppression and coercion into carrying goods, mizigo for either Swahili or Arab traders on their trading activities as well as for European settlers on their way to occupy farms in the present day Trans-Nzoia district.

This study has illustrated that in the colonial period, elders of Abatachoni, and Babukusu resolved against initiating their youth during odd years. Odd year initiations were known as esikumanya. The concept was negatively considered by elders of the above communities. Hence from 1942, initiating

¹Female pupils were not, according to Christian missionaries, supposed to undergo clitoridectomy

the youth during odd years was stopped. Since that period, initiations have been carried out only during even years. Furthermore, the attributes of militarism in initiation were less emphasised during the colonial period. In their place, increasing importance was attached to sending children to school to learn Western education.

The study has strongly validated the working premises which were identified in chapter one. Through the role of neighbours at all stages of the dispersion of social concepts, became evident that Abatachoni's practice and perception of certain values were effected. The age-set nomenclature, and the transformation of Cheptail to chebutalang'i are cases in point.

The neighbours' influence on the one hand, and clanal influence within Abatachoni themselves, on the other, further validated the premise which deals with the process of interaction in the spread of social concepts. In essence, this process enabled initiation ritual concepts to spread among various sections of Abatachoni and their neighbouring communities. In addition, the process of interaction equally validated the human factor in the movement of ideas. Finally, the premise articulating the position of the natural environment is qualified because of the significant contribution of streams, soil-texture, flora and fauna to the

dispersion of concepts reflected in Tachoni initiation rituals.

The historical manifestations which emerged were a process that operated under the structural functionalist paradigm. Though the paradigm had its own limitations, Victor Turner's version off-loaded them. Through his 'field context' approach which he defined as a process and configuration of changing and developing elements (Shorter, 1972:140-141), the structural-functionalist paradigm was energized to cater for time changes. Hence, this facility within the paradigm fruitfully guided this study to delve into concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni.

To conclude, therefore, we argue that the study has shown that social concepts in initiation rituals among Abatachoni were a crucial reflection on their world-view. Their social, economic and political values were mirrored in the above ritual concepts. For instance, the pre-colonial initiation ritual manifested a different world-view from that which they embraced during the colonial situation. Though the time limit in this study is around 1946, we would recommend for future researchers to examine the colonial and post-independent period with a view to demonstrating how concepts contained in initiation rituals affected the community's cosmological view.

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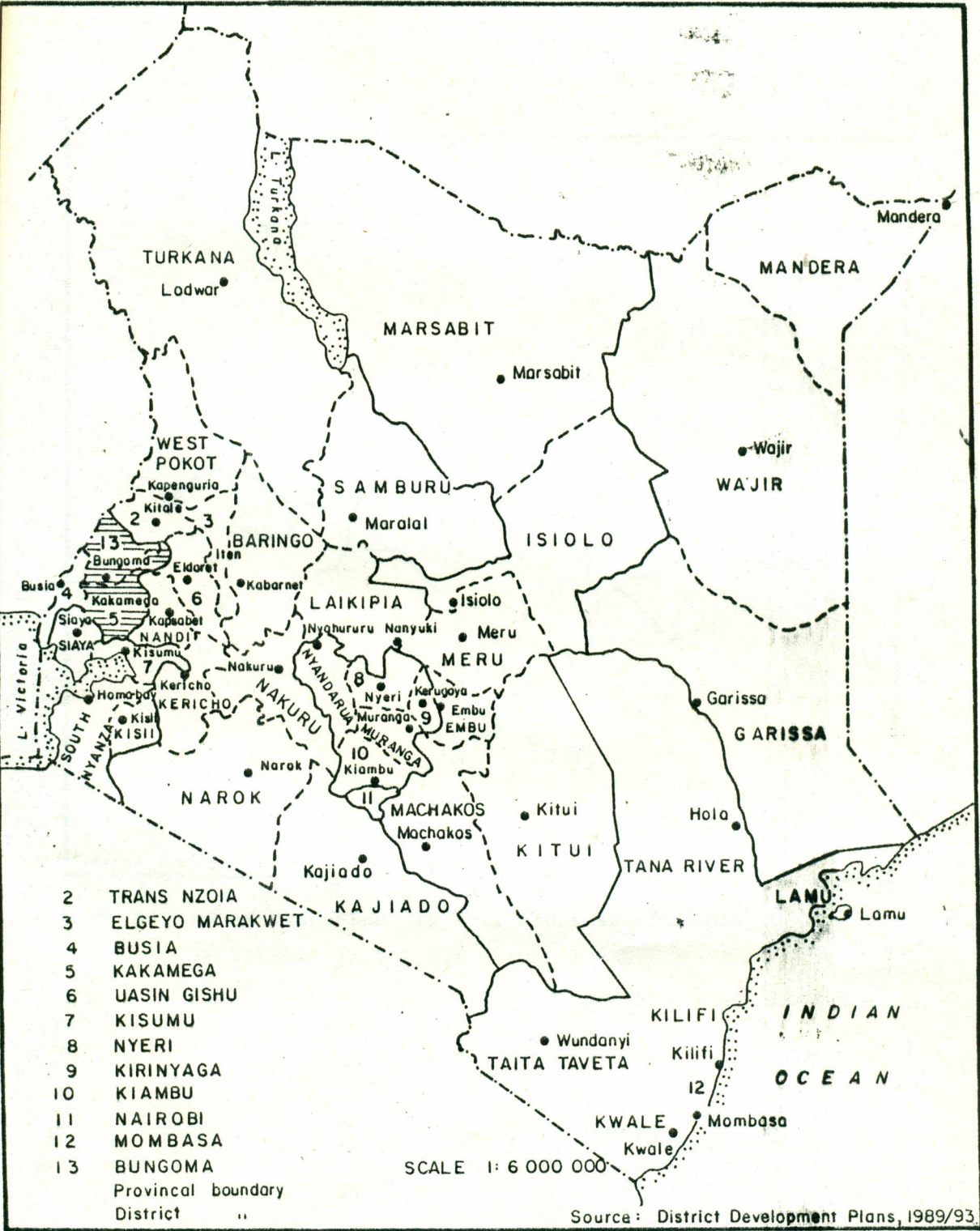
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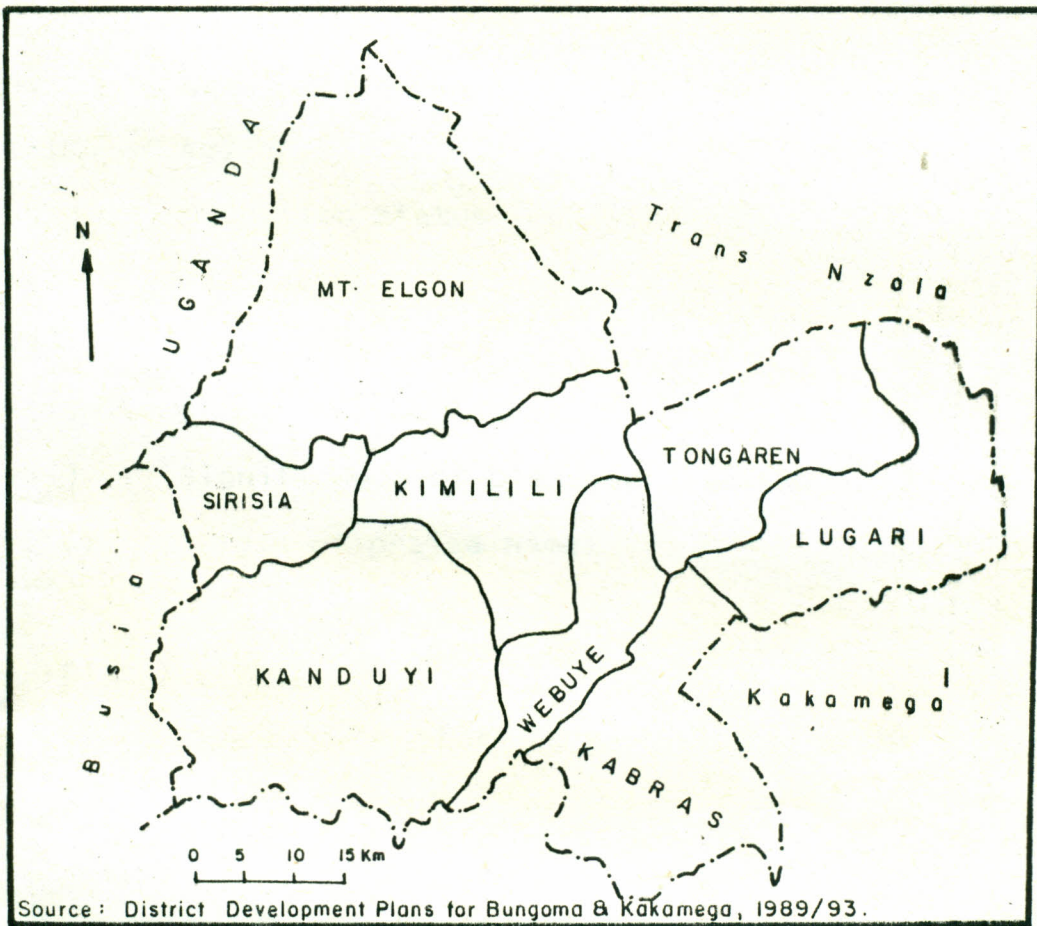
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APPENDIX I



MAP 1: LOCATION OF KAKAMEGA AND BUNGOMA DISTRICTS IN KENYA (Shaded part)

APPENDIX II



MAP 2: AREAS DISCUSSED IN THIS STUDY IN RELATION TO TACHONI INITIATION RITUAL IDEAS.

I EVEN KABRAS AND LUGARI ARE IN KAKAMEGA DISTRICT.

APPENDIX IIIQUESTIONNAIRE GUIDELINEA. Background Information

- (i) Name of informant
- (ii) Age
- (iii) Education status
- (iv) Occupation
- (v) Clan
- (vi) Clanal praise names
- (vii) Significance of clanal praise names
- (viii) Origin of praise names

B. Clanal History

- (i) Give brief history of your clan from the cradle land to the present
- (ii) What events happened in the migration of such a clan? Estimate the period.
- (iii) What important places did the members pass through?
- (iv) Whoo did they encounter on the way?

- (v) Identify the place and the period when the encounter took place.

C. Circumcision

- (i) When did the concept of circumcision occur to your clansmen? Explain.
- (ii) Why did the clansmen embrace the concept?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying when the concept was adopted?
- (iv) Did the neighbours of your clansmen at that time have the same concept? Explain.
- (v) Did both boys and girls start practising circumcision at the same time? Explain.
- (vi) Since the time your clan embraced the concept, have they encountered other people who never practised the ritual? Explain.
- (vii) What changes have occurred to your clansmen's view about circumcision from the earliest time up to the present? (First give your own experience and also use what you heard from your members)

- (ix) Do you have circumcisors in your clan? When did you have the very first ones?
- (x) How does one become a circumcisor? Explain.
- (xi) Is the art of circumcision respected? Explain.
- (xii) Do your circumcisors operate in other regions? Explain.
- D. Smithing
- (i) Does your clan practise smithing?
- (ii) If so, when and why did the practice occur to your clansmen?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying when the practice first struck them?
- (iv) Who were your neighbours when this concept struck? Were they practising smithing? Explain.
- (v) What tools did your smiths make? Explain.
- (vi) Explain the changes that have taken place in the smithing of your clansmen since the time they

embraced the practice to the present.

E. Age-set System

- (i) What is the meaning of an age-set?
- (ii) How many age-sets are in your clan? When did your clansmen start having age-sets? Why did your members adopt this concept of age-sets?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying when you adopted age-sets?
- (iv) Who were your neighbours? Did they have age-sets? Explain.
- (v) What were the criteria on which an age-set was established?
- (vi) Have these criteria been constant from the very beginning? Explain.
- (vii) Explain the changes that have affected the age-set values from the very beginning to the present.

F. Sangaya

- (i) What is the origin of the term Sangaya?
- (ii) What does it mean to your clansmen?
- (iii) When did your clansmen first conceive of this concept? Why did they conceive it?
- (iv) Where were your clansmen staying when they first conceived of the concept? Who were your neighbours?
- (v) Did your neighbours perform sangaya? Explain.
- (vi) Which clans have you come in contact with since your first sangaya? Do they perform it? Explain

G. Okhulichana

- (i) What is the meaning of okhulichana?
- (ii) When and why did it start among your people? Where were they staying? Who were your neighbours?
- (iii) Did your neighbours also practise okhulichana? Explain.

- (iv) Explain the various changes that took place in okhulichana history. Mention the changes, periods of the changes, reasons and places where the changes occurred.
- (v) What criteria governed okhulichana? How did they come about? Have they undergone changes since the time of inception? Explain.
- (vi) What other clans have a similar concept of okhulichna with your clan? How do you relate?

H. The Leopard, Yingwe

- (i) What role does the leopard play in initiation rituals?
- (ii) When was the "leopard" concept incorporated into these rituals? Why was it incorporated?
- (iii) Did the leopard substitute another value or it was a fresh symbol in the rituals?
- (iv) Where were your clansmen staying when you incorporated the yingwe into the rituals?
- (v) Where did the concept of the leopard come from?

I. The East, Yikwe

- (i) What role does the east play in your clan?
- (ii) When did your clansmen incorporate the values of the east in the initiation rituals?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen when the east was incorporated into the initiation rituals in your clan?
- (iv) Why was the east incorporated into the initiation rituals in your clan?
- (v) Who were your clans' neighbours when your clan first incorporated the concept of the east into the initiation rituals?
- (vi) Did your neighbouring clans also share similar values about the east? Explain.
- (vii) Which other clans have similar values as yours attached to the east? How do these clans relate to you?

J. Water

- (i) What is the role of water in both pre and post circumcision rituals?
- (ii) When was it incorporated into these rituals? Why?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying at the first time water values were incorporated in the initiation rituals?
- (iv) Who were your neighbours? Did they also have similar views about water? Explain.
- (v) Which other clans make similar use of water in the pre- and post circumcision initiation rituals? How do you relate?

K. Esitabicha

- (i) What is the meaning of esitabicha?
- (ii) How did the term originate and from where?
- (iii) When did your clan acquire the concept of esitabicha? Why?

- (iv) Where were your clansmen staying when you acquired the concept?
- (v) Which clans were your neighbours?
- (vi) Did they have the concept of esitabicha? Explain.
- (vii) Explain the developments that have been made on the concept of esitabicha from the time of the acquisition to the present date.
- (viii) What other clans have the same concept of esitabicha? How do they relate with you?

L. Obubiti

- (i) What is the meaning of obubiti?
- (ii) How does a person become an omubiti?
- (iii) Do you have ababiti in your clan?
- (iv) What is their role in the pre and post circumcision initiation rituals?

- (v) When and from where did your clansmen acquire the practice? Why?
- (vi) Where were the clansmen staying?
- (vii) Which clans were your neighbours at that time?
- (viii) Did they practise obubiti?
- (ix) Which other clans perform obubiti? How do you relate with them?

M. Cheptail

- (i) Who is Cheptail? Where is the origin of the name?
- (ii) What role does Cheptail play in your community?
- (iii) When did your clan incorporate Cheptail into the initiation rituals? Why?
- (iv) Where were you staying at that time?
- (v) Explain the changing roles of Cheptail in the initiation rituals from the time he/she was incorporated into the rituals up to the present date.

- (vi) Which other clans have a concept of Cheptaille?
How do you relate to them?

N. Nomenclature

- (i) What was the role of age-set nomenclature?
- (ii) What is the religious, social, political significance of the nomenclature to the recipient of the name?
- (iii) Is the nomenclature of the youth after initiation different from childhood or infancy naming? Explain.
- (iv) When did your clansmen acquire the practice of initiation nomenclature? Where is the source?
- (v) Where were your clansmen staying?
- (vi) Which clans were your neighbours?
- (vii) Did they have the initiation ritual nomenclature? Explain.
- (viii) What changes have been brought about to the initiation rituals since the time when your clansmen acquired the practice to the present date?

O. Maternalism

- (i) What is the meaning of maternalism?
- (ii) What role does it have in the dispersion of concepts in initiation rituals?
- (iii) When did certain concepts contained in initiation rituals reach your clan through maternal connections? Which were these concepts? What was their source?
- (iv) Trace the history of such concepts from the time your clansmen acquired them to the present date.

P. Information

- (i) What are chinyimba (jingle bells), ebitili (bangles), and ebitukhuli (rattles)?
- (ii) What role do they play in initiation rituals?
- (iii) When were they incorporated into initiation rituals? Where were they obtained from?
- (iv) Where were your clansmen staying when you incorporated these instruments into initiation

rituals?

- (v) Why did your clansmen incorporate the instruments?
- (vi) Which clans were your neighbours then?
- (vii) Did they make similar use of jingle bells, bangles and rattles? Explain.
- (viii) Trace the changes bells, rattles and bangles have undergone from the first time your clan acquired them to the present date.

Q. Militarism

- (i) What are lifumo (Spear), chilanyi (arrow-heads), sword (lisakha or lihalo), and knife (esilotwa)?
- (ii) What functions did they play in initiation rituals? What other weapons were incorporated into initiation rituals?
- (iii) When did your clan incorporate them into initiation rituals? Why? And from where did your clan obtain them?
- (iv) Where were your clansmen staying when they acquired

and incorporated the use of weapons into initiation rituals?

- (v) Which clans were your neighbours?
- (vi) Did they attach similar values to these weapons? Explain.
- (vii) Trace the developments on these weapons from the time your clan first acquired them to the present.

R. The Soil

- (i) What is the type of soil used in initiation rituals? Why was it incorporated into the initiation rituals? What was it?
- (ii) Where were your clansmen staying?
- (iii) Which clans were your neighbours? Did they use the soil in a similar way? Explain.
- (iv) What other clans use the soil in initiation rituals? How do you relate with them?

S. The Sun

- (i) What was the significance of the sun to your clansmen?
- (ii) When was the importance of the sun incorporated into initiation rituals? Why?
- (iii) Where did your clansmen get the value from?
- (iv) Where were they staying?
- (v) Which clans were your neighbours? Did they have the value of the sun incorporated in their initiation rituals? Explain.
- (vi) What other clans incorporated the value of the sun in their initiation rituals? How do you relate with them?

T. Slaughter of Animals

- (i) Did your clansmen kill animals during initiation rituals? Explain.
- (ii) When did this start and why? From where did your clansmen get this practice?

- (iii) Who were your neighbours? Did they also slaughter animals for similar purposes? Explain.
- (iv) Trace the development of slaughtering of animals from when it was first incorporated into initiation rituals to the present date. Where did your clansmen get the practice from?
- (v) What other clans slaughter animals during initiation rituals? How do you relate with them?

U. Place of Initiation

- (i) Did your clansmen value where a person got initiated from? Explain.
- (ii) When did the hospital start playing a role in the initiation of your youth? Why? What role did it play?
- (iii) Trace the history of the places of initiation among your clansmen. Did they value initiations in groups or in individual homes? Why?

V. Payment

- (i) Was payment for circumcision, smithing, and okhulichana instituted simultaneously with the introduction of the concepts? Explain. Why was

there payment?

- (ii) What items were used in payment? Why?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying when the introduction of payment was started?
- (iv) Which clans were your neighbours? Did they charge for circumcision, smithing and okhulichana? Explain.
- (v) Which other clans charge for the circumcision, smithing and okhulichana? How do you relate with them?
- (vi) Comment on the history of payments for initiation rituals among your clansmen from the time of its introduction to the present. Show the locations, time and circumstances surrounding the various phases of change..

W. Beer, Amalwa.

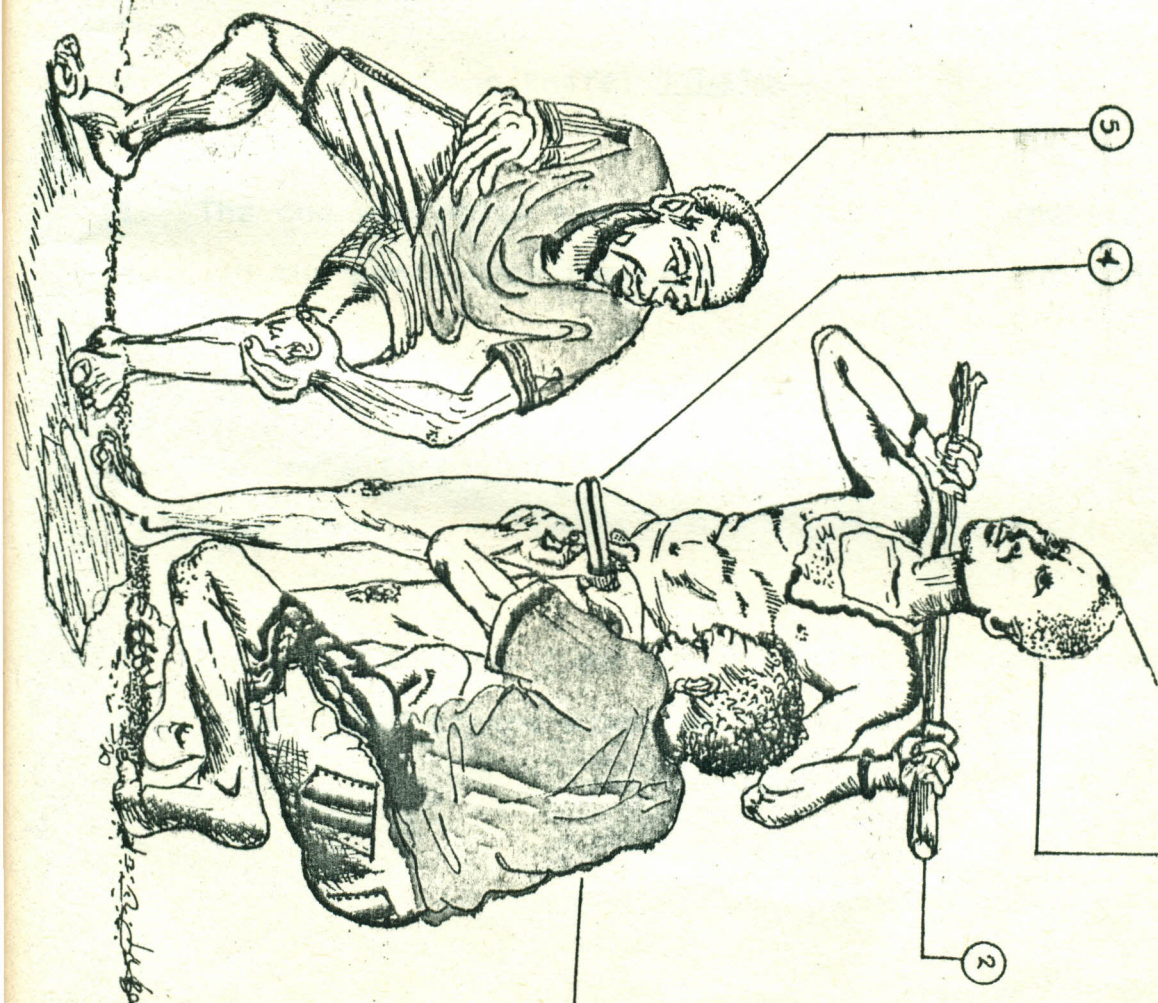
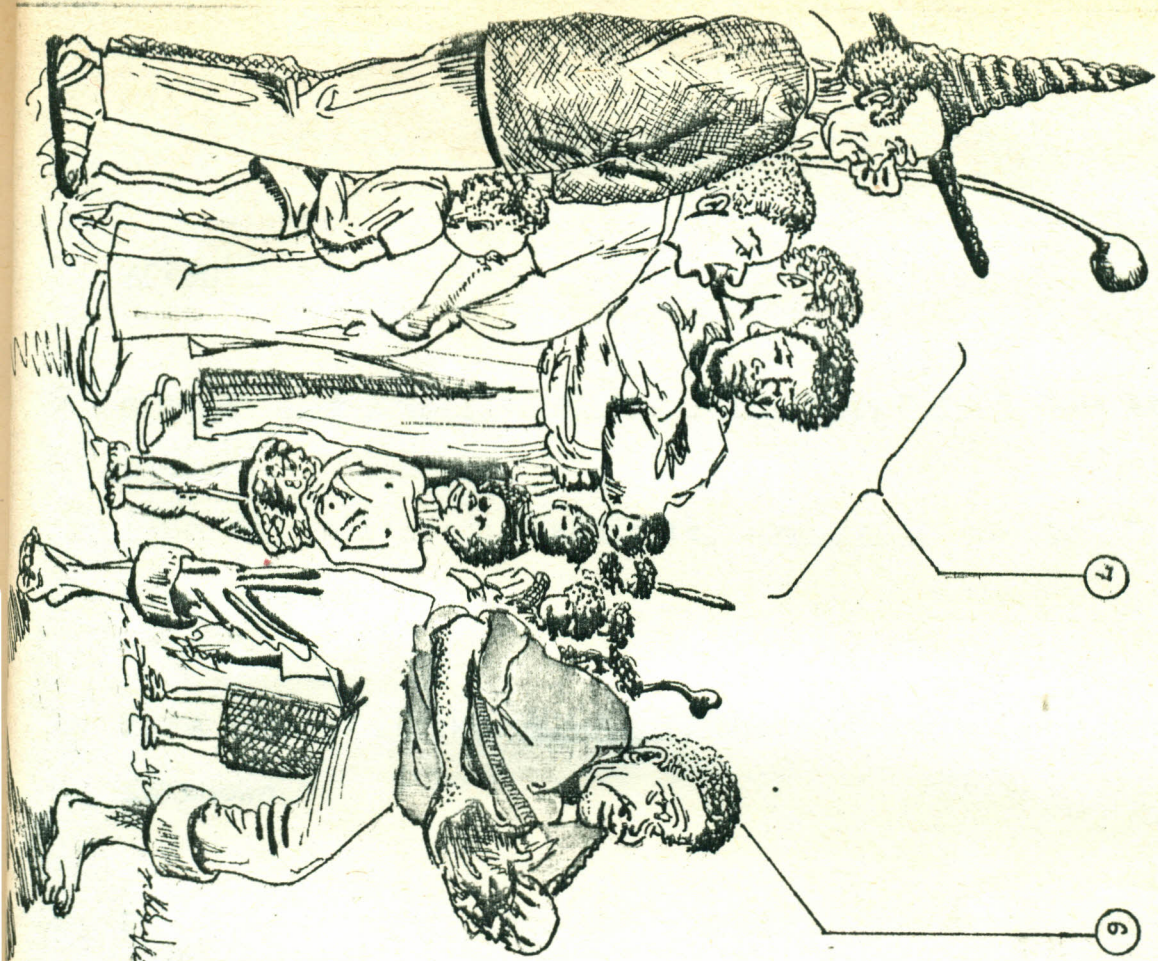
- (i) What function does beer play in initiation rituals among your clansmen?

- (ii) When was it incorporated into the initiation rituals and why?
- (iii) Where were your clansmen staying? Which clans were your neighbours? Did they also brew beer for initiation rituals? Explain.
- (iv) Were there special pots for this brewing purpose? Explain.
- (v) What changes have affected the brewing of beer during initiation rituals? Estimate time when such changes occurred and the location where your clansmen were staying.
- (vi) What other clans brew beer for initiation purposes? How do you relate with them?

APPENDIX IVAge-Sets and Age-grades Between 1800 and 1900 AD.

Age-sets between about 1800 and 1900 AD cannot be rigidly dated. This is especially so in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is argued that during this period, certain calamities engendered postponements of initiations sometimes up to three years. Thus, in this study dates based on age-sets between about 1800 and 1900 AD are estimates. For instance, the period from about 1800 to 1810 formed kolongolo age-set; 1824-1834 (kananachi age-set); 1836-1848 (kinyikeu age-set); 1850-1860 (nyange age-set); 1862-1872 (maina age-set); 1874-1884 (chuma age-set); 1886-1898 (sawa age-set) and 1900 started yet another cycle with kolongolo age-set. Each age-set has six sub-divisions. A sub-division has two consecutive years. The two years form an age-grade.

Beginning with maina age-set onwards, dates are more accurate than those of earlier age-sets.



APPENDIX V

A Display of A Section of the Initiation Ritual (see attached picture)

1. An Initiation candidate, omusinde, poised for circumcision.
2. A Special stick, omusukuni, the initiation candidate holds as shown.
3. The chief circumcisor, omusebi, operating on the candidate.
4. The circumcision knife, lihalo.
5. The one who helps the chief circumcisor, omutili, ready to hold the penis when the chief is operating the inner tissue.
6. The one with powdered dust, wa lifu, keenly observing his chief at work.
7. The eye-witnesses drawn at an angle so as not to obstruct the reader from taking sight of the entire view.

APPENDIX VIList of Informants:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Date of Interview</u>
Cheruya Tito	90 years	21st March, 1991.
Chetambe Maikuma	77 years	9th April, 1991.
Kapchanga Mutali	90 years	20th March, 1991.
Kerre A. Nandasaba	81 years	18th March, 1991.
Khakame C. Makhakha	77 years	16th March, 1991.
Khatete E. Nyongesa	44 years	21st March, 1991.
Kibeu Maurice	57 years	19th March, 1991.
Kibutuli Situma	91 years	17th March, 1991.
Kofulo	86 years	17th August, 1991.
Kusimba Joram	85 years	7th April, 1991.
Kwanusu Wasike	63 years	21st March, 1991.
Makari Wakoli	73 years	22nd March, 1991.
Makhanu M. Binyenya	78 years	5th May, 1991.
Malemo Simiyu	46 years	20th March, 1991.
Manguya Namutala	39 years	17th March, 1991.
Masibo Muyundo	80 years	7th May, 1991.
Masinde Esau	78 years	13th March, 1991.
Manyoro David	53 years	7th April, 1991.
Mulama F. Wasike	59 years	18th April, 1991.
Mumelo Mucheloesia	90 years	20th March, 1991.
Munyasia Festo	60 years	16th April, 1991.

Muse R. Manafwa ¹	93 years	1st March, 1991.
Mwasame Mulati	71 years	17th March, 1991.
Mwasame Paulo	88 years	17th August, 1991.
Naiveyi Josam	64 years	21st March, 1991.
Nalinya Makari	80 years	6th April, 1991.
Namutala Samita	88 years	17th March, 1991.
Nandokha Daniel	79 years	22nd March, 1991.
Nasong'o Nabwera	67 years	16th April, 1991.
Ndala, M. Wekalamwoyo	65 years	9th May, 1991.
		20th March, 1991.
Ndombi, Josephat	77 years	6th April, 1991.
Nuru M. Kirui	73 years	20th March, 1991
Sichangi W. Wanyama	73 years	17th April, 1991.
Sikwata Patropa	81 years	21st march, 1991
Simiyu Andrew	58 years	9th May, 1991.
Singalaba M. Kachenja	77 years	17th March, 1991.
Sirandula Jonathan	62 years	6th May, 1991.
Sitati W. Namutala	33 years	17th March, 1991.
Soita A. Muse	32 years	15th March, 1991.
Wafula J. Mulianga	84 years	17th March, 1991.
Walubengo wa Masengeli	94 years	19th April, 1991.
Waluchio Se Buria	82 years	13th March, 1991.
Wamalwa Titus	62 years	18th April, 1991.
Wambasi Wasakiti	77 years	10th April, 1991.

¹Mr. Muse died at the end of 1991 after a shock when one of his sons died abruptly.

Wandibba Simiyu		7th May, 1992.
Wangila Zakayo	64 years	16th March, 1991.
Wanyama J. Wachilonga	62 years	18th March, 1991.
Wanyonyi P. Nduguyu	82 years	18th April, 1991.
Waswa Hudson	50 years	18th April, 1991.
Wekesa A. Chenonoi	82 years	9th May, 1991.
Yinungilo Katame	66 years	9th March, 1991.

APPENDIX VIIList of Definition of Terms

In the preceding chapters, whenever a Tachoni term has appeared for the first time, its meaning is immediately provided. However, it is convenient here to include a list of definition of terms of those words which are frequently used in the discussion of certain concepts.

(i) Concepts expressed in English language

Movement of Social concepts - this expression is applied in the following ways:-

(a) It refers to the manner in which concepts in initiation rituals are transferred from one region or direction to another by people who move to new areas.

(b) It refers to the way in which a concept gains more meaning than what it previously meant. This latter definition is sometimes referred to as enlargement in scale.

(ii) Concepts expressed in Luyia language

Buluyia: — It is a term used to refer to the Abaluyia Community.

Chebotalang'i: This is a ritual word which emerged from Abatachoni's distortion of Chepta[?], a

Kalenjin word meaning God. In the ritual context, however, Chebutalangi signifies a lion (see chapter four above).

Esitabicha (pl. Ebitabicha): is a sacred place on an ever-flowing river in a swampy area where Abatachoni carry out their post-circumcision initiation rituals by passing initiates through small huts before being dipped in water (see chapter three).

Esisili (pl. Ebisili): Is a traditional hoe. It is small with a narrow blade. This hoe was used for weeding eleusine.

Obubiti: Initiation ritual priesthood.

Okhubatisia: To baptise.

Okhulichana: It is a post-circumcision initiation ritual which ushers the youth among Abatachoni into adulthood (see chapter three).

Okhwalukha: A term used to refer to the final process of post-circumcision initiation ritual. During that process, initiates come out of their

seclusion and eventually join the rest of the community.

Olubaka (pl. chimbaka): The term has two meanings:-

- (1) It is an age-grade.
- (2) It is a present or gift from coevals during an initiation ritual.

Olupao: A piece of timber.

Omubiti (pl. Ababiti): Initiation ritual priest.

Omufulu (pl. Abafulu): Initiate or neophyte.

Omusinde (pl. Abasinde). Initiation ritual candidate.

Sangaya: It has three meanings.

- (1) The term evokes a historical place, Sengeli.
- (2) It refers to the people known as Sengwer.
- (3) The term connotes a journey motif (see chapter four).

Yikwe: East.

Yimbako (pl. Chimbako): It is a traditional hoe that is slightly broader than esisili (as described above). Yimbako was used for digging and weeding crops.

Yingwe (pl. Chingwe): Leopard.

Yinjeso (pl. Chinjeso): A sickle. It was used in the harvesting of sorghum and eleusine.

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