

**TRANSFORMATION OF FEMALE CIRCUMCISION AMONG  
THE KIPSIGIS OF BOMET COUNTY: KENYA; 1945-2014**

**BY**

**WERUNGA DAMARIS SIMULI**

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**DECLARATION**

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

Signature: *damaris* ..... Date: *16/10/2017* .....

Name: Werunga Damaris Simuli

This thesis has been submitted for review with our approval as university supervisors.

Signature: *[Signature]* ..... Date: *16/10/2017* .....

Dr. David O. Okelo

Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies

Signature: *[Signature]* ..... Date: *30/10/2017* .....

Dr. Susan Mwangi Owino

Department of History, Archeology and Political Studies

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is a dedication to my parents who taught me that the best kind of knowledge is that, which is acquired for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my siblings who always reminded me that even the largest task can be accomplished when I take one step at a time. You have been a great source of motivation and inspiration. Your kindness and selflessness shan't be forgotten.

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADR-----	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AIC -----	African Inland Church
AIM -----	African Inland Mission
FC-----	Female Circumcision
FGM-----	Female Genital Mutilation
FGD-----	Focus Group Discussion
MC-----	Male Circumcision
KHDS-----	Kenya Health and Demographic health Surveys
KVE-----	Kipsigis village elders
KMY-----	Kipsigis Male Youths
KII-----	Key Informant/Information
OI-----	Oral Interview
UNICEF-----	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO-----	World Health Organization

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Circumcision-** Is a process consisting of the removal of only the prepuce (hood, covering) of the clitoris. In this context of the study it denotes to an initiation rite or a rite of passage that marks transition from childhood to adulthood

**Clitorectomy-** The surgical cutting of the clitoris. It is the process of cutting the clitoris without removal of the labia mineral and majora circumcision too.

**Excision-** Removal of either the some or the entire clitoris or partial or complete removal of the labia minora. In this study it has been operationalized to refer to the removal of the clitoris together with the adjacent parts of the labia minora or the entire labia minora as well as the labia majora

**Female Genital Mutilation-** practice of partially or totally removing genitalia of a girl or woman. Is a euphemism used to describe all the procedures that entail cutting of female genitalias.

**Infibulation-** Removal of all external genitalia, stitching the edges together to leave a small opening for passage of urine and menstrual blood. The terms was used to refer to the cutting of the entire clitoris, labia minora and outer surfaces of the labia majora after which the two sides of labia majora are fastened together leaving only a small posterior opening for urine and menstrual blood passage

**Rites of passage-** an event in life that is carried out at specific period in one's lifetime to mark transition from one life stage to another. In this context the rite of passage denotes to the ceremonial activity that makes a Kipsigis girl transit into a woman with full membership into the community

**Transformation-** Is a revolutionary change. The terms was used to refer to the alterations that the whole process of Kipsigis female circumcision has undergone

## ABSTRACT

Female Circumcision (FC) has been an issue of debate globally in the recent past, with intense campaigns against the practice. A practice that was initially carried out in many communities in the world, started facing hostility from the legal and human rights activists as a violation of human rights. Nevertheless, this practice has persisted even after the ban globally in states such as New Zealand, and most African nations including Kenya. Owing to the prohibition of the practice of female circumcision, other communities have come up with alternative rites of passage, educational programs that comprise of the girls being secluded and given specific instructions instead of the cut. Female Circumcision has undergone significant changes regarding rituals, the practice itself and the significance of the act among the Kipsigis. These changes have come along with educational, religious and activists programs. The study was necessitated by the controversies surrounding FC between the fight against the practice and the conservatives who advocate for upholding the practice as part of their culture thus the need to preserve it. This study focused on the transformation in Female Circumcision among the Kipsigis of Bomet County in the period 1945-2014. It began by interrogating the significance of Female Circumcision among the Kipsigis community. Secondly, the study sought to examine the impact of Christianity on FC among Kipsigis and thirdly, it investigated the changes and continuities of Female Circumcision practice among the Kipsigis since independence to 2014, given the intense campaign against Female Circumcision and the introduction of the new Kenyan constitution that has been more elaborate against the practice. Functionalism Theory guided the study. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Descriptive research design was applied in the study; both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. However, a qualitative approach was the primary approach. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used in selecting the research participants. The findings indicated that female circumcision played a key role as a mark of transition from childhood to womanhood among the Kipsigis. The ceremonies and teachings that accompanied it were imperative in the construction of a woman and preparing her for wifely roles. Additionally, it was noted that the missionary penetration in Rift Valley impacted on FC among the Kipsigis. Christianity termed FC as barbaric and primitive practice thus, to be done away with. However, despite such campaigns against FC, it still continued in a less intense manner. The findings also indicated that after independence, FC was declared illegal in Kenya and new forms of the practice emerged. The places, circumcisers, tools, and rituals that are used in the entire exercise changed over time. Accordingly, if the war against FC continues the practice is likely to be extinct in the near future. The study is significant because it enriches the historiography of gender studies as well as act as an impetus to studying Female Circumcision among other communities. The study results are helpful as far as Female Circumcision-related policy formulation and implementation are concerned.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter covers the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, questions, and premises. It also encompasses justification and significance of the study as well as and limitations. Further, the chapter reviews literatures related to the topic, states the theoretical framework and details of the methodologies used in the study.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Different definitions of female circumcision exist. For instance, among the Kipsigis, Female Circumcision FC is an initiation rite or a rite of passage that marks a transition from childhood into womanhood (Fish and Fish 1995). In addition, Moen (1978) Defines FC as a euphemism that comprises of a series of operations classified as genital mutilation (GM). According to Moen, FC as a practice is the least mutilating of the three operations; circumcision, excision, and infibulation. She asserts that FC consists of the removal of only the prepuce of the clitoris. On the other hand, the World Health Organization (2006) defines FC as procedures that consist of partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. WHO (2006) also describes this practice as another injury to the female genital organs for non-medical purposes. Generally, FC is termed as a violation of the human rights of women and girls. In essence, FC is a practice that has been common among the communities in Africa and to be specific in Kenya among the Kipsigis community. According to the report given by WHO (2012), FC reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is virtually

carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of girls and women. In this vein, according to WHO, FC also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death (WHO, 1998).

Female circumcision is one of the practices that have been regarded as a violation of human rights globally by the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights activists. Although initially valued and highly regarded among different societies for its role in the construction of a woman, by 1980s countries like Switzerland outlawed the practice. Basically, female circumcision involves the cutting or piercing the clitoris and secluding initiates for a particular period of time (Magesa, 1998). In essence, seclusion period provides time for the initiates to heal and learn their new roles as women in the society, as well as acquaint themselves with the societal secrets (Mbiti, 1990).

Snow (2001) notes that 1 billion women and 1.49 million girls worldwide have been subjected to Female Circumcision. This has been achieved essentially in Africa and a couple of nations in the Middle East in particular among the Muslim communities such as Yemen, Kurdish communities, Saudi Arabia, Asia among other ethnic communities in Central and South America. Notably, in Yemen, 23 percent of women have undergone circumcision. However, the figure ascends to 69% in the sparsely populated Red Sea and Aden coast areas. This is compared to the 15% in the densely populated countries and 5% in level and desert areas (WHO, 2008).

In the USA, about 507,000 women either have undergone the practice or are likely to undergo the practice (Ahmed, 2007). Variably, FC in this region is carried out on girls between few days old to 15years. However, in 1996 FC was outlawed although

it persists to date. Lawyers such as Dukerh have launched a campaign against FC, calling upon President Barrack Obama to develop a strategic plan to end the practice. According to Ahmed (2007), various lawyers such as Christopher Williams, Dawn Smith and Audrey Bergeson have also developed alternative educational programs in Atlanta educating women about the adverse results of FC; however, the turn up is so low.

FC is an old practice everywhere throughout the world. According to Tanui (2006), it has existed for more than 4,000-5,000 years beginning in a period originating before God's agreement with Abraham to circumcise his kin. In Tanui's exploration, it is stated that Female Circumcision started in Egypt and was regularly performed by the old societies of the Phoenicians, Hittites, and the ancient Egyptians. This authentic portrayal of the genesis of Female Circumcision only serves to advance the FC accordingly. Notably, it creates a gap that the study on the change of Female Circumcision among the Kipsigis addresses.

Among the Kurdish communities, FC is pervasive (ADR, 2010). In Iraq, FC is practiced in the Kurdistan region on the Muslim Kurdish women in Erbil city. Over 70.3% of the women are mutilated with the majority having undergone the female genital mutilation type one (Namiri, 2014). Traditional birth attendants are the primary actors of FC. The chief significance of FC in this society is socio-cultural in nature. However, the need to safeguard virginity is the principle reason behind FC. Accordingly, due to the brutal nature of FC in this community the ADR (2010) suggests its abolition.

In Africa, FC is considered an important rite of passage that marked a transition from childhood to adulthood. On this note, FC was meant to prepare young girls for

marriage and their future roles as wives (Mbiti, 1990). However, Genep (1967) records that some communities such as the Samburu and the Igbo used FC as a method of safeguarding virginity. Additionally, the practice was meant to reduce the women's sexual desires to remain subjective to their men (Wilhelm, 2009). The practice is recorded to be high in sub-Saharan Africa where more than 30 % of the women are circumcised (WHO, 2008). Countries in Africa that have recorded high rates of FC include Mali, Somalia, and Egypt. Others like Senegal and Nigeria record relatively low rates of FC (Mbiti, 1990).

In Nigeria, FC is prevalent among the Igbo and Hausa-Fulani people. The Igbo carry out the practice on young girls aged between 10 and 13 years old (Namiri, 2014). The whole process of circumcision entails complex preparations. However, the high point of it all is on the day of the actual cutting. The girls are not supposed to cry or show any signs of fear. Whoever cries becomes a disgrace and brings embarrassment to the family. After the cutting, the girls are put under house isolation where they are taught about future responsibility as wives. In addition, during this time they are taught muscle-relaxing and beauty techniques in order to look pretty and entice men (Namiri, 2014).

In Somalia, the prevalence of FC is about 95%, and it is mainly carried on girls aged between 4 and 11 years old (UNICEF, 2010). FC is used to ensure virginity among girls, which is a prerequisite for marriage (Olungah, 2010). Additionally, Olungah states that virginity maintained the family name and secured the family line. It is believed that a woman's access to land was through marriage and only circumcised women are considered suitable for marriage. Young women were therefore eager to get the cut and get married as soon as possible so that they could have access to

wealth and prestige. Such perspectives regarding the future of women in Somali is unhealthy on such grounds that women are ill-treated by men who feel they have purchased themselves a woman whose ultimate job is to satisfy him sexually. Out of ignorance, the Somali community also believes that a woman's external genitals are ugly and dirty and that they will continue to grow long if not cut (Olungah, 2010). In this regard, FC is seen to make a girl hygienically clean and beautiful. Besides, the long clitoris is believed to arouse intense sexual desires for the girl. Olungah further asserts that the tight opening left during infibulation is also thought to enhance male sexual pleasure, which prevents divorce and unfaithfulness. In fact, the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula is an area where various anthropologists have termed as "the land of the sewn women" due to the existence of infibulation. Cutting off the genitalia of a woman who fails to conceive is believed to solve infertility problems. FC in Somalia is also inseparable from religion, and it is supposed to make the girl religiously clean. Some claim that it is a requirement by the Koran. However, no single verse in the Koran has been given to support this. This explains why FC continues to be a social and cultural force even today. The specialists who conduct FC include elderly women, traditional birth attendants and sometimes, medical workers (ibid).

Additionally, FC is a customary practice in Uganda's Eastern region of Kapchorwa District (Kisekka, 1973). Case in point, in Uganda there is a customary sex education establishment known as *Ssenga*. It is an establishment which has been reconfigured to suit the times (Kisekka, 1973). The marvel of *Ssenga* speaks to a standout amongst the most capable social inscribers of ladies' bodies among the Baganda. The establishment of *Ssenga* encourages and fortifies patriarchal force, while in the

meantime subverting and spoofing it to tease out the transgression components of the *Ssenga* establishment. Traditionally, in Uganda, a girl who had not received the cut was not allowed to marry, speak or dance in public, nor was she allowed to touch food or utensils to be used by others as she was ostracized as unclean and bad luck.

Hernlund (2001) notes that, in Kenya, there is a general observation which is upheld by insights on FC in Kenyan Communities that circumcision allows the initiates start to have a place within a group authoritatively. They were and still are taught, expected and even offered lessons to be established in their mind for a lifetime and to be passed to the coming generations. Basically, this is seen as the best way to save and guarantee the survival of a group as an unmistakable component in the world (UNICEF, 2004). The FC practicing communities took a look at it as a proclamation that went down from precursors and divine beings to be practiced with no inquiry or adjustment at all thus the resolution is at last kept and satisfied (Hernlund, 2001).

The female circumcision has likewise prompted contention in Kenya following the time when the coming of the missionaries. In fact, the contention started in the congregation and had kept on showing itself as a religious contestation. Both the Methodist places of worship and the Scottish Presbyterian holy places in Kenya in the 1920s endeavored to stop FC by banning circumcised young girls and women who permitted the practice on their little girls. The participation of the Methodist Church of Meru dropped from seventy to just six inside of weeks of its initiating the expulsion principle (Murray, 1974). Accordingly, the Methodist Church depended on an adjusted "Christian circumcision." This involved the physical operation without the "barbarian custom of devouring and functions connected to the customary circumcision. The Anglican Church endured the same outcomes among the Kikuyu

group. Nonetheless, it was the Scottish Presbyterian Church that turned into a noteworthy setback in the occasions that prompted a split. The Roman Catholic Church then again stayed noiseless. An individual from the Roman Catholic Church is accounted for to have said: "The Roman Catholic Church would not agonize whether young girls are circumcised or not; Christians who circumcise girls are not suspended"(Murray, 1974).Murray further asserts that a key purpose behind the ascent of the AICs was the pompous and criticizing evangelist states of mind towards African traditions, especially FC and polygamy.

Nyangweso (2007) asserts that Kenyan communities that practiced FC also practiced MC. In these communities, both practices were perceived as an initiation rite into adulthood. In addition, they believed that carrying out the FC through clitoridectomy, excision, or infibulations could construct suitable women in their communities in that such women were considered to have less desire for sex, hence reduced promiscuity.

Prior to independence and just early years of independence, female circumcision was practiced among the Maasai, Samburu, and Somali, Meru, Abagusii, Gikuyu and Kalenjin communities (Wanjiru and Muriungi, 2014). Mbiti (1990) notes that, among the Maasai, FC entailed the piercing or the cutting off of the girl's sex organs. In preparation for the occasion, the heads of the girls are adorned with grass or leaves of a doom palm. Once the seclusion period was over, these young girls were married off to old men in the society. In some cases, they could have their heads shaved. The shaving of the head indicated a change from one status to another.

Among the Meru, FC dates back to the time when outsiders (the Gikuyu and Embu) could impregnate Meru women while their men were at war (Wilhelm, 2009). The act led to the removal of the clitoris in order to reduce the sexual desires of the women

such that they could remain faithful to their husbands (Wilhelm, 2009). Accordingly, girls are always under pressure from their peers and parents to undergo the procedure. FC in Meru persisted even after the ban in the 1990s. However, by 2007 alternative programs were developed instead of the FC. By the same year, about 2000 girls had taken classes in the program (Wilhelm, 2009). The programs prepare girls to womanhood through education rather than the physical cutting.

In his works on FC among the Abagusii, Momanyi (2001) notes that the journey to womanhood among Abagusii was incomplete without circumcision. Even after the ban, the practice still exists to date since the Abagusii were determined to fight for FC. Besides, this ethnic community was not at ease to talk about FC since there is a traditional explanation for every adverse outcome of the cut. An uncircumcised girl could not get married, and if she did, she could be circumcised during child delivery (Momanyi, 2001). The practice is considered a necessary mark of identity for a Gusii woman to distinguish herself from uncircumcised communities. They treat *Egesagane*, uncircumcised woman, with rejection if they fail to follow the tradition. This means that FC has a long way to go before zero tolerance.

Among the Gikuyu, FC (*irua*) was accompanied by a ceremony to represent a change of social positions for the initiates within the tribal organization (Smith, 2013). FC was carried annually on girls aged approximately 10 to 15 years. To the Gikuyu, FC admitted a girl into full societal membership (Kenyatta, 1938). After circumcision, the initiates took new salutations, assumed new dress codes, rights, and responsibilities in the society. They also could eat certain specific meals. Before the actual cutting, the girls could be shaved and anointed in a ceremony called *Kurathamaciana* that involved blessing the children and putting them next to Ngai

(Smith, 2013). The ceremonial council of elders could mark the initiates with a white chalk to signify the snow in Mount Kenya, the abode of the gods. The ancestral spirits could then be appeased through the sprinkling of *Njohi*, sugar cane liquor on the ground. Banana trees and sugar cane were then planted at the entrance of the homestead to drive away evil spirits. The next part of the ceremony was considered a fight between childhood and adulthood. The girls assembled under a *Mugumo* tree, singing and gathering twigs (Smith, 2013). The first girl to arrive at the tree became the favorite, and the men of her age set could try to win her affection with a hope of marrying her. Next, the initiates lined up before the council of elders to take the tribal oath. After the oath, they returned to the *Irua* homestead without looking behind. Looking back could make them recall the childhood misdeeds they have already thrown over the sacred tree. The elders sprinkled them with milk, honey, and medicine, which were believed to impart bravery and endurance. The following day early in the morning, the girl's undressed leaving only one bead around the shoulders. This symbolized that they owned nothing. They were in between childhood and adulthood (Smith, 2013).

While studying FC among the Kalenjin, Mbiti (1990) notes that the practice was done by the Nandi and the Kipsigis communities. In essence, among the Nandi the rite was a preparation for adulthood and wifely roles. Notably, no woman could get married if she had not faced the knife. FC among the Nandi is usually done on girls of age between 9 and ten years. As part of the preparation for initiation, the girls had to sleep with selected boys in a place called *Sikiroino*.

According to this community, Female Circumcision was aimed at teaching girls how to behave toward men and how to control their sexual desires. No sexual intercourse

was allowed during this time. The girls could be later tested for virginity, and if one had lost hers, she could be speared to death. At the age of 14 years, the girls could be set ready for the cutting. They had first to fetch firewood as a group. This symbolized cooperation among the initiates (Mbiti, 1990).

Mbiti (1990) further asserts that in the course of FC, the clitoris could be tied with a ligament before cutting. This was aimed at preventing further blood flow from the clitoris. The clitoris was then stung with stinging nettles to make them numb and swollen. After all these preparations, the cutting then could be done in a ceremony attended by many. Men were not allowed to witness the FC, thus, the exclusive nature of the rites of passages (Magesa, 1998). The girls could be kept in seclusion where they were advised on marital relations. Among the Nandi, FC was a rite of growth and shift from childhood to adulthood. The sex organ is a symbol of life, and the practice is the unlocking of life issue. Seclusion is a symbol of death, and its end is like resurrection to a new responsible life of a Kalenjin (Magesa, 1998).

Masolo (1994) however, criticizes Mbiti's works by citing how African religion intertwined with culture has changed over time ever since Africa was dominated by colonial masters. This has been exhibited in his writing when he asserts that today, many African Traditional Religion (ATRs) have inclined to the western way lifestyle. In a nutshell, FC has undergone functional changes due to own African lack of firm grounding onto it as well as the influence of the colonial masters and missionary forces in the region.

Among the Maasai, various myths are used to propagate FC. These include; the belief that the blood of a cut girl is bad, if not cut the clitoris will grow long, FC control women sexual urge and that FC makes childbirth easier (Lounge, 2010).

Additionally, fathers are proud when they cut their first-born daughters. This is because they believed they had become true men. If a girl were married uncut, she would be cut at the time of child delivery. However, her husband will be considered an outcast for marrying a woman not fit to live in a Maasai home. The Maasai FC operators barely use a disinfected knife, razor or a pair of scissors to cut off the labia or the clitoris. The operators then sew up the wound leaving just a small hole through which urine can pass. It is hard to believe that this is done without any form of euthanasia and all women suffer through this excruciating pain without anything to numb her nerves(Lounge, 2010).

Globally, studies on FC have concentrated on the actual act, significance and the global outcry for its ban. Few studies have interrogated the changes that have taken place on the role of FC. They narrowly seek to interrogate the importance or rather the significance of the practice, the changes on the practice itself such as on the FC actors as well as the rituals and assessing FC resilience.

Despite this, some communities, however, changed the way in which it was done. To begin with, girls began to be circumcised in private. Complex ceremonies were also discarded, and circumcisers began to hide. In spite of these changes, little scholarly attention has been paid to the information. Among the Kipsigis, inadequate literature exists on the changing dynamic of FC from 1945.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

In light of the a fore mentioned background, the study sought to interrogate the transformation in female circumcision among the Kipsigis of Bomet County in the period 1945-2014 in order to fill the gap owing to the changes that FC has undergone up to its current manifestation. This owed to the push and pull of the FC

conservatives versus the government and human rights activists. The two conflicting variables brought the essence to understand the context upon which each of the two is established to the present. It commenced by interrogating the original and significance of FC among the Kipsigis in the period from 1945-2014. In doing so, the study examined the role of Christianity on FC among the Kipsigis in the period 1946-1978. The researcher did an investigation on the changes of the practice among the Kipsigis in the period 1979-2014. The trends in FC were addressed in line with the factors that inform the changes and the current manifestations of FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet County.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- a. To interrogate the significance of FC among the Kipsigis 1945-2014
- b. To examine the role of Christianity on FC and its impact among Kipsigis in the period 1946-1978
- c. To investigate the changes and continuities of FC among the Kipsigis in the period 1979-2014

### **1.4 Research questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions

- a. What was the significance of FC among the Kipsigis in the period 1945-2014?
- b. What was the role and impact of Christianity on FC among the Kipsigis from 1946-1978?
- c. What were the changes and continuities of FC between 1979 and 2014?

## **1.5 Research premises**

This research was premised on the following:

- a. That FC had a significant role to play in the construction of a woman among the Kipsigis (1945- 2014).
- b. That Christianity was instrumental in the reconstruction of a Kipsigis woman among the Kipsigis (1946-1978).
- c. That changes and continuities of FC have contributed to its current manifestation among the Kipsigis (1979-2014).

## **1.6 Justification and Significance**

As attested in the background, the historical documentation of FC among the Kipsigis has not received adequate scholarly attention both globally and locally. Much of the existing literature is on the general practice of FC among the Kipsigis; focusing on the debates of female circumcision. In addition, they approach FC from human rights activists' point of view. Existing studies barely mentioned the transformation of FC among the Kipsigis. They studies provide pintsize information about the Kipsigis who are the focus of this study. In a nutshell, studies on FC have concentrated on the actual FC practice and the worldwide outcry for its ban due to its effects. This study takes a different angle by interrogating the changes that have occurred on FC since 1945 to its current manifestation 2014. The study takes a holistic approach to FC as it cuts across the actual act of FC, the rituals that accompany it as well as its significance and eventually the changes that have ensued.

The study diverted from other related studies owing to its focus on transformation in female circumcision among the Kipsigis. It aimed at enriching the historiography of

gender studies as well as act as a driving force in FC and related policy formulation and implementation. The study is therefore, important because it aimed at updating the studies on the practice from the colonial period up to the post-colonial era as in the current FC manifestation.

Findings from this study are believed by the researchers to be of great significance to the government, policy makers, gender academicians, NGOs and other stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of Gender related policies. It also suggests solutions to current debate on FC in the country. Apart from enriching the historiography of initiation rites in Africa, the study provides a new methodological and theoretical framework to interrogate the problem in Bomet County.

The study is on the Kipsigis and not any other community since the community in Bomet County has reported several cases of FC in the recent past alongside the Maasai community that borders this region (NTV news, 2015). Bomet County is significant in this study because it houses the highest number of Kipsigis who still carry out the practice hence they form the primary participants in this study.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

The study focused on the transformation of FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet County with focus being in areas such as Chapalungu, Bomet East, Bomet Central, Konoin and Sotik sub counties. The study was limited to the study period between 1945 and 2014. However, while it began in 1945, the researcher also looked at the period prior to 1945. This helped the researcher anchor the debate of FC within the African colonial Kipsigis society before the Africans embarked on a mission to resist the banning of their valued cultures. Essentially the nature and the significance were thus discussed. The study was wholly on Female and not Male circumcision.

The study was limited to transformation of FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet County; all other Kipsigis residing outside this region were only studied in as far as they are related to those of Bomet County.

Given the sensitive nature of the study topic and the FC practice, a number of participants were not willing to freely give information. This was, however, delimited through the assurance that their identity will be concealed and that the study was entirely for academic purposes.

Language proved to be a challenge in collecting data from the respondents; however, the two research assistants who understand the Kipsigis language helped to overcome the challenge. Another problem was the vastness of the area of Bomet County; however, with the help of the research assistants, data collection became manageable.

The period of 1945 was chosen as the starting point of the study because it was in 1945 that the Missionary opposition to FC prompted the establishment of many African indigenous Churches and schools to place emphasis on the Biblical warrant to take account of African cultural norms into the modes of worship of which FC was inclusive. Among the Kipsigis, the African Inland Mission/ African Inland Church abolished the practice in Bomet. Despite the ban, there has been resilience in the community up to the present though with some transformations that the study addresses.

The period 2014 was chosen to be the ending point to the study since Kipsigis community members first started embracing alternative rites of passage (ARP), and FC educational programs instead of the cut. Furthermore, the current constitution passed in 2010 is elaborate on FC with leaders such as Jebii Kilimo being on the fore

front to advocate for ARP. This can be evident in the interrogation on the prevalent reduction of FC to the ARP among the Kipsigis of Bomet County.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

This section covers a critical analysis of the already existing works on female circumcision both in Kenya as well as globally with a view of identifying the gaps left by other scholars. In addition, the works have been analyzed thematically as per the objectives.

#### **1.81 Review of the related literature.**

Namir (2007) notes that, in Iraq FC is common especially in the Kurdish region of Erbil City. In this region more, than 70.3% of women are mutilated with the majority having undergone FC type one. Traditional attendants are the main performers of FC (Namir, 2007). The author further notes that the main purpose is social cultural and more importantly safeguarding virginity among the girls. His ideas shed light to this study as far as the significance of FC is concerned. He also informed this study on the primary performers of FC; this study was vital to our study even though the author does not provide the origin of FC in Iraq whereas this study aimed at examining the history of FC and its specialists among Kipsigis of Bomet County.

In his study in Gambia, (Hernlund, 2000) takes an insight into the Cutting without ritual and ritual without cutting: female circumcision and the re-ritualization of initiation in Gambia. His study relates to this one as they both address the practice of FC transformation incorporating the rituals without cutting. He gives an account of the Gambian alternative rites of passage. Despite their resemblance in nature, the two address two entirely different communities in quite different demographics and location. In addition, it owes to the fact that these diversely placed communities are not homogeneous, therefore, ought to be studied separately.

Studying FC among the Somalis, Olungah notes that the practice was carried out to ensure virginity among girls, which is a prerequisite for marriage. According to Olungah (2010), FC practicing communities believed that a woman's access to land was through marriage and only genital cut women are considered suitable for marriage. The Somalis also thought that a woman's external genitals are ugly and dirty and that they continue to grow long if not cut and that the long clitoris is believed to arouse intense sexual desires to the girl. The tight opening of infibulation is also believed to enhance male sexual pleasure that prevents divorce and infidelity. Cutting the genitalia of a woman who fails to conceive is believed to solve infertility problems. FC in Somalia is also tied to religion, and it is believed to make the girl religiously clean. His works informed this study on the reasons for FC and the myths rotating around it. However, this study deviates from his by providing the details of FC during the colonial period and the changes the practices has undergone over time. His coverage of Somalis also might have overlooked some factors in the practice of FC. Indeed, he provides disjointed information thus, a narrow approach to the study of FC; this is another gap this study looked at.

Khamalwa (2004) gives a detailed account of male initiation(*Imbalu*) among the Masaba of Uganda. He critically analyzes the main actors of *Imbalu*, candidates and the clans involved. He further provides the faces of *Imbalu* and the cultural, individual, and symbolic significance of this practice among the Masaba of Uganda. He further notes that *Imbalu* has gone through various changes. His ideas informed this study as far as the significance of circumcision is concerned. He also shed light on the trends in female circumcision. However, his study was limited to the *Imbalu*, which is a male circumcision while this study focused on FC.

According to Namulondo (2009), female genital mutilation or female circumcision are common terms in Uganda and they are used to incorporate a broad range of traditional practices that involve the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia basically for conventional and cultural reasons in most African societies. The study addressed the perceptions of this practice and looked at different efforts by the Community Based Organizations and Government to eliminate this traditional practice among the Sabinu people of Kapchorwa District in the Republic of Uganda. The outcome of the study indicated that there are individuals who are in favor of the practice, while others are against the practice and there are various efforts that are being employed by the local community as well as government to eliminate the tradition in Kapchorwa. As a result of these efforts, there has been a change in the community; however, this does not yet mean that the tradition has been entirely eliminated. Nevertheless, this research deviated from her study as this one focused on Female Circumcision transformation.

Additionally, the East is not left out in the battle against Female Circumcision. As indicated by Toubia(1995), there is a war seething, with fanatics on both sides, over the issue of circumcision. On one hand are secularists whose restriction to religion has actuated them to participate in a campaign against all types of circumcision, including male circumcision, as a type of child abuse. On the other side are the conservative traditionalists who have attributed to religious conviction social customs including practices of FC. In his study, he found that in the middle of the extremes are some good natured individuals not befuddled about the genuine way of the experimental confirmation and the religious medicines with respect to a wide range of works on including any type of cutting in the genital zones. From his examination,

we noted that there has been a colossal change in the act of Female Circumcision in the Muslim world. This has been advanced not just by the Islamic laws excepting this practice, additionally by training and familiarity with the unfavorable impacts of Female Circumcision. Having learned the view of Muslims and the reaction in battling this practice, there are examination crevices in connection to the contributing elements to quick change on FC among the African groups (Toubia, 1995). The current study did this by endeavoring to bridge this gap by laying emphasis on the change of FC among Kipsigis in Bomet County.

During the pre-colonial period, FC was carried out among the discussed communities of the Maasai, Somali, Kalenjin, Bamasaba, Igbo, and the Kurdish without fear or interference. Each community was free to do so as it was generally known to be a rite of passage (Kenyatta, 1938). However, with colonialism, significant changes in the practice of Female Circumcision were witnessed. This is because Christianity came along with colonialism and it was against the practice as it termed it a mutilation. It is from this time that perception on the practice among Africans started changing. This was accompanied by conditions that anyone who practices it could be excommunicated from the Missionary churches (Kenyatta, 1938). Colonialism affected FC because some Kipsigis slowed down in carrying out the practice.

After independence, the practice continued to face an onslaught from mainstream churches including the Catholics, and Pentecostals and it drastically reduced in regard to what was termed as westernization (Womenshealth.gov, 2013). The African independent churches mainly in Central Kenya and schools across the country upheld the practice. In the 1990s the human rights activists intensified their campaigns

termining the FC practice as backward and uncivilized. This has led to communities shying away from carrying out the practice.

According to Womenshealth.gov (2013), in most regions of the world, education is gradually changing attitudes and influencing the decision to have FC. In this regard, education has led to the practice being deemed a backward activity. Many programs are socio-culturally profound and use esteemed local women to teach other women and girls in their communities about the adverse effects of FC. Notably, recent research shows that women in these regions are beginning to support the worldwide call to end FC. This can be seen from a few women activists such Nyong'a (1978) and Moen (2000) who once have come on the limelight to fight the practice.

Studying FC among the Abagusii, Momanyi (2001) indicates that the journey to womanhood among the Abagusii was not complete without circumcision. Even after the ban, they still practice FC. However, he does not give the details of the practice regarding the time of initiation, the age of the performers and the tools used; he also does not to give the current trends in the practice. This was among the gaps that this study intended to fill.

Magesa (1998) notes that initiation is significant in the transition from childhood to adulthood Individuals get to learn societal secrets and their adult responsibilities. He further says that initiation is not only an induction into psychological maturity but also a rite of passage. He provides the five stages of initiation (seclusion, instruction, physical impression, integration, and covenant). However, Magesa addresses initiation from the general points of view of both male and female. He treats African communities as one homogeneous group. Furthermore, much of his examples are on male genital cut and gives little attention to FC. This was a gap that this study

intended to fill by looking at FC among the Kipsigis. Magesa (1998) also does not recognize that initiation rites have gone through changes over time because of the dynamic nature of culture. He, therefore, fails to address the current trends in FC, which was the focus of this study.

In his works, 'rites of passages', Gennep (1999) outline the rites of passage. These include birth, naming, initiation, marriage, and death. He points out that these were paramount because they explained the transition in life. He, however, does not give details about FC or initiation rite. More so, he addresses these rituals in general. Thus little attention is paid to each of them. In this way, he leaves scholars wanting to know more about the rites that he outlines. Therefore, this study intended to fill this gap by studying into details FC among the Kipsigis.

Wilhelm, (2009) studies FC among the Meru. He notes that FC among the Meru dates back to the times when outsiders would impregnate Meru women while their husbands were at war. Accordingly, the clitoris had to be removed in order to reduce their sexual desires such that they could remain faithful to their spouses. He also notes that although done secretly FC has persisted among the Meru despite the alternative programs that have been put forward. By 2007 only, 2000 girls had taken classes in these programs (Wilhelm, 2009). These programs prepare girls into womanhood through education rather than the physical mutilation. His study is relevant to this study because he provides the origin, significance, and the trends in FC, which was the focus of this study among the Kipsigis. However, Wilhelm tends to be judgmental in his study in that he seems to take sides that FC is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which was not the case with this study.

Smith (2013) provides a detailed account of the Gikuyu female circumcision process. He notes that among the Gikuyu of central Kenya, FC was accompanied by *irua* ceremony to represent a change of social positions for the initiates within the tribal organization. His ideas are relevant to this study as far as the significance and the preparation of FC are concerned. He also shed light on the participants in FC, as well as the tools used. This study differs from his since the former encompassed the holistic changes in the FC in a different demographic location in Bomet County and on the Kipsigis community in particular.

Wood and Broomfield (2000) write on cross-culture practice. The writers' objective was to determine how cross-culture help in degrading undesired cultural practices among various interacting communities. Their study examines the relations between cultural diversity, innovation, and advancement, in relation to the eradication of unpleasant cultural practices, social and cultural mix of Britain's population in which FC is inclusive. It was thus learned that interaction among the communities led to cross-cultural practices, which only promoted popular cultural practices but shirked the undesired ones. The current study thus departs from their views since it neither perceives FC as a desired nor undesired practice.

Cheserem (2010) also conducted a study on the Female Genital Mutilation. Her objective was to determine the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in Kenya, Role of education in eradicating FC, and alternative rites approach for FC. The findings of the research were that other alternative rites approaches substitute the practice of Female Circumcision. This study focused more on the alternatives of FC. Thus it was relevant to this study because it touches on the aspects of alternative

approaches to FC. In that case, ARP portrayed in the findings formed elements of the transformation of FC and among the Kipsigis.

Kanake (2007) also did a study on the transformation of the traditional circumcision rite of passage for Meru girls in Kenya. He explored the understandings, attitudes, and values of Meru people as expressed regarding traditional Meru education and ritual for the adult transition. The study shows that 69.2% Meru people misunderstand different beliefs concerning the current existing girl's circumcision rites; 82.3 percent of Meru people value girls' circumcision as a means to transition girls into adulthood. Some respondents viewed initiations as a way that could encourage initiates to face life with maturity by full preparation and responsibilities attached to the circumcision rite. It was also generalized that without the benefit of reforming the girls' rite of passage, Meru risk loss of female circumcision practice, which has grave consequences to the community. Owing to the diversity of their demographic location, origin and significance of FC, the current study is different from the former as the researcher bridged the gap by examining the transformation of FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet owing to the fact that cultural practices vary from community to another and communities are not homogeneous.

Arthurs (1997) studies Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the United States of America. He tables a debate on whether FC is a rite of passage or a violation of human rights. His discussion informs the current study because he reports on various perceptions of FC and tries to explain the reasons for the current trends in FC. He, however, leaves scholars in a dilemma as to what FC is, exactly; this is gap this study also sought to examine and fill.

This study is driven by the controversies surrounding the practice in that the Human Rights Activists advocate for the ban the practice while the conservatives from the Kipsigis and some Maasai such the TusaruNtonomok uphold the practice as part of their cultural norms and are adopting alternative rites of passage educational programs rather than FC. It is from the push and pull factors of the practice that the need for the study cameabout.

Mbiti (1990) studied FC among the Nandi. He noted that the process was a dramatization break from childhood to adulthood. He provides the method of preparation that started long at the age of 9-10 years of age while the cutting itself took place at the age of 14 years. The author notes that for the young girls to be cut, they had to go through sexual test period where they could sleep with boys in a house called *Sikiroino*. However, they were not to do any sexual intercourse in the process. Mbiti also notes that before the circumcision the girls had to be tested for virginity and that they had to gather firewood together as a sign of cooperativeness. Mbiti (1990) further demonstrates that after the circumcision the girls were secluded. Seclusion provides an opportunity for these women to learn their future roles as wives. Additionally, he describes the entire circumcision process and provides the significance of each action or tool used. His works were relevant to this study because he describes into details FC among the Nandi, the closest neighbors of the Kipsigis. He provides the significance of FC, which was the primary goal of this study. Mbiti (1990) also focuses on the Nandi, while the current study departs from his by studying the Kipsigis community with particular attention to the transformative nature of FC hence, updating the current manifestation of FC.

Daniels (1976) writes about Ethnocentrism and Masculinity/Femininity. He notes that among the Kipsigis, female FC originates from the time before colonialism whereby both girls and boys were circumcised. The practice was well observed and given due attention among the Kipsigis. This can be evident in the rituals that revolved around the time before and after the initiation process. For instance, the husband and the wife were not to divulge to each other what ensued during the rite as it was an abomination. Husbands were to exclusively attend to the male initiation rites and vice versa (Koech, 1974).

FC among the Kipsigis is considered a necessary as well as a sufficient encounter by an individual who acquires both status and personal attributes of womanhood. Thus, circumcised women among the Kipsigis not only ascribe to other women's characteristics, which they consider unfeminine but also explain uncut women's features in the absence of initiation among those ethnic groups (Daniels, 1976). His works inform this study because he brings in the connection between the behavior of uncut women and the psychological impacts of the practice. Daniel's research, however, tends to lose some weight owing to the fact that FC is almost invisible and therefore needs to look at the nature of the current manifestation of the practice. This study is set to address the changes in the practice and perhaps the effects accompanying the changing nature of the practice.

The literature reviewed above shows that some studies have been done on FC around the globe. Among the Kalenjin, studies have been carried out among other sub-sections such as the Nandi's significance of FC and little has been done on the Kipsigis which are not homogeneous in nature. This is especially in the case regarding the changes that the practice has undergone in Bomet County in particular.

In essence, several gaps were identified and which need serious scholarly attention. Many scholars have given FC a legal approach thus failed to address its significance and reasons for persistence despite the rampart campaigns against FC practice. This study examines in a historical perspective, FC among the Kipsigis highlighting its transformation.

### **1.82 Theoretical Framework**

While various theories have been developed to discuss culture in the world, this study has used three theories that are related to cultural practices that suit the FC cultural practice among the Kipsigis. These include gender schema theory propounded by Sandra Bem (1993), which states that in the course of acculturation, individual initiate internalizes the dissimilar division of relations created to him or her by the society as natural and escapable. Thus, the custom of FC places women into a position of wifely, and motherhood in the society. The theory was applied to this study in the sense in which it explains how individuals become gendered in society, and how sex-linked characteristics are maintained and transmitted to other members of culture among the Kipsigis. Another theory related to the study was the historical particularism theory by Franz Boas (2010) that looks at cultural practices such as FC as a unique result of its own historical processes. The theory helped to explain how the Kipsigis community conservatives have always fought to preserve their own culture; therefore it justifies the existence of FC despite being outlawed.

Since the study aimed to seek a framework for their empirical research, it adopted Talcott Parsons' functionalism theory. The main idea of functionalism was that social practices could be explained regarding their function in maintaining society (Holmwood, 2005). The study made use of functionalism theory in which the society

is conceived of as a system of interrelated parts in which no part can be understood in isolation from the whole. A change in any part is seen as leading to some level of imbalance, which in turn results in changes in other areas of the system and to some extent to a reorganization of the system as a whole (Holmwood, 2005).

The study also made use of the functionalism theory as applied by Durkheim in the 20th century and backed up by Sigmund Freud's view that best suits the study as it states that cultural practice has psychological and physiological functions such as fear reduction, bravery instilling, and desire satisfaction (Holmwood, 2005). In addition, it states that cultural practices ultimately contribute to maintenance and survival of the social system.

For that reason, the theory was used to explain how FC and the rituals attached to it are used to construct a woman in the Kipsigis. FC was comprehended and conceptualized as symbolic rite of passage that culturally creates a woman and gender relations that simply go beyond the physical cutting of women genitals

Despite criticisms that Parson's functionalism theory celebrates the status quo and pays little attention to change which is essential; elements of social life, the theory was more relevant to the study as it empathizes on maintaining of cultural norms. In this case, the Kipsigis people are resilient on FC despite the global fight against it.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This section discusses the methodological approaches adopted in this study. The research designs, site of the study, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection instruments and procedures have been discussed. The section concludes by proving the ethical consideration adherence by the researcher.

### **1.91 Research design**

The study adopted a descriptive research design and applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and analysis. The researcher chose the descriptive research design for it depicts the participants in accurately owing to its in-depth study of an individual. The quantitative approach was used in the sampling of the number of participants. The, qualitative method was the primary approach because it allowed for an in-depth collection of data regarding opinions, attitudes, and feelings of the participants identified (Creswell, 1998).

### **1.92 Site of the study**

The study was carried out in Bomet County (see the map, Appendix 5). Bomet County borders Kericho County to the North and North East, Narok County to the South East, South, and South West, Nyamira County to the North West and Nakuru County to the East. The county occupies an area of 2,037.4 Km<sup>2</sup> where 1,716.6 Km<sup>2</sup> of this land is arable land apt for farming. Bomet County is divided into five sub-counties, ten divisions, 66 locations and 178 sub-locations. The sub-counties are Bomet Central, Bomet East, Chepalungu, Sotik, and Konoin, each of which is a constituency (Bomet County Agriculture Sector Program Support, 2013-2-17).

County Government of Bomet is a county having been created from the former Kericho District in the former Rift Valley Province of Kenya through Kenya Gazette supplement no. 53 of 1992. It has a population of 724,186 and an area of 1,630.0 km<sup>2</sup>. Bomet County as illustrated on the map (Appendix 5) attested to host most of the primary participants in this study as they had experienced or witnessed the practice of FC.

### **1.93 Target population**

In essence, both men and women of Bomet County aged 18 years, and above were targeted for interview. It was hoped that people within this age bracket have participated or witnessed and thus knowledgeable on the activities of FC. Administrators such as the Deputy County Commissioner Non-Governmental Organizations, the chiefs and clan elders, the clergy, and former FC specialists were targeted because they possessed first-hand information about the practice.

### **1.94 Sampling technique**

Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to identify the prospective interviewees. Purposive sampling was utilized to sample participants. Snowballing sampling was used because the area of the research was sensitive due to the campaigns against FC. The knowledge of the insider was thus required to locate the participants of the study. The study adopted a sample size of 100 people out of approximately 220,000 men and women above 18 years of age in Bomet County (IEBC, 2009). 100 participants were assumed to keep represent the rest of the population.

### **1.95 Sample size**

61 individuals were interviewed. The researcher arrived at the sample size upon learning that the respondents were giving recurring opinions and feelings as far as the FC was concerned. They consisted of ten clan elders in Sigor, Kong'asis, and Chepalungu market Centre, Nyangores, Kono, Chepalungu sub-county office, and Bomet Town. Three chiefs were also interviewed, and six focus group discussions were conducted each having 5 participants, 7 Village elders, 1 journalist, 2 ex-circumciser and 14 men and 14 Kipsigis women.

Additionally, 5 non-Kipsigis individuals were also interviewed. Notably, these people helped the researcher to avoid biases of the respondents from the community upon which the study focused on. The participants were obtained depending on their availability and willingness to give information and more importantly their knowledge on FC.

### **1.96 Research Instruments/ Data Collection**

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, oral interviews, key informant interview, and focus group discussions were used to generate primary data. Key informant interviews collected data from the county administrators and the purposely selected clan elders on the changing nature of FC, and its significance among the Kipsigis respectively. Focus group discussions collected data from women groups and youths on the evolution of trends of FC among the Kipsigis.

Eventually, the data was supplemented and corroborated by data from the written sources and archival sources

### **1.97 Data Collection Procedures**

With a go-ahead to undertake the research from the National Commission for Science and Technology (NACOSTI), we collected both primary and secondary data. Before conducting any interview, the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study. Primarily, primary data was obtained from interactions with participants in the field through the research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussion guides as well as observation sheets. On the other hand, secondary data was obtained from library books, journals, thesis, and newspapers Dissertations by accessing libraries such as the Post-modern library of Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi Library, Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, and Kenyan public libraries in Nairobi and Bomet counties. More useful data was extracted from books by anthropologists such as Peristiany (1939) and Orchardson (1961). Archival sources from Kenya National Archives in Nairobi were used to capture some aspects of the FC in the pre-colonial period since participants none-exists. Useful archival primary was obtained from files such as GP 301 PRI on the age set system, and GP 301.7 URC on the Kipsigis, KNA REP22/5/1996 on Human Rights in Kenya

### **1.98 Validity and Reliability**

Various research instruments were triangulated so as to ensure reliability findings. The researcher then explained the differences and similarities in the information. Research instruments were sent to the approachable and responsive departments to establish their correctness. This was done to ensure validity.

### **1.99 Data analysis and Presentation**

Data analysis started right in the field to help avoid loss of vital information. On this note, qualitative data was sorted, and tape-recorded data was transcribed, typed, and then analyzed thematically as well as chronologically. Content and document analysis was carried out through critical textual review analysis and interpretation to test the applicability of the information from secondary data sources to this study. Analyzed data was reported in the form of narratives with first hand quotation from primary sources.

### **1.910 Data management and ethical issues**

Data recorded in the field was transcribed. Basically, gender representation was given priority. Participants were chosen on a voluntary basis, and their privacy was ensured. The researcher acquired a letter from Kenyatta University addressed to the National Research Council where issuance of a letter of authorization (letter research permit) was given. The researcher sought authority from the Deputy County Commissioner as well as local administration of Bomet County where the research was conducted. Any reference made to work is highly acknowledged. The findings will be sent to the interested stakeholders.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0 CIRCUMCISION AMONG THE KIPSIGIS TO 1945**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the significance of female circumcision among the Kipsigis in the pre-1945 period. However, in order to articulate this, an examination of female circumcision among the Nilotic speakers in Kenya will have to be examined. For a better understanding of the Kipsigis FC, an assessment of the Kipsigis social, economic and political organization will be done. The chapter contends that FC played a critical role in changing girls to become women in the society. This chapter discusses the social organization of the Kipsigis from which circumcision on men and women is highlighted but pays particular emphasis on FC, what entails becoming a woman among the Kipsigis, the significance of FC as a cultural practice entailing the rituals, the initiates, and seclusion among the Kipsigis. It also presents the practice of female circumcision and concludes by discussing the values attached to the practice.

#### **2.1 The socio-cultural, political and economic organization of the Kipsigis**

Circumcision, both for male and female is either a cultural, religious or medical practice depending on the context in which it is carried out. Female circumcision is a cultural practice that communicates values, beliefs, and customs of the Kipsigis community. It has a significant social function and fosters feelings of the Kipsigis identity as well as solidarity. Female circumcision is a significant practice as it is the means through which culture and its traditions and shared values are conveyed and preserved.

### **2.1.1 Kipsigis migration and settlement**

The Kipsigis, also known as the Lumbwa, represent the most populous branch of the Kalenjin-speaking people, numbering about 80,000. They regard several neighboring ethnic groups as “brothers,” including the Nandi, the Keiyo, the Tugen, and the Suk. Peaceful relations are upheld with these groups, mutual responsibilities of a particular and special kind are pragmatic, and inter-marriage is acceptable. They all speak related languages (Favero, 1970). Among their traditional foes, the Kipsigis count the Maasai living to the south, the Kisii and Luo to the west, and the Turkana. Native accounts relate that the Kipsigis migrated from the north about ten decades ago following a distressing drought which destroyed their pasture lands.

### **2.1.2 Economic organization**

A clan elder remarked that the ethnic community was primarily pastoral at the time (elderly man, KII, 26/8/2016). His sentiments agree with Favero, (1970) who asserted that before taking sole possession of their present territory, the Kipsigis absorbed the Sirikwa tribe and beat off the much-dreaded Maasai warriors. Since this successful invasion and settlement, the tribe has become semi-agricultural, though cultural values still center on their beloved cattle (wealth, bride-price, social and economic prestige).

The Kipsigis territory is made up of small farms. Other than that, the Kipsigis value animal rearing and crop cultivation (Favero, 1970). This concurs with Saltman (1970) who asserts that, among the Kipsigis one is never a man if he does not own a cow.

Livestock is also an essential asset of dowry payments. Milk is a staple, as well as tea which is grown privately and on large, long established plantations dating back to colonial days (Saltman, 1970). The mid-morning *Chai* break is a universally accepted

event; Chai consists of tea brewed in boiled milk, with copious sugar added when available. Denoting to the patriarchal nature of almost the entire African communities, Kipsigis Men inherit land; while women do not. Men clear the ground and build fences and homes (Saltman, 1970). In a focus group discussion with the Kipsigis Village Elders (KVE), they asserted that women are responsible for raising the kids, running the house and sometimes holding the only paying job. Men often feel a certain sense of entitlement, because men are seen as holding the preeminent position of a defender (FGD, 11/8/2016).

### **2.1.3 Political organization of the Kipsigis**

The Kipsigis, like most Nilo-Hamitic peoples, practice a form of democratic government which grants the population the final voice in matters relating to civil administration (Ehret, 1974). A group of hamlets forms a village (*kokmel*) which acts as the “basic unit of administration,” and also serves as an economic unit in as much as its inhabitants “cooperate in the work of the fields and give assistance in case of distress (Huntingford, 1956). Consistent with their democratic principles, the ethnic group has a decentralized form of judicial organization.

A focus group discussion with Kipsigis elders noted that the Kipsigis had age set and age grade systems (FGD, 3/9/2016). This agrees with Daniel (1976) who notes that Kipsigis are grouped into age-groups or classes. For the males, three age-grades exist in the boy’s group including the uninitiated or uncircumcised; the warriors; and the elders.

The most highly-desired native privileges are the prerogatives of the warrior class, for life before initiation is hemmed in by rigid taboos and often, the elder is definitely anti-climactic in character (Daniels, 1976). An oral interview with a clan elder

established that the Kipsigis place great value on personal autonomy and are reticent to interfere in one another's affairs (Clan elder, 1/9/2016). This indicates that they are not aggressive unless their wellbeing is infringed. The Kipsigis men are respected for their achievements and admired for their persuasive oratory. Despite that, however, they do not receive consistent support for their positions at public gatherings (Clan elder, O.I, 22/5/2016). Further sources indicate that the Kipsigis cliques and political factions are ad hoc and unstable (Fevero, 1970). Men are a symbol of leadership. For instance, the essential forum of political participation is the *kokwet* council, which is composed of all adult men within the *kokwet*. These men appoint a "village elder," who serves as a liaison to the local sub-chief designated by the Kenyan government. The sub-chief or the local Chief may call a *kokwet* meeting to communicate government policy (Ehret, 1974).

In a FGD with Kipsigis village elders (KVE), it was noted that the neighborhood elders settle disagreements and that there is a justice system of restitution at this level (KVE, FGD, 11/8/2016). Difficult cases are referred to the government agencies. Their sentiments concur with the Saltman (1970) analysis of the Kipsigis dispute resolution methods analysis in which he asserts that the social-political organization of the Kipsigis permitted them to settle their dispute through the council of elders.

## **2.2 Cultural practices among the Nilotic speakers**

The Kipsigis FC cannot be discussed in isolation of the entire Nilotic speaking communities. The Kipsigis female circumcision is affiliated to other Nilotic speaking communities as this helps to assess the origin as well as the significance that the Kipsigis hold as far as FC is concerned.

The term 'Nilotic' is used in various senses. First, it describes the geographical region of the upper Nile basin including the *Pagan Tribes* of the Nilotic Sudan, the title of the Seligmans' (1932) comprehensive ethnography of the region. It also denotes a set of cultural traits that are shared some, but not all, of the peoples of the Upper Nile, with others in an area extending beyond the south of Nile basin into Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Sources tell us that the term 'Nilotic' describes a language family in a classification of languages (Childs, 2003).

According to historical linguistic studies of the Nilotic languages, together with a consideration of the contemporary geographical distribution of languages, the original proto-Nilotic language community in their homeland to the southwest of the southern Ethiopian highlands possibly started to break up into three groups about 4,000 years ago. These proto-Nilotic groups began to independently change into the ancestral dialects of what are currently known as the western, eastern, and southern Nilotic groups of languages (Ehret 1971).

The Western Nilotic such as the Dinka, Nuer, and Luo moved first and in a westerly direction to occupy the grasslands around the confluence of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Nile. Studies further indicates that the proto-Southern Nilotes, having interacted with the neighboring Cushitic-speaking communities in their homeland north of Lake Turkana, had acquired from them various Cushitic vocabularies and social practices.

Some of these vocabularies and practices include circumcision, clitoridectomy, a prohibition on eating fish, and cyclical age set naming systems, all of which are not known among the Western Nilotes (Childs, 2003). By the first century of the present era, the Southern Nilotic speakers such as the Kipsigis, Nandi, Pokot, Marakwet and Tugen had moved south, some into what is today Tanzania. Here, they encountered

agricultural Bantu-speaking peoples moving to the north, from whom they embraced root crops and banana cultivation to add to their cultivation of grains, sorghum and millet, and pastoralism. Further, most of the Eastern Nilotic speech communities like the Bari, Lotuko, and the Turkana are presently found between Lake Turkana and the Nile. According to sources, some of the predecessors of the present-day Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania had followed the Southern Nilotic speakers to the south. It is alleged that towards the end of the first millennium, they absorbed some of the Southern Nilotes and at the same time adopted many of their cultural practices such as circumcision, could be traced back to origins among Cushitic peoples (Gregersen, 1977). In this way those Eastern Nilotes who followed the Southern Nilotes, adding to whatever Cushitic traits they may already have acquired before migrating south, acquired further Cushitic practices from the Southern Nilotes as intermediaries.

The western, eastern and southern Nilotic relate with the old ethnological dissection of the people into Nilotes, Northern and Central Nilo-Hamites, and Southern Nilo-Hamites, terms which are commonly featured in literature documented before the mid-1960s. This terminology is derived from a now-discredited speculative theory of racial mixing to offer an explanation for the distribution of Nilotic social and cultural features (Ruhlen, 1991).

### **2.2.1 An Overview of the Nilotes' Rites of Passage**

As discussed above, the divisions among the Nilotic speaking communities are coined from their diverse social, political, economic as well as cultural features. Having in the course of their migration and settlement in their present day locations, the Nilotes in East Africa have through interaction adopted many customs and

practices from neighboring Southern Cushitic groups (Gregersen, 1977). The latter comprise of the age set system of social organization, circumcision, and vocabulary terms. This is perhaps the main reason why the Kalenjin practice both male and female circumcision. This agrees with the remarks of one of the key informant who asserted that:

*Keebatuum* and *Tumdo* are essential in making our girls graduate from childhood into adults. Our neighbors also practiced initiation rites on both their boys and girls (Elderly woman, KII/22/8/2016).

According to Bem (1993), there is a reason behind each practice. The Nilotes believe to have interacted in many ways with the Cushites who practice female circumcision (Gregersen, 1977). Sources show that it was from such interactions some practices such as FC, cattle rearing became part and parcel of their lives. An elderly man who noted that such practices are less or assimilation from the communities they interacted with during their migration and settlement (elderly man, KII, 29/9/2016).

From the above discussion, sources such as Bem (1993) and Gregersen (1977) point out that FC was an assimilated cultural practice from the Cushitic speaking people. Such practices were inherited wholly including the teachings and beliefs that were attached to them.

### **2.2.2 Socio-cultural organization of the Kipsigis**

According to a study by Fish and Fish (1979), there are seven sequentially recurring age sets, called *ipinda*. The preceding articulation agrees with one of the respondents who asserted that one is free to dance, drink, and carry on with age mates but ought to be more circumspect in the company of seniors (elderly man KII, 27/8/2016).

Accordingly, the Kipsigis man should not marry the daughters of his age mates. Women are also initiated into age sets, but they take the age-set status of their husbands when they marry. These showed that the Kipsigis men also belong to patrilineal associations called *boriet*, which, in the past, served as regiments in times of war. According to a source consulted, it was noted that young Kipsigis children are nursed, fed, dressed, bathed, and watched over by women. Fathers take a keen interest in their children, but physical contact and displays of affection are generally restrained (Saltman, 1970). As a rule, young girls are given household chores at an earlier age than their brothers.

The *kokwet* is the hub of community life for it forms the political and judicial unit of the Kipsigis. People call on their fellow *kokwet* members for mutual aid. Members of the *kokwet* or of neighboring *kokwotinwek* also cooperate in public projects such as building schools.

Fevero (1970) notes that boys are circumcised and girls have parts of their clitoris and labia removed. Boys return from initiation with an ascetic bearing that signifies their ascent from childish things and childish behavior. They are expected to remain aloof from their mothers and sisters, who in turn treat them with respect. He further articulates that girls return from initiation with the expectation they will soon be married. It is at that point that the researcher sought to discuss the process of becoming a woman among the Kipsigis with particular emphasis on the female circumcision practice rituals.

### **2.3 Being a woman among the Kipsigis**

Studies have shown that women are socially constructed in the society (Bem, 1993, Fevero, 1970, Fish and Fish, 1979 and Gregersen, 1977). In this vein, apart from the

biological makeup, several other social ascriptions make one an entirely and complete woman (Okemwa, 2014). Accordingly, women are accorded various roles in society to enable them be fully accepted women of a particular community. For instance, Okemwa (2014) asserts that a real woman among the Kisii is expected to be circumcised alongside bearing children, making the home, taking care of both her husband and the children. Similar to this, an oral source consulted indicate that among the Kipsigis the female sex is divided into two; girls and women (clan elder, O.I, 4/5/2016). This agrees with Fevero (1970) who articulates that Kipsigis women were divided into girls (uncircumcised) and married women. According to the respondents, a woman's role in the society is very different from the role of a girl. They asserted that the women are fully incorporated members of the Kipsigis community while girls were not yet full members. That they only become fully recognized members after being circumcised as this means they have to abide by the community norms that accord them the wifely responsibilities to their families and the society at large. A clan elder interviewed noted that among the Kipsigis the family was the basic unit of the society and that Kipsigis believed in one supreme God, the creator of the universe known as the *Asis* (Clan elder, KII, 6/5/2016). His remarks agree with Kenya Information Guide, (2015) which reports that the Kipsigis God was traditionally referred to as *Asis*.

Additionally, the respondents (KVE, FGD, 13/8/2016) noted that the Kipsigis had one spiritual and political leader *Arap Koilegen* whom the Kipsigis believed to be the son of *Asis* (God) owing to his prophetic powers that they see happening presently. *Arap Koilegen* led the Kipsigis resistance movement against the British Administration in the region in 1901 (KVE, FGD, 13/8/2016). Jeste (2004) who

asserts that at one point in the colonial period, the British Administrators expressed their incapacity to rule the Kipsigis due to their leader *Arap Koilegen* echoes the same views.

It is against the above discussed social organization of the Kipsigis that the researcher sought to assess the significance of FC among the Kipsigis. This is indebted to the initiation process being one of the aspects that are significant for one to be socialized into the Kipsigis community as a full member. Like the other Kalenjin communities such as the Nandi, the Tugen and the Okiek, and the Kipsigis maintained intimate cultural relations with them. They intermarry, share clan affiliations, and participate in joint initiation ceremonies (Saltman, 1970). An oral source showed that in the case with circumcision, shortly after puberty, the Kipsigis boys and girls undergo separate initiations. One would not be termed a complete woman without undergoing FC in the Kipsigis community (Fish and Fish, 1979).

The preceding discussion calls for the need to seek into the significance of FC among the Kipsigis. The findings indicate that FC practice has existed and as per the theory by of Historical particularism that best describes cultural practices being the outcome of their own historical developments. Therefore, the theory was imperative in the significant explanation behind FC.

#### **2.4 Significance of Kipsigis Female Circumcision**

As evident in the preceding section, FC dates back to the emergence of the Kipsigis community (Ehret, 1974). This section discusses the significance of FC among the Kipsigis community in Bomet County.

To begin with, the Kipsigis community's attitude towards uncircumcised women was assessed in order to establish the value of FC among the Kipsigis. However, the Kipsigis male youths interviewed articulated that they do hold any established theory to hold about the significance of the practice (KMY. OI, 15/8/2016). However, many agreed that they do socialize with women who are not circumcised.

The findings of the key informant interviewee (chief, 16/8/2016) indicate that despite a few Kipsigis conservatives feeling that uncircumcised Kipsigis women are not fully fit to be members of the community, a majority of the Kipsigis have a changed perception concerning the same. Majority of the respondents and more so, the learned, the youth and the religious Kipsigis value the current strategies to end the cutting of the female genitals and instead encourage the ARP (Kipsigis Youths, 26/8/2016).

This indicates that the practice was more highly valued in the periods prior and just after the Kenyan independence. The Kipsigis still embracing the practice are those that seem to have resisted the colonial penetration into the region. They have a perception that the colonialists had an ill motive towards their cultural practices and they had nothing to do with the wellbeing of the Kipsigis people.

As one FC proponent elderly woman articulated:

*Tumdo* is the only way to instill good moral into our women, they older generation cannot be compared to the current generation of women (elderly woman, O.I, 12/9/2016).

The rite of circumcision was considered a significant period for it introduced the initiates into the secrets of the society (Fish and Fish, 1979). Before initiation, the initiated and the initiators were distinguished by referring to the former as the

*Kipsigisindeet*, the ending index denotes to one that is strong in something and hence a real Kipsigis (GP 306.4 PER). This implies that circumcision both for male and female was such a vital practice among the Kipsigis as it gave the initiates a sense of belonging without which one could be termed an outsider. These sentiments coincide with those in (KNA.GP 301.7 URC) in the assertions that before circumcision, children are not considered as being Kipsigis but only as Kipsigis children. Therefore, FC was a significant cultural practice among the Kipsigis dating back to ancient times. The practice existed for over 4000-5000 years originating in the period predating God's covenant with Abraham to circumcise his people (Cheserem, 2010). Before the Kipsigis, FC began in Egypt and was usually carried out by the ancient Phoenicians, Hamites, and Ancient Egyptians. It was from the Egyptian Cushites that the Kipsigis had the belief that the foreskin is a feminine part of the male and the clitoris is the masculine part of the female, thus, had to be removed (Cheserem, 2010).

The above sentiments agree with those in an archival source which outlined that:

The foreskin of the woman (clitoris had to be cut as it symbolized the masculinity (manliness) of a woman. This was the same case with men whereby boys were to be circumcised to avoid looking feminine as the foreskin in men was believed to symbolize the feminine part of a man. To us, these discourses were termed a taboo and against our norm (KNA DC/KBU/ADM 2/2/8/2016)

The myth on FC among the Kipsigis holds it that long time ago; when all the Kipsigis men except young boys and women went to war over their stolen cattle and goats. When they returned, they found all their women pregnant. Therefore, the men decided to punish women for infidelity and to reduce their sexual desire. FC then began and had existed up to date. When girls underwent FC, they took an oath in

their own bloodshed that they will endure FC or otherwise bring a curse upon themselves, their families, as well as their land.

A chief in one of the locations remarked that:

The Kipsigis female circumcision is nearly as old as the Kipsigis male circumcision although male circumcision precedes FC slightly owing to female misbehavior of cheating to their husbands. Otherwise, I do not think our women would be undergoing FC at the moment (chief, KII, 16/8/2016).

Additionally, another oral source noted that:

Since I was born in 1914, the practice has been in existence; it was used to make women become strong women just as male initiates also underwent the painful cutting to make them strong men in the Kipsigis community (Elderly woman, KII, 16/8/2016).

In terms of promoting childbirth, the Kipsigis had a myth, which held that the clitoris continued to grow longer as one became older. In addition, as it grew longer, it became rough thus, had to be circumcised to reduce childbirth complication. Overall, the greater value of FC was attached to improved reproduction.

The Kipsigis society is a patriarchal society dominated by men. They also practice polygamy; therefore, to be able to control female sexuality, FC was devised (Committee Human Rights, KEN, 1996).

In an interview, one elderly woman remarked:

I had all my four girls circumcised as it was a norm in my community. No one would marry them if they were uncircumcised. I would be termed an immoral woman to leave my children to stay uncircumcised (An elderly woman, 21/8/2016)

In that view, the Kipsigis community regarded women who did not subject their daughters to FC as irresponsible, immoral and betrayers of the Kipsigis noble custom. Supporting the same opinions, an area chief remarked that:

In fact, the uncircumcised women were labeled as incomplete, children or the uncut. In fact, they were told to go to Kisumu to join the Luo, known not to practice FC. They were not regarded as Kipsigis as the customs does not permit any man or female to bear children while uncircumcised (Chief, KII, 21/8/2016).

The views of the oral sources above agree with Cheserem (2010) who notes that among the Kipsigis uncircumcised women could not get a hand in marriage. She notes that single men that attained marriage age from all over the community accompanied by their parents and relatives freely visited homes known to have circumcised ladies to try their luck in getting future wives for their sons. It never mattered whether a man had a girlfriend or not among the initiates, the parents of the man and the ladies determined their fate.

An elderly lady (22/8/2016) interviewed said that the uncircumcised girls were mocked and were the center of gossip in the nightmare of the villages, and children born by uncircumcised women were given a concussion to die because they were believed to be unclean and raw.

Clan elders interviewed indicated that FC was vital for any lady to get married (clan elder, O.I, 23/4/2016). An archival source consulted noted that the practice is believed to increase the girl's chances to marriage, reduce infidelity, and promote childbirth (KNA.Peristiany, 1932).The remarks are in line with Okemwa et al. (2014) who notes that in the traditional African society for any woman to get married she had to be cut.Even after marriage, those not circumcised would be forced to be excised (Elderly lady, KII, 2016). This agrees with Cheserem (2010) who notes that alternately, uncircumcised married women could be circumcised immediately the pregnancy was known.

Peristiany (1939) discusses four elements that were united to make the *Tumdo* (initiation). First, that circumcision was something without which no marriages or sexual relations could be established with other ethnic group members. Second was the initiation into secret rituals of the Kipsigis community. This was one of the strongest links uniting the Kipsigis. The initiation also imparts traditional morals--do's and don'ts such as "never kill a surrendered enemy" and "the loot should be abandoned if blood was shed in its procurement" (Okemwa et al., 2014). Thirdly, teaching in ethnic custom was delivered by the *Motirenik* (circumcisers) and the elders. In addition, infliction of bodily pain was imperative to harden the physical endurance among the initiates.

According to the archival source, (GP 306.4 PER, 1930), the fourth element was that circumcision was a rite of passage separating childhood from adult membership of the Kipsigis. In this respect, FC among the Kipsigis is a practice widely believed to mark a transition from girlhood to womanhood).

Owing to the myth held that initiation among the Kipsigis paved the way for boys and girls to be fully recognized members of the community, it is imperative to discuss the activities that entailed the construction of a woman through FC among the Kipsigis in the proceeding subsections.

## **2.5 Preparation for FC among the Kipsigis**

Principally, African societies were characterized by rituals and practices attached to spirituality. Most of those acted as a bridge from one stage of life to another. A clan elder interviewed at Chepalungu Sub County offices noted that initiation rites had instruction and prohibitions that had to be followed to make the life of an individual full. This claim is seconded by Kamasao (2009) who notes that initiation rites formed

part of these practices and instructions and prohibitions typically accompanied them. An oral source indicated that circumcision marked a move from one world to another. In this regard, Kamasao (2009) asserts that in the traditional African society, the initiation (circumcision) rites marked a transition from the profane world to a sacred one.

## **2.6 Rituals attached to Female Circumcision among the Kipsigis**

Every culture has a ritual/ rituals that accompany the practice and is the case with FC among the Kipsigis. The next section looked at the Kipsigis rituals that accompanied the process of female circumcision ranging from the preparation, the actual initiation process and the post-initiation rituals.

### **2.6.1 Preparation (*Rootyineet / Rootyineet-aap Laagok*)**

Among the Kipsigis, this observance began a day before going into isolation. Early in the morning, the candidates were expected to gather branches from the *keruunduut* (the “toothbrush” plant). It was not compulsory to gather a specific number. Usually, the bushes were available nearby (Elderly woman, KII, 22/8/2016). Another elderly woman echoed these sentiments through an oral interview whereby she articulated that when the branches of the *keruunduut* were used in ceremonies, they were known as *koroseek*.). The remarks of the ladies agree with Fish and Fish (1979) who note that each girl took the branches to her home and placed them against the *mabwaita* there. Tying anything to a *mabwaita* or placing anything near it was considered an act of worship. Notably, tying *korosyoot ne tnoon* (a green *koroseek* branch) at the *mabwaita* was like saying, “Here is where we can talk to our Creator.” The *mabwaita* helped in talking to *Asis*. The people believed this would result in life and health (Elderly woman, KII, 22/8/2016).

Another aspect of FC is that it entailed the whole community. Given their social organization, the Kipsigis believe in unity. For instance, a village member in Sigor noted that that evening the candidates and their friends and relatives started visiting from house to house. Each family with a candidate would have lit a fire east of its houses where similar activities were going on (woman villager, KII, 23/8/2016). Adult female relatives garlanded by *sinendeet* vines circled the *mabwaita* as they held *koroseek* wands in their hands. The candidate would circle the *mabwaita* four times and then was anointed with butter on the chest, legs, and forehead. The butter for anointing was in a *laaleet*, a cow horn which was kept for ceremonial use. Kipngetch, (2014) asserts that a close relative could take home a wand consisting of one or two branches of the *koroseek* and tie them to his or her own *mabwaita*. This showed that the person had been present at that ceremony. All the sacred vines used in the ceremony would be buried on the dung heap after the initiate came out of seclusion as an adult. The wands were kept on the roof of the house until burned.

### **2.6.2 The *Yaaititaaet: Rooteet* ceremony**

Circumcision took place in a long prepared ceremony during the month of December. Before circumcision, all girls aged 18-19 years were psychologically and physically prepared to face the knife. The mothers of the girls brewed liquor earlier and they went around the community inviting people for the occasion (Fish & Fish, 1979). The fathers of the girls chose the cattle to be slaughtered on the day of the celebration. A day to circumcision date, the candidates wore special skin clothes usually prepared by their suitors to be. They also wore *keldet* (headgear), beautiful bracelets, bangles, and jingles. More so, they carried a cow whisky and a whistle. All the above acted as an alert that they were ready for circumcision (Fish & Fish, 1979). They went around

the community singing and dancing to songs of bravery and joy of inviting friends and relatives for the occasion. An elderly key informant noted that FC was a communal occasion upon which the members of the community including relatives, neighbors and friends were invited to witness such an important occasion not only on the initiates but also to the entire community in welcoming new full members of the Kipsigis (elderly man, KII, 27/8/2016).

It was mandatory for every initiate to seek permission from her biological father to be allowed to become a candidate for initiation. According to one of the oral interview respondents (elderly man, OI, 2/9/2016), the permission from the father signified his blessings. He further asserted that even if the father was away from home, the girl had to pay a visit to him to seek his permission. Before this, the girl was supposed to have gained permission from her maternal uncle. Following the evening of singing and dancing, the candidates gathered at the home of the oldest father to one of the initiates. There they were given words of encouragement (Kipngetich, 2014). They were also admonished not to fear what was going to happen to them.

In conducting a key informant interview, an ex-circumciser, (KII, 22/8/2016) recalls that the candidates would array their order of rank which became their law until their *Kaiilet* ceremonies were accomplished. This was done at the *mabwaita*. Rank was governed according to the ages of the father of the initiates. The daughter of the oldest father went first and automatically became the leader among the initiates. Others then came into line after her according to the ages of their fathers. In relation to that, the same informant interviewee articulated that:

After that, the candidates faced east as they marched through the arch. Then the candidates were taken to the place where the operation was to be performed. Notably, this place was near the *meenyjeet*, the

temporary house where they would live while in seclusion (an ex-circumciser, KII, 29/8/2016).

On the eve of circumcision day, an oral source showed that drums were beaten until late and the initiates danced and entertained the visitors in the compound for this festivity. People ate food and drank the traditional beer as they encouraged the candidates to face the knife without fear (an FC influential man, O.I, 29/8/2016). He further asserted that fear was believed to show the initiates inability to be a “real” Kipsigis woman that one may fail to take up societal roles as a woman, a mother and a wife. Kipsigis women ought to be fearless and enduring as life is not a bed of roses.

### **2.6.3 The *Yaaitaaet* ceremony (The cut)**

On the material day in the morning, a group of women who were mostly their aunts only covering themselves with blankets escorted the girls to the chosen circumcision homestead. The girls could be tested for virginity by sitting on an *ng'echeret* (a traditional bowl-shaped stool that contained fresh milk). This was a symbol of fertility among the initiates owing to their role in the community of the Kipsigis (elderly woman, KII, 26/8/2016). Every girl could sit on it in shifts as their aunts checked them for virginity. All villagers ridiculed those found to have broken virginity before being circumcised. They were viewed as a shame to their parents. The girls' clitorises were hit by the stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), a herbaceous perennial flowering plant to make them numb to prevent or reduce pain during the cut.

A girl who was a virgin at the time of her initiation was honored. The second night before her clitoridectomy she was allowed to sit on a concave stool near the initiation house. This stool actually belonged to her father (Fish and Fish, 1979). The girl showed respect and honor to her father by being allowed to sit on his stool. In the

stool was milk, salt used by goats, and a piece of brass wire was as used for women's earrings.

A clan elder noted:

Her mother could say with pride. "My daughter was a girl of the stool."  
"She will be honored by allowing her to carry bells (small ones) after coming out of the ceremonies. (Clan elder, KII, 23/4/2016)

An oral source (elderly woman, 25/8/2016) noted that girls wore many decorations and unique ornaments on their bodies as they entered initiation. Supporting the same views, Fish and Fish (1979) notes that boyfriend or brother brought many of these for her to wear.

As noted by one of the elderly men:

After the evening of the singing and dancing, the candidates could gather around the homestead of the oldest father of those to enter into initiation. They were encouraged to face the cut and that they should not fear what was about to befall them (elderly man, O.I 26/8/2016).

Only one knife was used to circumcise all the initiates and could be used annually for the next group. Sharing of the knife was a symbol of unity and bonding among the initiates (Mbiti, 1990).

In a nutshell, girls at initiation went through the suffering of the operation knowing that it was painful, but they looked forward to the time when they would be coming out of the seclusion. They knew they were being watched while undergoing pain. "I will endure pain now to strengthen me for what is ahead as an adult". They were encouraged to look forward (An ex-circumciser, KII, 22/8/2016).

The girls stood in a line according to the ages of their parents in descending order. Usually, the girl whose parents were eldest was the first on the line followed by the

rest in descending order. Once their clitorises were numb, the girls were laid on a special skin and tightly held by their aunties. *Chebyoseet* is a respected older woman who knows what to do by conducting the operation on the girls. The *chebyoseet* spewed the wine on the girls. After the operation, girls traditionally could spend as long as one or more years in seclusion (Fish & Fish, 1979). The girls would have built their *kaaptiriong'* (daytime shelter) under the supervision of their *motiryoot*. The circumciser then could cut the entire clitoris leaving the area flat. This was done to all the candidates. The circumcisers were usually elderly women who entered the profession through what was regarded a divine calling from the spirits and gods (Cheserem, 2010).

#### **2.6.4 Seclusion (*tyenjiinet*)**

Following the operation, the initiates were in complete seclusion for about 12 months or more.

To begin with, as a mark of transition from girlhood to womanhood, the initiates were introduced to marital behaviors and education. Education was granted by the elderly women of the community mostly aunties during the seclusion period. The initiates were taught how to talk and behave towards their husbands, being good mothers and wives. After the teachings, they were then considered ripe for marriage (KNA.ADM, 1931).

They were ritually unclean during this time.

During the seclusion (*tyenjiinet*) period, the girls were taught by the older women. *Chelimen* was the ceremonial song which the girls sang in the morning and in the evening. The song meant that the girls should get the cattle of the uncircumcised (an

elderly lady, KII, 2016). During this session, the initiates were introduced to a new societal language and secrets. An archival source consulted revealed that during this time, they were given teachings on the dietary, wifely, and motherhood responsibilities and they took an oath never to disclose the secrets to those yet to be circumcised (KNA.PER, 1930).

The above-discussed rituals inform the initiates of the features of the Kipsigis *tumdo*. In this way, they root the young people in the Kipsigis culture and as a consequence allow them to develop a sense of belonging. An oral source indicated that the initiates used *Seegeetook* (small wooden spoons) to scoop food. Traditional Kipsigis did not use forks or spoons but used their fingers to put their food into their mouths, but Fish and Fish (1979) notes that during this period of seclusion the initiates were not allowed to touch food with their hands (Fish and Fish, 1979). All they could touch was their own clothes and people. Only women were allowed around the girls.

The woman in charge of cooking for the initiates was referred to as *Kameet-aapTaarysyek* (ex-circumciser, KII, 29/8/2016). They were fed by an elderly woman whom they called (mother) during and after seclusion. Another imperative personality was the daughter to *Kameet-aapTaarusyiek* who was *Chentolongi't* of age range of 7 to ten years. She was to eat any food leftover of the initiate (Fish and Fish, 1979).

An oral interviewee noted that only the circumcised women paid the initiates a visit. Men were not allowed to the seclusion places (elderly woman, O.I, 27/8/2016). The above concurs with Magesa (1998), who notes that initiation rites are gender and sex specific. The food was prepared by the initiates' parents or a hired person whom they paid a she-goat or a ewe or a young bull for each child fed. They are both symbols of

objects or occasions of great value. Trees and animals are significant in the course of the circumcision and even the entire *tumdo* process since their products are useful in the process (Kipngetich, 2014). According to an elderly woman in an oral interview, she explained that the natural world is mentioned in the songs and used as images. The singers employ metaphorical expressions in their song such as the tall trees when they want to talk about strength and endurance, and tiny animals when they want to talk about wit (Elderly woman, KII, 27/8/2016). A picture below shows how the initiates dressed while in seclusion having been extracted from archival source (KNA.PER.1930).

### **The dressing code of initiates in seclusion**



The initiates spent daytime hours in their seclusion place. Here they were fed delicious and special foods and tutored in the art of being good wives and mothers. Girls believed that having been through the operation they would be blessed with many children, and thus they would not bear reproach. Inside the shelter, each girl had a section for her own (KVE, FGD, 23/8/2016). There she built a miniature house. She had *labootoonik* (Sodom apples) to represent her cattle. By moving them around, she learned to care for cattle, how to herd them, how to drive them to the river for water, and milking. At night the girls slept in a room set aside in the house of their guardian who was a respected woman: she guarded the girl initiates at night. The girls wore special garments made of hides for their ceremonies (ex-circumciser, KII, 2016). These sentiments were echoed by another chief who articulated that a girl's ceremonial dress for circumcision was made of skins and covered the entire body

with just two holes for the eyes to peer through. This hide garment was decorated with beads and covered with a brick-colored smear of grease and red ochre (Chief, 23/8/2016). They wore these garments all the time: they did not wear their regular clothing while in seclusion. When the girls wanted food, they let it be known by beating their hands against their thighs. Beating against their hide garments made quite a loud sound. While in seclusion, the girls made decorated sticks and sent them to their friends.

In an oral interview, an elderly woman noted that;

They also spent time sewing leather garments and making *kiiskiisik* (woven baskets). They also did beadwork. The primary colors for Kipsigis beadwork were red, yellow, Blue, and white. If a man happened to enter where girl initiates resided during seclusion, he was fined an ox. The women killed this ox and ate the meat. There was no reading of entrails for omens nor was any ceremony performed. It served as punishment for the man who had disobeyed rules (elderly woman, O.I, 27/8 2016)

The FC process was incomplete without the *Labeet-aap Euun* phase that marked the end of the seclusion period.

### **2.6.5 *Labeet-aap Euun* (Cleaning of the hands)**

*Labeet-aap euun* took place 12 or more months after the operation. This was mainly a ceremonial washing of the hands for cleansing. It was done to permit the initiates could touch things and eat with their hands again (clan elder, KII, 2016). At this time the daily singing of the initiates begin. They sing the morning and evening song called in the case of girls it is known as *Chelimen*. Until this ceremony was completed the initiates could not leave their camp. Following it, they had a bit more

freedom. They had their faces disguised with paintings of white clay so they could not be recognized. They were not to be seen by men. Nights had to be spent in camp.

This ceremony took place at the river where water was dammed up. Initiates led by their sponsors crouched as they made their way beneath an arch erected in a pool: it was usually made of branches from ordinary trees. The arch was known as *kimussang'it* (ex-circumciser, KII, 29/8/2016). After this, they could travel about. The faces of initiates still could not be looked at upon by members of the opposite sex. This was the starting point of isolating the initiates to avoid sexual pervasiveness.

The *Keetyenji* ceremony (singing for them) was held about one month after *labeet-aap euun*, or the beginning of the third month of seclusion. Only those connected with the initiation took part in singing. This was also the period when the boys were taught by older men (ex-circumciser, KII, 29/8/2016). While in the camp they were prepared to be adults, to be good members of their clans, tribal customs and moral and religious codes were included. The significance of this ceremony was to emphasize the teaching going on in the camp: there must be neither quarreling nor anger. No cursing or profane words were spoken. *Toolosyeet* (goodness and kindness) were insisted on (Orchardson 1961).

This was followed by:

### **2.6.6 *Ketienjin* ceremony**

The ceremony involved singing song of the welfare of *Tegerisiek*. A *Tegeret* is someone whose next elder brother or sister had died before she was born. This ceremony takes place in the seclusion area. Young men and elders converge and give

the initiates lessons of life using riddles. The elder also blessed them while chanting the blessing chant.

*Kaberuret.*

*Boiyot: Baibai Kole Baibai*

*Tugul: Baibai*

*Boiyot: Burgei Kole Burgei*

*Tugul: Burgei*

*Boiyot: Bore Tumdo Kole Bore*

*Tugul: Bore*

*Boiyot: Kim Boriet Kole Kim*

*Tugul: Kim*

*Boiyot: Kigas Kele Kigas*

*Tugul: Kigas*

*Boiyot: Abai Kele Abai*

*Tugul: Abai Boiyot: King Kole King*

Translated to:

The Blessing Chant

Elder: Happy lets agree happy

All: Happy

Elder: Warm lets agree warm

All: Warm

Elder: The initiation ceremony will succeed

All: It will succeed

Elder: The Community is strong Lets agree is strong

All: Strong

Elder: Let it be heard lets agree let it be heard

All: Be heard

Elder: It is fertile lets agree it is fertile

All: It is fertile

Elder: It is complete lets agree it is complete

On the day of *ketyeenji* and coming out of seclusion, girls, now known as *laarusyoot*, *taarusyeek* were dressed in unique garments. They were handed over to their suitors and got married immediately (Fish and Fish, 1979). The above was an indication that the initiates had become adults. An oral source remarked;

After the initiation practice, the initiates underwent complete seclusion for about a year or more. The isolation process was symbolic as it meant that they were unclean therefore could not intermingle with the rest of the community members freely. They were to be isolated until their wounds were healed. They were unclean to the extent that they were never allowed to touch food; all they could touch was their clothes. They ate using *seegeetook* (small wooden spoons) (Village elder, 28/8 2016).

*Kayeek* was the naming ceremony when the girls initiate were named after being circumcised. The name began with the word *tap*. They carried sticks for one full month. They also wore flexible brown leather veils that hung down to their knees. An oral source explained that they spent most of their time sewing their new garments to be worn on their coming out of seclusion ceremony day. Brown et al. (2014) assert that the clothes were made of six to eight new sheepskins with all the wool removed they were sewn together and decorated with seams at the seams. The *naaryeet* was a

headdress made of strips of leather decorated with small cowrie shells, a fringe of iron chainless, and a tuft of hair from the beard of a white goat.

An elderly woman noted that:

On coming out of seclusion, a younger male relative would stand at the arch to open the way for the each initiate and anointed her. The (*ng'eeetunotet*) involved the initiates and their specific sponsors forming a procession through an erected archway, after which each initiate and her sponsor marched around. Each time the initiates were sprayed with wine. The present males could anoint with a dab of butter each female related to him (Elderly woman, KII, 28/8 2016).

Various bells on leather straps were worn around the neck of the girls who were still virgins when they came from seclusion. They would hold the bells from the left side of their bodies as they walked. A clan elder noted that these bells were an expression that these girls were virgins. This agrees with Fish & Fish, (1979) who notes that Different bells produced different sounds that were significant as they meant the girls were still “clean” virgins. *Kaapsuben* was the hole in the secluding house of the girls whereby the fire was lit. The girls’ parents were responsible for maintaining the fire burning throughout the seclusion period failure to which a ram had to be sacrificed as this signified a bad omen for the initiates’ future lives.

There were cases also when a ram could be sacrificed, for example when an initiate wet the beddings or wept when being bullied by her colleagues (Burnette, 1979). There were special people in the course of the initiation processes. *Motiryoot* was a female leader that was in charge of the camp for the secluded girls. She could oversee the girls during the day time sheltering. Her responsibilities coincided with those of the male initiates’ leader.

Also, a girl's head was shaved at the *mwabaita* seclusion house. The cut hair was put toward the east into the *mabwaita*, and prayers were offered to *Asiis* (God). A woman who was keeping girl initiates in her house at night was not allowed to have her own hair cut. It grew long and matted. Her hair would be cut at the same time the girls had theirs cut again as they finished their period of initiation. Each initiate also had several sponsors. At a certain stage, one of these sponsors was appointed to stand by the *mabwaita*. In her hand was a small decorated ox-horn which was used for ritual purposes. It held clarified butter (Burnette, 1979). The woman would take a stick usually used for cleaning gourds and smear some of the butter on the forehead, chest, and legs of the senior sponsor, the initiate, and the junior sponsor in that order. She would repeat these four times and then spit once as a blessing. From then on there was a special bond between the initiate and this woman; they would call each.

An ex-circumciser noted that;

The initiates were taught on how to behave towards their husbands. This was done to avoid repeating what their myth holds about the Kipsigis FC origin. They were taught to be faithful to their husbands whether they were around or not (Ex-circumciser, KII, 22/8/ 2016).

The goodbye songs were sung as the initiates left the seclusion place to join the rest of the community members as complete women who were ready to take up roles that were accorded within the Kipsigis community (Fish & Fish, 1979). For instance, one key informant sung as a song that was used to welcome back the initiates into the community after seclusion.

Elderly woman sung as the following song that was accompanied with interpretation;

*Sabarinyon oh kesole ming'in tiony ak*

*kesole ming'in tiony we sabarinyon*

*Ming'in kiplekwet we ming'in kiplekwet we  
sabarinyon*

*Sabarinyon oh kesole barar tiony ak kesole  
barar tiony we sabarinyon*

*Barar interit we barar interit we sabarinyon*

*Sabarinyon oh kesole abaiket ak kesole  
abaiket we sabarinyon*

*Abai sinenendet we abai sinendet we  
sabarinyon*

*Sabarinyon oh kesole toror ket ak kesole  
tororket wee sabarinyon*

*Toror chepkoibet we toror chepkoibet we  
sabarinyon*

Translated to

As we go we praise the tiny animal as we go

The tiny animal (hare) as we go

We praise the noisy animal as we go

The noisy animal is the squirrel as we go

As we go, we praise the fertile tree as we go

The fertile tree is *sinendet* as we go

We praise the tall tree wee as we go

The tall tree is *Chepkoibet* as we go (elderly woman, KII, 29/8/2016)

Upon conducting a focus group discussion with several village elderly members at Sigor market, one of them gave insight that the Bamboo(*Kipkoibet*), the tallest tree in Mau forest, is mentioned in the song *sabarinyon* above.

The *sinendet* creeper is also mentioned. *Sinendet* is described as fertile, and among the Kipsigis it is used in the main ceremonies. An oral source showed that its sap is milky, which is a symbol of fertility among the Kipsigis (elderly woman, O.I, 2016). *Kipkoibet* tree has been given a characteristic that usually is accorded to Bamboo. An elderly woman explained that they praise the currently tallest tree. Apparently bamboo used to be present on the south-western outskirts of Mau forest a long time ago.

The songs mentioned also talk about people in the community in relation to the physical world. An oral source explained that it is an expression that the Kipsigis singers recognized the environment as part and parcel of the community life (Clan elder, KII, 2016). In the song, *sulacha*, a woman who is fetching water is described. She has to kneel to do so. A former chief explained that this means that effort has to be exerted in order to acquire basic needs from the physical environment (former chief, KII, 2016). The geographical station of ‘our brothers’ is also described. They are found in the plains. This means that some areas occupied by the Kipsigis are plains and lowlands like several parts of Chepalungu Sub County while other areas are highlands, as some regions of Bomet Central and Konoin Sub-counties.

### **2.6.7 Winding up Seclusion and the ceremonies associated with it**

#### ***Kangeetunet-aap Laagok / Ng'etunoteet / Ng'etuneet***

These were inclusive terms for the last stages of initiation rites. They indicated coming forth and arising. The final initiation ceremonies prepared the initiate for adulthood. They made the initiate aware of the change which had taken place in her position in life. “I am not going to play; I am going to face life” (elderly woman KII, 27/8/2016).

*Ng'etuneet* marked the end of seclusion, and it was believed free the initiate from ritual uncleanness. This was done the final evening before *tileet-app kirokweek*. It was a public ceremony; entire families could be present (Clan elder, KII, 29/8/2016). Each initiate wore a *naaryeet* (a crown or tiara) which was made of hide and decorated with small cowrie shells. It was a sign of honor for having finished all of the ceremonial processes. This could be likened to our present-day graduation cap. Each family had one of these, and it was kept for use by their children irrespective of sex.

### ***Yaateet-aap Ooret***

This ceremony involved going through an arch which had been put up. Ng'etich (2014) further asserts that usually, a younger sister of the initiate would stand at the arch to open the way for her. If he had no younger sister, another young female relative could perform this task (clan elder, KII, 28/8/2016). The initiates and their sponsors formed a procession. The *motiryoot* and the initiates marched through the arch facing east. A clan elder noted that Passing through the arch indicated arising from childhood to adulthood (clan elder, KII, 29/8/2016). The arch was burned later along their rubbish before leaving the camp. The *meenyjeet* was left to deteriorate; it was not used by another group.

The initiates accompanied by their sponsors marched around a nearby *mabwaita* four times (Ng'etich, 2014). Each time around, the initiates were sprayed with wine by the *poiyoote-aap piisye*, the elder in charge of the spraying. Males present anointed each female related to him with a dab of butter. This was an expression of blessing the new society members (clan elder, FGD, 2016)

***Kaiilet***

At this ceremony each graduating initiate was anointed with butter contained in a ceremonial cow horn. Each family chose a child of opposite sex to anoint the initiate from their family. The anointing was done with the right hand (former circumciser, KII, 2016). A dab of butter was put on each initiate's forehead, chest and legs of each of the four times march around *mabwaita*. Then a big feast was held with everyone in the community attending. It was a time of happiness to welcome the initiates from their seclusion (Ng'etich, 2014).

***Tileet-aap Kirokweek***

The following day *tileet-aap kirokweek* (cutting the stick) took place. Initiates and their sponsors marched around a herd of cattle, or a flock of sheep and goats. The animals were then driven up to the *mabwaita*, and the process was repeated with the *mabwaita* as the center. Then the initiates lined up in front of the elder who was kneeling at the *mabwaita* (Manners, 1967). The walking stick which had been presented to the initiates at the upcoming ceremony was now cut in two by the elder; the lower half was given to the initiate to carry until his or her hair was cut four days later. This cutting of the hair took place west of the *mabwaita* facing the sun. A thin paste of milk and salt lick clay was rubbed on each head. The hair instead of being thrown away as normally done was plastered to the *mabwaita* with the same paste (Manners, 1967).

As observed from the preceding discussion, FC gave room for the initiates to belong to the community officially (Manners, 1967). The practice was considered a commandment passed down from the ancestors and the gods to be practiced without any question or alteration, thus, the tradition was ultimately preserved, and fulfilled

(Cheserem, 2010). The solely way that one earned respect in the community was through circumcision; one could not be crowned a leadership position as a chief, village elder, judge or addressed honorably unless one was circumcised. The uncircumcised could not file a case against the circumcised, what counted was that the child (uncircumcised) had made a mistake and that the master was the circumcised. It did not matter who was offended. All the strategies and mechanisms established were to ensure that all women underwent circumcision (Manners, 1967).

In addition, several rites of passage were highly valued in the Kipsigis community. The first being birth that entailed the naming of the newborn, the second rite of passage was the most important event was the *keebatum*, the coming of age or rather the initiation period. This period was considered the most important of all among the Kipsigis community (Ngetich, 2014). The initiation rights for Kipsigis girls were similar to those of the male counterparts. The initiation rites prevailed for a couple of months since to them; initiation entailed not only the circumcision ritual but also the initiation into the secret rituals of the Kipsigis community and the teachings of the Kipsigis norms.

Orchadson (1961) puts into writing the feeling of the Kipsigis concerning initiation;

Before initiation, children are never considered as Kipsigis. After initiation, they were expected to discard all their childish behavior, to learn to control their feelings and conduct themselves in a superior manner to the uninitiated ones. Thus, initiation was more or less considered as a rebirth of which the circumcision is the outward sign.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, in this chapter, it was noted that the Nilotic speakers where the Kipsigis belong borrowed the culture of Circumcision from the Cushitic speakers. Additionally, it was established that among the Kipsigis, animals were kept as their mode of production. Socially and politically, the men were the major decisions makers in the community. The youth were arranged concerning age sets depending on the time they were initiated. Furthermore, it was noted that FC came into being as a way to reduce women sexuality while their husbands were away. However, the findings also indicate that FC played a key role in the construction of women and preparing the young girls into wifely roles.

The researcher has discussed the origin of FC, the activities revolving around FC as well as the significance of female circumcision in relation to the Kipsigis community. The research findings show that the practice had an important role in the community. However, despite the changes, the community still attaches FC to valuable role and responsibilities of women in the community of the Kipsigis.

The findings further showed that FC was carried out in various stages and that every ritual, and ceremony that was conducted and any tool used had a specific meaning that it communicated. Additionally, FC was seen to be communal in celebration but selective in practice with only the circumcised witnessing the candidates during the cut. The seclusion period and the teachings that accompanied it were seen to be central in the making of a woman.

As noted by Moen (1978), FC is a cultural practice among the Kipsigis as the community must control reproduction and every patriarchal society just as the

Kipsigis does so by controlling its women. In addition to being an initiation ceremony, control of sexual behavior is also a commonly acknowledged reason for FC among the Kipsigis. In their case, excision is used to attenuate sexual desire, and make women less vulnerable to sexual temptation to other men other than their husbands after marriage.

Generally, FC is associated with initiation rites especially in sub-Saharan Africa and so was the case with the Kipsigis. The findings indicated that FC symbolized one's passage from childhood to adulthood, but often associated particularly with preparation for marriage and motherhood as it is accompanied by instruction in marital duties and homemaking skills.

It was noted that FC among the Kipsigis is a means through which the community establishes one's sexual identity. It is thought that the long clitoris represented masculinity or rather 'maleness' in a Kipsigis female therefore it must be removed just as it is the case with the MC whereby the prepuce is thought to represent 'femaleness' or femininity in a male and therefore it must be removed through circumcision.

The next chapter discusses the role of Christianity in shaping FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet County.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 CHRISTIANITY AND FEMALE CIRCUMCISION 1946-1975**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the role of Christianity in shaping the changes in FC. To do this, the chapter discusses colonial penetration in Kenya and how colonialism and more specifically the Christian missionaries impacted on female circumcision among the Kipsigis. Additionally, the discussion will be made on how the Kipsigis reacted to Christianity in their quest to safeguard their traditional culture including FC. In so doing, the discussion will stretch way back to the earlier colonial times before 1946 so exhaustively explore on the manifestation of Female circumcision during the Christian missionary activities in Kenya.

#### **3.1 Colonialism in Kenya(1895-1964)**

The origins of the colonial history of Kenya dates back to the Berlin Conference in 1885 when East Africa was first divided into territories of influence by the European powers. The British Government founded the East African Protectorate in 1895 and soon after, opened the fertile highlands to white settlers (Boulanger, 2008). As Favero (1970) asserts, even before it was officially declared a British colony in 1920, these settlers were allowed to have a voice in government, while the Africans and the Asians were banned from direct political participation until 1944. During this period thousands of Indians were brought into Kenya to work on building the Kenya-Uganda Railway line and subsequently settled there while inviting many of their kith and kin who were mainly traders from India to join them (Favero, 1970).

The over seventy years of colonial rule in Kenya was characterized by punitive economic, social and political policies (Fevero, 1970). Most outstanding among these policies was racial discrimination. The large tracts of fertile land were alienated for white settlement, and harsh labor laws were enacted to force the Africans to work at low wages on settler farms and public works. With such, the social organization was as well disrupted owing to the European notion that African had a primitive social organization that entailed religion, culture, and education among others. In addition, African political participation was confined to local government.

Colonialism came with many changes in the ways of lives of the colonized societies. Africans in particular were the most affected concerning the way their cultures were devalued by colonial masters (Mugambi, 2002). This owed to the fact that the colonial masters perceived African practices to be primitive and ungodly. Among the discarded practices was female circumcision that had dominated nearly all African countries.

Looking at the global picture, there were early attempts to persuade communities to abandon FC, first by Christian missionaries and colonial authorities at the beginning of the 20th century and later by Western feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. These attempts were largely considered to be western imperialism and something imposed on communities by outsiders (Mugambi, 2002).

### **3.11 Missionaries Activities and Female Circumcision (1929–1932)**

The arrival of the British (around the beginning of the twentieth century) radically transformed Kipsigis society. White settlers alienated nearly half of Kipsigis land (Mugambi, 2002). Through a series of pressures and inducements, the Kipsigis were gradually drawn within the orbit of the colonial market economy. In the late

twentieth century, structural changes in the regional economy forced thousands of western Kenyans, mostly Luo people, to come to Kericho in search of employment. Many found work on Kipsigis farms and spent years working for the same family (Fevero, 1970).

At the onset of the colonial era, barely was there any Christian Kipsigis, however, after colonialism about 50% of Kipsigis were Christian (priest, 5/92016). He noted that the rapid revolution shaped a high degree of cultural displacement, unlike with Islam which was progressively Africanized for over 1000 years in Africa. His articulation coincides that of Robert (2009) who contends that Christianity has been overwhelmed with the history of European conquest and up to date, it is yet to escape that legacy and become an agent of true liberation.

There are several reasons that many scholars have used to justify the changes that traditional African practices have undergone. Among the main reasons cited by Liberalists, historians or Eurocentric scholars in support of colonialism in Africa is that Africans have barbaric practices that were more of the violations of human rights and FC was not an exemption. A clan elder in an oral interview noted that, when missionaries came to Kenya, they regarded Kenyan cultural practices as satanic and outdated (clan elder, O.I, 2016). They did not see any religion in Kenya but rather a multiplicity of gods. Accordingly, they came with a new religion; Christianity with a white God. Africa was regarded a blank slate upon which the colonialists could impose their western culture in the name of civilizing Africans (Boulanger, 2008).

The entry of colonialism among the Kalenjin was marked by active resistance that ran upto to 1905 when the *Orkoiyot* supreme chief of both the Nandi and Kipsigis

was killed by the British man; Meinertzhagen. This was the turning point for the colonialists who conquered the Kalenjin. Despite that however, the colonial government did not pass any policy at that time to condemn FC due to the need to avoid further resistance from them (Andersson, 1993). Nevertheless, a retired chief noted that in the 1920s, the colonial missionaries began opposing FC on health grounds (retired chief, KII, 2016). This agrees with Hernlund (2000) who notes that the war against FC amplified in 1929-1930s. The Church of Scotland started banning it on school going children whose parents advocated for FC.

An oral source (clan elder, KII 27/8/2016) indicated that while campaigns by the British colonialists prompted African resistance movements among other Kenyan communities such as the Gikuyu, the Missionaries were allowed in to work with the Kipsigis where no Europeans had settled by 1933. She asserted that the resistance movements such as Kikuyu Central Association advocated for FC as a valuable African culture. Jenkins (1991) notes that missionaries of the Africa Gospel Mission made an entry into the Kipsigis land while missionaries of the Africa Inland Mission made an entry into the Nandi and Tugen territories. This helps explain how presently the larger percent are Kipsigis are claimed by Africa Gospel Church and the Nandi by the Africa Inland Church (Jenkins, 1991).

It was around the mid-1950s that the imperial government attempts to regulate FC were half-hearted with a view to treading carefully. In 1956, however, many areas in Kenya declared “female circumcision” to be illegal. In the midst of the violent protest over settler colonialism and land rights that became known as “Mau Mau,” this was a risky act from which the African colonial governments distanced themselves. In a key informant interview with an elderly woman said that:

Almost immediately, in defiance of the ban of FC, adolescent girls bought razor blades from local shops and went to the forests to circumcise themselves (an elderly man, KII, 30/9/2016).

In doing so, these girls were defying the authority of colonial-appointed chiefs and colonial rule itself. With regard to this, Boulanger (2008) notes that they and their families paid the price of that defiance between 1956 and 1958, 2 500 people were charged before the African courts and fined in cattle, imprisoned or set to hard labor. That was the beginning of the continued intensified campaigns against the practice.

An old man remarked that:

At some point, we were forced to carry out the practice at night and secretly so that the colonial missionaries could not spot us. They were totally harsh on us as they termed the practice as ungodly. According to them, men were the only ones supposed to be circumcised (elderly man, O.I, 30/8/2016)

This period as well marked the era of white women emancipation. These women assigned themselves the roles of liberators of the black women in colonies. Women got political positions too. The first issue handled by those women was FC and African women education. The above led to a conflict between colonial administrators and Africans (Hernlund, 2000).

Despite the fact that colonial administrators did not want to touch on FC directly, the formal education, as well as health literacy coupled with Christian missionaries, could drastically change the image of a once noble practice (FC) among the Kipsigis (retired chief, KII, 2016). Christianity led by the Scotland church Africa Gospel Mission, African Inland Mission Church (AIM) and the African Mission Church (AMC) regarded it as barbarism, sinful and savage. Africans responded by establishing African Independent Churches that embraced all aspects of African cultures (Population Reference Bureau, 2001).

Most respondents, however, noted that colonial missionary campaigns against FC in Kenya and among the Kipsigis, in particular, were not concerned with the health or women sexual rights. Rather, their concern was on communal activities that accompanied the practice, something that contrasts the European sense of community. Thus it had to be done away with. In addition, education of girls in England shaped the attitude towards FC in Africa and girl child education as from 1945. Education was perceived to be good for the Kipsigis community. Thus, since English girls education was linked to civilization mission, and the role of women as improvers, education of a girl child was regarded as stepping stones to the improvement of the native people especially women. Education was conducted in mission schools (WHO, 1997). However, the girl child education was not at the heart of colonial government because it was not beneficial to them. Moreover, the community did not value girl-child education, to them; it was more of a waste of resources. Accordingly, it was such a challenge to unmask traditional African customs to end FC.

The last decade of Kenya's independence witnessed amplified campaigns against FC and stern legal actions against perpetrators (county administrator, KII, 6/7/2016). The oral source concurs with Cheserem, (2010) who notes that in the 1950s, the colonial government through local administration banned the FC practice and declared it illegal. She further notes that between 1956 and 1958, approximately 2500 people were arrested, fined and others were detained due to practicing FC.

It is important to note that the colonial government did not have the intention to intrude into the African cultural practices, as they feared being resisted. Likewise, they were not concerned much about FC among the Kenyan communities and the

Kipsigis included. However, with colonial protection, the Christian missionaries brought education and health education as well as a new religion. The new white religion condemned FC as a barbaric and primitive practice. The Scotland church AIC and AMC were on the forefront to fight FC as early as the 1920s (WHO, 1997). European women also fought against the practice as from the 1930s and by 1945, the war against FC had intensified. By 1950, radical measures were taken against those found conducting FC.

Christian missions started to voice restriction to the practice given medical concerns, for example, high child and mother mortality rates during childbirth and also infections and sterilization in young women who experienced FC. The contention of reduced birthrates appealed more to the monetary sensibilities of Kenya's Chief Native Commissioner, G.V. Maxwell. He issued Circular Letter No. 28 in August 1926 to every single senior official requesting that they endeavor to constrain the practice in light of a legitimate concern for humanity, local genetic counseling, and population increase (Pittman, 2010).

The issue was put to consideration of Katharine Marjory Stewart-Murray, Duchess of Atholl, in 1929 during a meeting of the Church of Scotland Mission to the Kikuyu. At the meeting, an evangelist wife, Mrs. Hooper, portrayed the mutilation and agony endured by girls in an ordinary female circumcision operation (Pittman, 2010).

In an oral interview with the Elderly Kipsigis women (23/7/2016), they noted that in Bomet county the once part of former Kericho District, the Tenwek Mission Hospital, Kaboson Pastors School in Siongiroi were influential in campaigning against FC in Bomet county. The churches taught followers of the ungodly practice of FC. The hospitals provided a platform upon which the Kipsigis sought medication

and alongside that, could be made aware of the adverse health effects of FC on women among them being the reproduction complications, over bleeding leading to death as well as infectious illnesses (Robert, 2009).

### **3.12 Cultural imperialism on Female Circumcision**

According to Tomlinson (2012), cultural imperialism is the application of political and economic influence on a community to elevate and spread the values and customs of a foreign culture at the expense of a native one. In this vein, cultural imperialism is the effort by powerful states to force their culture and societal systems upon subjugated, or less powerful, people. These formal and informal efforts are often based on ethnocentrism and were exemplified by the social Darwinist movement of the late nineteenth century.

Cultural imperialism is responsible for the spread of some positive values, including democracy and equal rights, but it also brought about the demise of many indigenous cultures and languages and provided a justification for colonialism (Fernandez-Romano, 1999). Cultural imperialism in this context can as well be denoted to be the systematic penetration and domination of the cultural life of the popular classes by the ruling colonialist to reorder the values, behavior, institutions and identity of the oppressed Kipsigis peoples to conform to the interests of their masters (Anderson, 1993). The Kipsigis and the Nandi at the time were known by academicians to be one and the same ethnic group; they shared their leader (*Orkoiyot*). An influential old man stated that the Kipsigis resisted the imperialism by the British in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the first bit of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after their leader was killed. They fought the *Mzungu* as all they wanted was to preserve their independence, their culture. They also just disliked the white man's complexion (Old man OI, 23/8/2016).

According to Anderson (1993), after losing in battle with the British in 1906, cultural imperialism took both 'traditional' and modern forms in the entire 20th century whereby the Church, educational system, and public authorities played a major role in inculcating Kipsigis peoples with ideas of submission and loyalty in the name of divine or absolutist values. Accordingly, cultural imperialism played a significant role, in this case, owing to the European mission to elevate their modernity while demeaning the African cultural practices (Tomlinson, 2012). Traditional African cultural practices paved the way for a foreign way of doing things as Africans became fully 'westernized.' The social fabric was completely devastated, and a new culture of violence was implanted (Fernandez-Romano, 1999).

During the early period of Western colonialism, cultural imperialism was marked by efforts to spread Christianity and European economic values to indigenous societies forcibly. The onset of the new imperialism of the nineteenth century saw the maturation of this trend as imperial states sought to replicate their legal, political, and educational systems within their colonies.

Another elderly retired teacher asserted that:

Europeans made us realize how hard we had made our lives of ourselves. Female circumcision has no value as far as a woman reproduction is concerned. In fact, it brings opportunistic health breeding complications hence risking the lives of our children and women (elderly retired teacher 26/8/2016).

The above assertions agrees with Fernandez-Romano (1999) who notes that the rise of the United States as a global power in the twentieth century, American culture came to dominate the world through an informal and tacit form of cultural imperialism.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that cultural imperialism was the height of the Christian missionaries' activities in the continent and Bomet County cannot be assumed. Christianity was a tool for western cultural exportation that aimed at controlling the Africans including the Kipsigis in Bomet County.

### **3.2 British Human rights activism and FC in the 1930s**

The history of campaigns against FC can be linked to the British women who were key campaigners against the act of female circumcision in Kenya from 1929 through the early 1930s. Specifically, the Duchess of Atholl and Eleanor Rathbone, both MPs and establishing individuals from the Committee for the Protection of Colored Women in the Crown Colonies, were influential in Parliament and determined in their endeavors. The impact of Rathbone and different women's activists drove the Duchess to wind up "defiant" and to stand up on new matters because of 'a developing awareness with human wretchedness' (Hurst, 2011).

Rathbone was a promoter of women's rights. She was particularly worried by the state of colonized women all throughout 1930s the point of British women to enhance the deteriorated status of native African women in Africa and Kenya, in particular, moved from the attention on female circumcision to incorporate more extensive concerns toward the general health, prosperity and training of local native girls and women (Hurst, 2011).

Enactment banning or constraining the female initiation demonstrated to be ineffectual and brought about mass dissension from Kenyan women and men, boys and girls. In this manner, British women, colonial authorities, and missionaries trusted that education was a superior strategy than enactment to battle the fight

against female circumcision, abortion, prostitution and degeneration in Kenya (Hurst, 2011).

Another old man 89 years old gave insight on the role of missionaries' role in changing FC in Bomet County. He asserted that:

There was a white woman medical doctor who discouraged us against FC. This was evident in her duties when she attended to a pregnant woman who was circumcised while giving birth. The lady (Chepkorir) passed on for over bleeding. This was a horrific experience to the doctor that she began discouraging the locals against FC (elderly man, KII, 2016).

The human rights activists have been influential in making the Kipsigis people from being dogmatic in thinking that without circumcision a woman a lesser woman. Therefore, we can allude that education through the human right activist has resulted in the prevailing changes in FC.

### **3. 2 African reactions to imperialism to 1945**

African reacted to European imperialism both in the 19th and 20th centuries (Todd, 2015). This owed to the realization that the colonial masters had imposed colonial policies that politically, economically and socially deprived off Africans their right to enjoyment of the three mentioned aspects. In the reaction to colonialism, women played a role owing to their feeling of being infringed. For instance, the rehabilitation of women during the Kenyan Emergency that was the Mau Mau movement was the direct attempt to subvert the women into suitable European gender roles (Todd, 2015).

A retired government officer noted that missionary Christianity disunited the Kenyan communities (retired government officer, KII, 2016). These remarks agree with Boulanger, (2008) who asserts that Christianity created divisions among the Kenyan

communities by polarizing several issues such as female circumcision. It was during this time that resistance groups to Christianity arose, the most prominent being the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), used its reception of female circumcision to gain backing for the retention of all aspects of the African culture. In opposition was the Kikuyu Progressive Party (KPP), which took up the foreigners' banner and urged for the abolition of the FC practice.

In this way, colonial penetration brought mixed reactions among many Kenyan communities and more so to the Kipsigis community (Okech, 2012). Owing to the perception that FC was a way to transform a young girl into womanhood with tribal and family identity, many were left in a dilemma hence, double consciousness. Some who embraced Christianity were denounced from the Kipsigis community as this meant that such women could neither get married, bear children, hold leadership positions nor own property whatsoever.

An old man interviewed noted that the Church of Scotland Missions (CSM), the African Inland Mission (AIM), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), and the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS) were the prominent Protestant missions teaching against this FC in a Kenyan woman's rite of passage (old man, O.I. 2016). His remarks agree with those of other scholars who notes that Dr. John Arthur, head of the CSM at the time, was conceivably the most candid opponent of female circumcision through the 1920s to 1930s (Boulanger, 2008). He saw to it that his teachers instructed against female circumcision, which missionaries almost unanimously labeled "barbarous." As such, the teaching against circumcision became one of the Women's Activism for Gender Equity in not only in Kenya but the whole

African continent. It turned to be the most controversial issues of an increasing battle over cultural norms (Boulanger, 2008).

In the verge of such battles, FC would eventually hamper women chances to enroll in particular schools (clan elder, O.I, 1/9/2016). This caused in many Kenyan women dropping out schools run by different religious groups, or, more importantly, supporting newly forming independent churches and schools in which missionaries and government administrators had no part.

Among the Kipsigis, some circumcisers were firm to safeguard their divine profession while many others opted to convert to Christianity owing to which was the better option for them.

Another ex-circumciser said that:

It was recently after the government was strict on us that I considered quitting being a female circumciser. This was also after a reality of guilt dawned on me when in the early 2000s; I circumcised a girl who bled nearly to death. The girl had been forced to be circumcised to be married off. This was a tormenting moment for me because I had never experienced such before. Actually, that was a turning point in my life. I swore to quit the profession and instead advocate for banning of FC (ex-circumciser, KII.1/9/2016).

The ongoing discussions agree with the Gikuyu reactions to their female circumcision on the onset of colonialism. The initiation rite makes one a daughter or a son of a particular family, clan, and tribe. Those who did not participate in the rite were a laughing stock in the entire community as they were treated as *kihii* (uncircumcised) girl. The uncircumcised were never accorded respected in the Gikuyu community as they held no dignity womanhood (Boulanger, 2008).

Christian education supplanted female circumcision and its associated initiation practices. As indicated by two Kipsigis women, education gave a different option to

FC (women group, FGD, 2016). They clarified that if a Kipsigis girl was not circumcised, she was unmarriageable and along these lines of less esteem since she would not get a bride price.

### **3. 21 African independent churches' Reaction to banning of FC by colonialism**

As the preceding discussion indicates, the British undertook a campaign from 1929 to 1932 to stop the practice of female circumcision in Kenya which was a British colony at the time (Murray, 1974). A Kipsigis elderly woman in an oral interview noted that the British efforts were met with resistance by the Agikuyu Kenya's largest ethnic community, and resulted in what was called the "female circumcision controversy" in the euphemistic terminology of the time (elderly woman, O.I /31/8/2016). Furthermore, Murray (1974) argues that the issue became a focal point of the independence movement against British colonial rule, and a test of loyalty, either to the Christian churches or the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) of the Kikuyu people.

A village elder noted that Initiation rites are the lifeblood of most African communities and that in East Africa, these rites are part of traditional beliefs and customs, and may include physical hurt (village elder, O.I, 27/8/2016). The initiation rite, particularly in Kenya, was seen as a graduation ceremony and a means of enculturation, giving a sense of identity. The revelation agrees with Joshua (2009) who asserts that the penetration of European missionaries in the early 20th century set the stage for contestation between Christianity, as understood by the European missionaries, and the African leaders over the rite of initiation. In a key informant interview, one old woman articulated that Female circumcision was at the core of this

contestation (old woman, KII, 28/8/2016). Her remarks concur with Kimani (2006) who asserts that in the 1930s, missionary opposition to female circumcision spurred the creation of indigenous churches, including the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa.

A key informant noted that Missionaries perceived the practice as not only brutal and oppressive but also medically and hygienically undesirable and that they considered it foreign to both their culture and to Christianity (old woman, 29/8/2016). Her sentiments agree with Joshua (2009) who asserts that missionaries perceived female circumcision to be barbaric and primitive by their standards. Moreover, they felt it was deserving of church discipline not to practice FC (Joshua, 2009).

Another oral source consulted showed that FC was vigorously attacked by some influential European agencies, missionaries, pro-African bodies and government educational and medical authorities in 1929 (clan elders, FGD, 2016). That an injunction was put out by the missionary churches preventing circumcised girls and their parents from attending church and school (Kimani, 2006). However, African leaders and cultural systems hit back strongly, especially against the church; that in 1930, a strong challenge against the missionary position was launched by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in Nyeri (elderly man, O.I, 28/8/2016). The preceding articulations echo the sentiments by Joshua (2009) who notes that the result was the opening of independent schools and churches. In addition, a key informant interviewee noted that African independent churches tolerated FC and many other African cultural practices elderly man, KII, 29/8/2016).

In another key informant interview, an elderly woman remarked that:

Endeavors to demonstrate that the point of confrontation between the Missionary Church and the African Independent Churches was religious freedom in the form of a customary rite were done (elderly woman, KII, 30/8/2016).

Her remarks agree with Tomlinson (2012) who notes that the African Independent Churches (AICs) demanded religious freedom from what they perceived as cultural imperialism. Further, it shows that in this contestation, FC was used only to achieve political and religious interests (Spickard, Cragg & Carlson, 2001).

A key informant asserted that the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa supported the Mau Mau and encouraged its members to join the armed struggle (man, KII, 30/8/2016). This was evident in 1952 when the anti-colonial Mau Mau uprising was launched largely by members of the Kikuyu community (Karanja, 2006). The colonial government responded by imposing a state of emergency and closing down all churches and schools. Churches affiliated with the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa were not reopened until independence in 1963 (Karanja, 2006). As in the case with Bomet there was no renewal of non-western religion (Bediako, 1995). A retired major general asserted in another KII that the cold blood murder of their *orkoiyot* was the end of their active resistance (retired major general, KII/2/9/2016).

The African independent churches grew rapidly, and many foreign missionaries also entered East African region after independence in 1963 (Man, KII, 30/8/2016). His sentiments are by Mayer (2004) who notes that in 1967 for instance, American Pentecostal Dale Brown founded the Kenya Assemblies of God, which joined with the Assemblies of God U.S in 1972. The church grew fast in Nairobi with an annual growth rate of 38%.

In 1964, Relations between Kenyatta and the dominant mainline churches, such as the Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church, were relatively amicable during his presidency (elderly man, KII, 1/9/2016). The preceding sentiments articulate that Jomo Kenyatta was Kikuyu, as were most mainline church leaders and his brother-in-law was the first African bishop of the Kenyan Anglican Church (Freston 2001). However, many respondents noted that Jomo Kenyatta, a proponent of FC contrary to the teachings of the mainstream churches.

Despite President Kenyatta's effort to revive cultural practice independence in the country, the effect was never felt in Bomet (elderly man, OI, 3/9/2016). As many respondents noted, Bomet did not experience rebirth of African independent churches. One woman asserted that she is not aware of any existing African Independent church in Bomet. The main churches are the early missionary churches; African inland church and African Gospel church that have been growing since colonial times.

### **3. 3 Jomo Kenyatta and Female circumcision (1963-1978)**

Kenya's first president, being a strong proponent of the practice, he channeled his effort into preserving the cultural practices of Africans. This was evident in his book *Facing Mount Kenya*, 1938. This was a mobilizing agent around cultural rights as attested in the first chapter of the study. Also in 1972, Kenyatta established a national body (Kenya National Council of Arts and Culture) in an endeavor to coordinate cultural activities in the country (Barasa, 2015). In an oral interview, one elderly man articulated that being an anthropologist, Kenyatta liked embracing his cultural practice (elderly man, O.I, 30/8/2016). In addition, historically, many MPs in the

post-independence era have either chosen to be neutral or on the subject or have supported FGM in order to retain their political position (FIDA, 2009).

During the Kenyatta's regime, Kenyan communities witnessed the revival of their valued cultural practices (Nyamwaka, 2008). Another elderly man in Bomet town recalled:

During Kenyatta's regime this region freely carried out its cultural activities. There was no hindrance from anyone. *Tumdo* activities were carried out in the open, and there were no rules to bar people from practicing it (elderly man, KII, 1/9/2016)

Historically, there was little political will to outlaw FC with Kenyatta. However soon after his death, this changed with Moi ascendancy into the presidency.

From the analysis, it noted that the colonial period up to the independence period was full of the push and pull between the colonial pro-FC and the resilient African communities. The study established that the period was occupied by activities of those who maintained their support of FC. Africans were victorious in their endeavor to conserve FC as part of their culture. There was very little that was experienced in as far as the ban on the practice was concerned. The study findings indicate that many African communities' cultures were deeply rooted and widely embraced. The African independent churches were on the forefront in the FC resilience. For instance, the African independent churches in Bomet were instrumental in the preservation of the Kipsigis cultures.

### **3.31 Womens Year 1975**

In relation to female circumcision, The United Nations (U.N.) selected 1975 International Women's Year. The U.N. charter had long stated that the global

organization was dedicated to human rights with no discrimination based on gender. This followed the 1970s, where feminism was attaining impetus as an international social and political movement. The U.N. General Assembly declared International Women's Year and organized the first World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City during the summer of 1975 (Nzomo, 1989).

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the chapter discussed the role of Christianity in shaping FC among the Kipsigis during the colonial period. The findings show that the Christian missionaries termed FC as a primitive culture that had to be done away with. Additionally, the new religion of a white God was portrayed to be a tool for cultural imperialism among the Kipsigis. Christianity eroded the once valued culture of the Kipsigis and impacted negatively on FC. What was traditionally a glorified practice turned to be a regarded as an outdated, primitive and barbaric and satanic act. It will then be instrumental to conclude that colonialism formed a major landmark in the history of FC among the Kipsigis. It laid the basis for the war against FC. Colonialists changed the noble value of FC to something evil, satanic, and gross violation of human rights.

The findings further indicated that women who were circumcised were not allowed in the Christian missionary schools. Since the missionaries had dominated the region with their African Gospel Mission and African Inland Mission churches, Bomet County, the African resistance to their preaching was not felt. Respondents instead pinpointed Central Kenya with African Independent churches that fought to preserve their cultures among the mentioned were the *Akorino* church in and other resistance movements such as the Kikuyu Central Association. However, in reaction to their lost culture, Africans established their own independent churches. These churches

allowed the practice of all African cultures and rites. However, in the case of Bomet, the Missionary activities influenced radical transition from traditional cultural practices to the current way of life in general.

The findings also show that in the wave of decolonization erosion of African cultures such as FC were at the center of African grievances. At independence, under Kenyatta regime FC regained its past glory. Kenyatta was a staunch proponent of African culture.

The next chapter discusses the dynamics of FC in the period 1976-2014

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0 CHANGES AND CONTINUITY IN FEMALE CIRCUMCISION 1976-2014**

#### **Introduction**

Culture is dynamic in nature. How each generation perceives a cultural practice may differ considerably from the previous or the future generation. Given the idea that FC was traditionally the Kipsigis cultural practice, it has also undergone various changes. Indeed, FC has changed in the way it is perceived as well as conducted owing to the variations in the three different sets of political leadership that as well impose their own changes in the course of power administration after the Jomo Kenyatta in 1978. As such, the three regimes cultivated varied socio-economic, political and cultural policies that impacted on FC differently (Barasa, 2015).

In this chapter, we discuss the changing trends in FC among the Kipsigis since 1979 up to 2014. The chapter interrogates the post independent debates on FC and the impacts of these debates on the practice that have led to both changes as well as the continuation of FC. Additionally, the chapter provides a critical examination of the alternative methods to FC among the Kipsigis and the factors that inform the application of these methods. Finally, the current manifestation of FC among the Kipsigis will be discussed.

#### **4.10 Women's decade (1975-1985)**

After the women's year conference, the U.N. extended the acknowledgment of International Women's Year by announcing 1976-1985 the U.N. Decade for Women (Nzomo, 1989). This highlighted the need for women's rights and asserted a U.N. commitment to equality. The UN also established a Voluntary Fund for the U.N.

Decade for Women, which became United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW), to further work on women's issues such as gender violence and FGM (Fraser, 1987). As Nzomo asserts:

The women affairs have started being addressed despite some resistance among ourselves. The government, through the help of the representatives, is addressing each issue that women face.

The aftermath of the women's decade is exhibited in the African women's decade that has since then made steps in addressing pressing issues of women not only in the continent but also at grassroots levels in each state. There was barely any noticeable change in FC practice until the second presidency of Daniel Arap Moi from 1979. His government effort to help achieve the objective to reduce gender based discrimination.

#### **4.11 Policies on FC in Kenya (1982-2002)**

In 1978 upon the death of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Arap Moi took over the seat of presidency in Kenya (Odinga, 2013). An oral source noted that President Moi was more affiliated with the AIC (old man, O.I, 2016). Studies have it that when Jomo Kenyatta died in 1978, the succeeding president Daniel Arap Moi from the Kalenjin-speaking community, he reduced the Kikuyu influence in government (Freston, 2003). This owed to him being an active member of the African Inland Church, a non-Pentecostal evangelical church founded in 1895. An old man interviewed noted that the Moi regime was contrasted to the Kenyatta government (Old man, O.I, 2/9/2016).

The Kenyan government has progressively put in place several policies to eliminate FC. Remarkable steps into this effort are traced back from 1983, when the then president Daniel *arap* Moi issued a decree against FC (Kirigo, 2016). IN his announcement, those practicing it were required to stop the practice or face legal

action. In a FGD, an old man stated that the president's pronouncement led to Kipsigis carrying out FC in secret by inviting the circumcisers to their homes without the knowledge of the authorities. He further noted that, although the decree showed the highest level of political determination to eradicate FC in the country, it had limited success.

Having assumed power from the predecessor who valued and believed in the preservation of the African cultural practices, President Moi came slowly on his political policies that contrasted with the former's. Since ascending power in 1978, it was until 1982, that the president came into the limelight to condemn FC in his own homeland the then Baringo District. He issued presidential decrees without any specific policy formulation on FC. An elderly woman in a focus group discussion remarked that:

During Moi's time, the FC practice deteriorated in a way owing to his strong and firm sentiments in his declaration that FC was not a progressive cultural practice. People feared being prosecuted should they be found (elderly woman, FGD, 2016).

Her remarks concur with archival source consulted that outlined Moi's remarks as indicated below:

If I hear of a person circumcising girls in this district, he/ she will be on fire (KNA.OR,FGM in Kenya, 1982).

The president's sentiments above indicated that FC perpetrators would be prosecuted. This did not mean the law applied to his homeland only but also to all other Kenyan communities that practiced FC.

The president's attitude towards FC was contrary to his predecessor's. In addition, his reign experienced reduced FC activities that were not only carried out in secret but also in fear. The practice of FC only became a secret; however, it was still being

carried out in various communities including the Kipsigis. His first attempt to adopt the legal approach to end FC was not until 1996(KNA.OR, FGM in Kenya, 1982).The findings indicate that he set a background upon which the female circumcision campaigns were established as attested in the preceding sections.

Following the 1993 UN Declaration on Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women, Kenya developed a National Plan of Action for the Elimination of FC (Kirigo, 2016). The UN declaration required governments to commit themselves to condemn violence against women, punish offenders, and address issues surrounding gender-based violence. This sparked more interest in Kenya in addressing FC, which was further reinforced by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Following the ICPD, Kenya developed a population policy that was known as Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2000 on Population Policy for Sustainable Development which advocated against FC (Kirigo, 2016).

#### **4.12 The standing committee on Human rights in Kenya of June 1996**

This seemed to be a critical period in Kenya whereby the public had to be informed through campaigns on how to distinguish between progressive and retrogressive traditional values and customs and to remain to cherish the former while abandoning the later for the general welfare and wellbeing of the entire nation (KNA.KER, the report of his Excellency, the president of Kenya, 1999).

The legal status on FC continued to intensify during Moi's reign. For instance, the President under section 23(1) of the Constitution of Kenya appointed a standing committee on Human rights in Kenya on 22nd June 1996 (KNA.REP, 1996). This was after the parliament defeated a motion to make FC an illegal cultural practice

citing the abuses arise from social conditioning. Certain groups in society suffer from human rights violations because of society's adherence to undesirable traditions and customs ((KNA.OR, FGM in Kenya, 1982).

According to the report by the action plan, the effort to curb FC had been made without breakthrough as the culture is still deeply rooted and viewed as a recognized rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Accordingly, it was established that FC bestows adulthood and therefore marriageability (one cannot marry a child, and therefore, uncircumcised girl/woman does not qualify for marriage (KNA.REP, outstanding committee on Human rights in Kenya, 1996). In line with that, the report showed that FC was (is) a period of training when one was socialized to the values of the community, educated on how to be a responsible wife and a good mother.

#### **4.22 The National Action for Elimination of FC of 1999**

A Human Right Activist interviewed noted that the president did not relent on his mission to outlaw FC in Kenya. A case in point was when he launched the National Action for Elimination of FC in 1999 (Human Right Activist, KII, 2016).

With such, there were reasons behind the perpetuation of the belief in the practice. For instance, that the husband of the uncircumcised wife will die, midwife helping during childbirth can go blind on seeing uncircumcised genitals and also that the baby born of an uncircumcised will be abnormal (KNA.REP,1999).

In 1999 the Ministry of Health launched the Ministry of Health launched a National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Female Circumcision in Kenya in 1999 detailing the government's commitment to ending the practice. This was after the report had shown that due FC practicing communities had begun to change their

techniques of carrying out FC. An old woman interviewed noted that there were tremendous changes at this time as the laws were being intensive; though much was still to be done owing to those who still practice FC in secret (woman, OI, 2016). Her remarks agreed with an archival source, which showed that the circumcisers were not only traditional circumcisers but there were also traditional birth attendants (TBA), and health professionals (KNA.REP, 1999).

#### **4.23 Anti-FC Act of 2001 and the children Act of 2002**

With such continued battles to end FC in Kenya, the president realized that more efforts ought to be channeled in the FC debates. In a speech making Independence Day in 2001, President Moi said that circumcision of girls below 17 years of age was punishable by at least a one-year jail term. He reassured young girls that the police were ready to protect them since the Parliament has passed a Children's Bill in the same year. This led to the first Anti-FC act in 2001. President Daniel *Arap* Moi issued two presidential decrees banning FC and prohibiting government-controlled hospitals and clinics from performing FC (FIDA, 2009).

This was followed in 2001 by the passing of the Children's Act (which came into force in 2002) which made FC illegal for girls under 18. A former government official noted that the penalties under the act for anyone subjecting a child to FC were 12 months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to fifty thousand shillings (approximately US\$600) (former Government official, KII, 2016). There were, however, few reported cases, and there was widespread criticism that the Act offered inadequate protection, did not apply to adult women, was poorly implemented and failed to curb FC (Feed the Minds, 2010). Concerning the effectiveness of the 2001 Act, FIDA found that communities (in Samburu and Garissa districts) were aware of

the law and the protection it afforded to children at risk. However, this led to FC being done more in secret to avoid prosecution. The cultural concerns and, in Muslim areas, religious beliefs had more weight than the fact that FC was now illegal. In addition, those entrusted to enforce the Act conspire with perpetrators to defeat the cause of justice (FIDA, 2009). As one of the respondents affirmed in a KII that the law makers have played a major role in FC resilience in Bomet county as the FC perpetrators have often been compromised at the expense of their votes in return.

While FC declined slightly in Kenya, statistics indicate that one out of four women was still being circumcised. This forced the government to introduce a more comprehensive law, the Prohibition of Female Circumcision (2011), which stipulates stiffer punishments for criminals. These include a three- to seven-year prison sentence or a fine of approximately US \$6,000 for FC perpetrators (Kirigo, 2016). In addition, a comprehensive National Policy for the Abandonment of FC was put established in 2010. The policy calls on stakeholders to take concrete steps to promote the elimination of FC through lawmaking, education to the public, advocacy, coverage through media platforms, women empowerment, and accessibility to reproductive health. These laws and policies are supported by the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, which reaffirms the government's pledge to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

#### **4.3 Government Acts on Female Circumcision (2003-2014)**

In 2002, there was a major landmark in the history of Kenyan politics. The NARC coalition took over the movement in Kenya after successful after 24 years of KANU reign. Mwai Kibaki became the president. An oral source indicated that President Kibaki was a staunch Catholic believer and had no different stand from that of his

predecessor (former politician, KII, 2016). In 2002, Kibaki's government established an Act that provided state protection to all victims and various ethnic groups among which FC was still prevalent. In December 2003, Kibaki's government yet signed another protocol called *Maputo* which was stipulated in Article 5 and stipulated that FC should be condemned and prohibited.

#### **4.31 African Women's Decade (2010-2020)**

The researcher noted that the women's year and the decade for women paved the way for the African women's decade. The objective of AWD Monitoring program is to hold African governments accountable to the commitments they made to gender equity in policy decisions in the context of the African Union's African Women's Decade. That is the reason why each African government is obliged to attain the goals of the African Women's Decade among which the health reproduction and prevention of HIV/AIDS are coined in (Nzomo, 1989). For female circumcision, the decade for women in Africa has made efforts through governments well as nongovernmental organizations to eradicate all practices that directly or indirectly hamper the proper wellbeing of an African woman. This has been evident in the reports that summarize the women status in each African women and the progress (Nzomo, 1989). This section is well discussed in the proceeding sections whereby the researcher though her findings give an insight of how African reacted to the colonial imperialism and how their reaction through various sector have led to the current status of not only an African woman but a Kipsigis woman for this matter.

This movement led to the Kibaki government taking a noteworthy initiative in realizing the objective of the African Women's Decade by 2020. To start with, the parliament passed the Anti-FC act in 2011 as discussed below.

#### **4.32 The Anti-FC Act of 2011**

Having a feeling of inadequacy, Kibaki's government continued with the push towards the eradication of FC. This owed to the previous criticisms that the first enactment did not cover adult women who were still facing FC through in the course of child delivery or seeking health services as well as those who still willingly wanted to undergo FC (former minister, KII, 2016). From such debates, the second anti-FC act was passed by parliament having been drafted by Kenya Women's Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) and signed into law in 2011.

Having established links with the international community, the act was supported by the Kenyan Parliamentary Council, the National FGM Secretariat, and the UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Program. This Act criminalized all forms of FGM performed on anyone, regardless of age or status, and banned the stigmatizing of a woman who had not undergone FC in an attempt to tackle social pressure. As noted by (retired major general, KII, 4/9/2016). It also made it illegal to aid someone in performing FC, taking them abroad to have the procedure done, failing to report to the authorities if the individual was aware it had taken place or carrying out FC on a Kenyan abroad. The punishment for this act was much more severe than the 2001 Act and can apply to a wider range of FC perpetrators (RMG, KII, 4/9/2016). The penalties include three-seven years' imprisonment or life imprisonment for causing death by performing FC and fines of nearly US\$6,000.

Under the National Policy for the Abandonment of FC, capacity-building of those responsible for upholding the new law took place. This was evident in 2011, when nearly 800 police officers, probation officers, community leaders and others were

trained to implement the new legislation (RMG, KII, 4/9/2016). However, an oral interview with a man at Kong'asismarket said that;

*Tumdois* still practiced in these remote areas where the Anti-FC campaigners have never reached since the enforcement. Very remote areas ought to be target places in such campaigns (Ant- FC campaigner, KII. 2/8/2016).

This claim is in line with the Human Right report (2011) which articulates that the new law was praised by NGOs and others opposed to FC. However FC continued to be practiced, particularly in rural areas (Human Rights Report, 2011).

In 2013, President Kibaki retired paving the way for the Jubilee Government under the leadership of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

#### **4.4 Uhuru Kenyatta and Female Circumcision (2013-2014)**

Just like his predecessor, President Uhuru Kenyatta exhibited his effort to continue the fight against female circumcision.

With his government, Women in Kenya have witnessed societal achievements in different altitudes. For instance, there are many campaigns against cultural practices that have been considered retrogressive act to women. These include female circumcision, domestic violence, which in many cases affects the women and children, sexual harassment and denied opportunity to an education. The Uhuru's government initiative to offer free education has made it possible for more girls to attend school and to have careers of their choice (McFerlane, 2014). Right from his manifesto, he president showed commitment to eradicate FC. This was articulated in his speech during the Global leader's meetings on gender equality and women empowerment on 29 Sept 2015. The president expressed that his government commits to the eradication of all harmful practices including FGM and child

marriages (McFerlane, 2014). He started by appointing members of the Kenyan Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Board.

#### **4.41 Kenyan Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Board in 2013**

In our effort to accelerate the abandonment of a handful of harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, Kilimo was appointed by President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya to head the Kenyan Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Board. The appointment was based on Hon. Dr. Kilimo's work in Kenya as she was fundamental for the fight on FGM, through her work in the field and at the political and legislative level. A former minister noted that she had been instrumental in heightening political will to address the issue, serving as an outstanding model for women, girls, and activists both in Kenya and internationally (former minister, KII, 2016). Her fight had made her a target, as when, during her 2002 electoral campaign for Marakwet East Constituency, she was challenged by her political opponents because she had not been circumcised and so was not fit to hold public office (Matharu, 2014).

#### **4.42 The Early Child Marriage Law in 2014**

Uhuru's regime made steps in enforcing the FGM and Early Child Marriage Law. By prohibiting early marriages, the government put a block to FC since most of the girls get married immediately after circumcision (Matharu, 2014). There have been measures to apply an integrated approach to towards stopping FC. A county administrator noted that rigorous campaigns informing teachers, health practitioners, law enforcement agencies as well as the general citizens of Kenya on their obligation to report cases and offer protection to any girl seeking refuge were set (County Administrator, KII, 2016). This led the researcher to seeking deeper into the matter by conducting an interview from other local administrators such as chiefs.

Another key informant interviewee noted that:

This has indeed proved to be working though not in totality. A case in point was in Sigor village where some girls had been rescued in the process of being circumcised at night. This was the courtesy of the sub-chief who has been vocal in the fight against FC (chief, KII, 2/9/2016).

The above statement is an indication that the county administrators had become vocal in the fight against FC in Bomet county.

#### **4.5 Major changes in FC among the Kipsigis to 2014**

FC being a cultural practice has never been fixed and as Robert (2009) asserts, no static culture has survived history. A culture which is inflexible in a globalized world is a culture on the verge of extinction. His sentiments could perhaps justify the persistent the current manifestation of FC among the Kipsigis with the ever changing attitudes, interpretation and expression (Robert, 2009). From an oral interview responses, eminent changes in FC have been exhibited in the current government's effort to curb it (O.I, 2/9.2016).

President Uhuru's regime was instrumental in partnering with international bodies that work to curb FC. For instance, in the 2015 World Day for Zero Tolerance to FGM, the UK Government, together with the United Nations Joint Program on FGM/C (UNFPA-UNICEF) recognized the achievements made by the Government of Kenya towards eradicating female genital mutilation. With such, the organization reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Kenyan government in its efforts to end FC within a generation. Such programs are active in Kenya and work closely with the government (Alvida, 2014).

The UN Joint Program works with local partners to deliver community education programs to highlight the issues around FGM and to advocate for 'Alternative Rites of Passage,' in which the girl experiences all the elements of the ceremony marking the transition to womanhood, but is not cut. This approach can be highly effective, as evidenced by declining rates of FC in Kenya (an FC influential woman, O.I, 2/9/2016). In this vein, the current regime understands that FC is a practice strongly tied to tribal and religious traditions. It is a community norm, a social contract that the entire tribe or village undertakes together. This is a principle factor to consider and understand.

Eliminating FC has therefore required the endorsement of the entire community, women, and men. Any national strategy must work on a community-by-community basis. This owes to the fact that there will be no 'one size fits all' solution, and the influencers will differ across communities (Turner and Chatterjee, 2014).

The continuity in a change of FC is as prompted by the freedom of media having been allowed to air FC documentaries. For instance, as quoted from the Standard Media publication on 6th February in 2015 "We must also be clear that it is possible for community traditions to be honored in ways that do not endanger the health, basic human rights, or even lives of the girls and women within that community." The aim of a national strategy will ultimately be not only to eliminate FC but in doing so to empower millions of Kenyan girls and women, enabling them to play a full and unhindered role in society (Turner and Chatterjee, 2014).

FC is at present honed in a few areas of Bomet County extending over the focal point of Bomet town; it is not found in Chepalungu locations such as Sigor, Kong'asis. Other regions are Konoin and a small portion of Sotik Sub County. The rest of Bomet

County accessibility of reliable figures on the pervasiveness of female circumcision has reduced incredibly as of now (Chief, O.I, 13/9/2016).

Initially, the FC processes took three to twelve months including seclusion, however, has reduced to one month. This event was typically performed in month of December after school breaks (Fish & Fish, 1979). Before initiates, the girl has to be granted blessing; and permission from the material order and parents. During the initial years in Kenya, girls were initiated at *TulwopKwony* (Koech, 1974).

The government has made it lawful that FC is a criminal act. What was initially a noble cultural practice is now perceived to be a crime, barbaric and human rights violation. FC has taken another shape so diverse from the original picture. Today, the practice is being carried out secretly without communal knowledge. Today those who still conduct it do not hold ceremonies and rituals the way they were done initially.

A chief of Sigor Location of Chepalungu Sub County notes:

Apparently, it is difficult to know that the practice has taken place. Those who do it consider doing it secretly; they fear being noticed by the administrators (chief, KII, 7/9/2016).

Another assistant chief asserts that:

They no longer conduct the rituals they used to perform in the past. They no longer wear the special clothes nor do they carry the cow whisky and the whistles as they traditionally did. They know that such dress code could easily attract the attention of the public thus, their intentions are known (assistant chief, KII, 28/8/2016).

The above sentiments are an indication that the rituals and practices that were associated with FC are no longer done due to the secretive nature that that practice has taken. Respondents assert that the age of circumcision has changed. Initially, FC was performed on girls aged 12-19 years. As noted by respondents, currently FC is even done on married women who already have children. Young girls of age 14 or

fewer years are becoming a target of FC. For instance, among those rescued from seclusion hideouts in Bomet in December 2016, were four married women, and two young girls aged 12 and 14 years. The young girls had just finished their K.C.P.E examinations. Most of the married women are circumcised either voluntarily or forcefully during child delivery. A Kipsigis journalist notes that:

Today, FC has become a collaboration business between birth attendants and village elderly women and husbands. Those not circumcised are cut during child delivery either with their consent or without (Bomet-based journalist, KII, 10/92016).

Normally, girls spent 12 or more months in seclusion whereas nowadays, the period it lasts for only a month. This is due to the Kenyan education system having a three months session of school followed by one of vacation. Another change is evident in the way the Kenyan government regulate the cultural practices whereby it neither permits circumcision camps to be held before schools close for vacation nor be extended beyond vacation period (Burnette, 1979).

Furthermore, the period and time of circumcision have changed too. Customarily, the practice was carried out during the December holidays as they were the longest school breaks of the year. The candidates were circumcised very early in the morning when the weather was still cold to avoid much pain and bleeding. Today, however, FC is conducted at any given convenient time of the year and mostly at night. The above act is a way to conceal the FC Act.

Oppression has as well changed, initially; those who were not circumcised were regarded as children and outcasts. They could not get married. Contrastingly, in the contemporary Kipsigis community, those not circumcised are valued. Unmarried

Kipsigis men interrogated preferred marrying uncircumcised women. They say in chorus:

Those are educated and enlightened. They are active in bed (Kipsigis unmarried men, O.I 7/9/2016).

This shows the changes that have manifested over time in as far as FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet is a concern. The victimization can be evident among the unmarried men who prefer marrying uncircumcised women with the claim that they want their wives to enjoy sexual pleasures just as the men do.

The value and meaning associated with FC have tremendously changed over time since the coming of the colonial masters who introduced Christianity. The first significance of the word "circumcision" among the Kipsigis was to cut off or cut away. This meant cutting off the foreskin in boys and clitoris among girls. However, with the introduction of religious doctrines by the colonial masters, the meaning has changed to be spiritually symbolic. Apparently, FC means to cut away all that is unChristlike. In Deuteronomy 10:15, 16 God said to Moses, "Yet the Lord set his affection on your forefathers (Fish and Fish, 1979). This is the reason that most of them advocate embracing the Alternative Rite of Passage other than cutting of the clitoris (Mohammed, 2009).

In addition, the ordeal those women underwent while partaking FC was severe (Chesere, 2010). The cut was done without any aesthetics; some bled to death. The above risk explains why FC is a violation of human rights according to activists. Another reason posed by activists against FC is that many of those cut do not continue with their education. Instead, they are married off leading to early marriages

(Baumgardner, 2014). They say the above reasons leave women financially dependent on their husbands thus amplifying poverty in the society.

A circumcised woman asserts that:

*Yateet ab tibiik* was so painful but it was mandatory to all women failure to which the woman would be disowned from the community. However, I am now happy that the education and the government are working conjointly to help curb the practice. In fact, if I were not circumcised by now, I would never be (circumcised woman, KII 1/9/2016).

Again, seclusion has turned out to be a hideout. Traditionally, the seclusion house was known and those circumcised could be paid visits. However, today, this is not the case. Only the family members of the initiates know about the seclusion place (Burnette, Fish & Fish, 1979). In addition, traditionally, the circumcision knife was shared among all the initiates. The above was a symbol of unity and cooperation among them. However, today, each candidate is circumcised using her own new razor blade. The above is due to the HIV/ AIDS and related infections threats transmitted through blood.

#### **4.6 Alternative Rites of Passage (ARPs)**

For the Kipsigis where FC is part of a rite of passage initiating girls into adulthood, one approach that has shown some success is the Alternative Rites of Passage (ARPs). ARPs substitute the cutting part of the ceremonies with alternative rituals that preserve the cultural traditions while eliminating the cutting (Saarinen, 2007). A religiously oriented approach refers to strategies which demonstrate that FC is not compatible with the religion of a community and thereby lead to a change of attitude and behavior (AIC pastor, KII, 2016). ARPs have been implemented with varying degrees of success. The success of APRs depends on the community practicing FC as

part of a community ritual such as a rite of passage (Saarinen, 2007). The Kipsigis embrace the ARP since they still feel the teachings offered during FC are still valuable in the contemporary world.

The new rite is known as *Tumndab ngalek* or 'Circumcision Through Words'(Village Elder, KII, 24/8/2016). It uses a week-long program of counseling, capped by community celebration and affirmation, in place of the widely criticized practice also known as female genital mutilation (FGM).(Reaves, 1997).

The first 'Circumcision Through Words' occurred in August 1996, when 30 families in the tiny village of Gatunga, not far from Mount Kenya, ushered their daughters through the new program (Reaves, 1997). This ARP has spread out of collaborations between rural families and the Kenyan national women's group, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO), which is committed to ending FGM in Kenya (teacher, O.I,6/9/2016).

It has followed years of research and discussion with villagers especially in Kalenjin land in which Bomet was a target by MYWO field workers with the close cooperation of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), a nonprofit, nongovernmental, international organization which seeks to improve the health of women and children. Headquartered in Seattle, PATH has served as a technical facilitator for MYWO's FGM program, providing the methodologies and other inputs to help carry it forward. The Seattle, PATH who are the proponents of the new rite has since incorporated and are seeking support from international donors in order to continue and expand their efforts. Indeed, it was such broad-based cooperation that led to the effort's creation in the first place.

Owing to the fact that female circumcision covers more than the practice itself. It is often a deeply entrenched in the culture of the Kipsigis, wrapped in a complex shroud of assumptions, taboos, and beliefs that impact a woman's social status and personal identity (Saltman, 1977).

It is from the above understanding that we established that the central defining achievement of Circumcision Through Words as an ARP is not that it saves girls and women from the dangers of FC but that it captures the cultural connotation of female circumcision while doing away with the dangerous practice itself.

Upon conducting a subsequent key informant interview, another chief noted:

Circumcision through words (ARP) brings the young candidates together for a week of seclusion during which they learn traditional teachings about their upcoming roles as women, parents, and adults in the community. During this time, initiates learn more about modern messages about personal health, reproductive issues, hygiene, communications skills, self-esteem, and dealing with peer pressure (Chief, KII, /15/9/2016).

To ascertain the rituals that are still valued, another elderly man asserted that:

The period is capped by a community celebration of song, dancing, and feasting which affirms the girls and their new place in the community (elderly man, KII, 2016).

Indeed, after witnessing the community's response to the first celebration, MYWO Chair Zipporah Kittony said she was "overjoyed" and believed it was a critical achievement in their efforts to eradicate FC (Reaves, 1997).

In addition, ARPs proved to have limited impact unless they are accompanied by education which engages the whole community in collective reflection and leads to changes in the expectations of community members. Initiatives which involve only girls who are at risk of FC rather than the entire community did not change the social

norm and the community continued to practice FC (Population Council, 2007). These findings are also supported by research by UNICEF (UNICEF, 2010). ARP camps had been used in addition to girls' empowerment programs and intensive community awareness encouraging the local community to accept the ARP as an alternative to FGM (Feed the Minds, 2010).

Alternative rites of passage have been embraced in Bomet County. As it has been observed in other regions, methods of instructions have become instruments that have replaced the actual FC.

One ARP graduate noted that:

During our visit, the twenty of us happened to be taken to a church conference. We were taught biblical teachings of how God commanded Abraham to circumcise all his male descendants. This enlightened us that girls are not supposed to be circumcised as even biblical teachings do not advocate for such. Other teachings entailed being well-behaved women in the society, body hygiene, and decent behavior towards men. Reproductive teachings were also incorporated; they entailed things such as preserving virginity till marriage, effects of abortion and early marriages (ARP graduate, KII, 4/9/2016).

From a number of cases reported, they indicate a continued implementation of alternative rite of passage in Bomet County. The introduction of alternative rite of passage for girls other than FC has shown a significant change in the practice of FC.

As heard from another ARP graduate:

We enjoyed the new ceremony because it does not inflict pain or rather interfere with our health and education. It is not ruthless as it used to be done on others. Girls aged between of 9 and 12 are given beads and clothes as a sign of rite of passage to maturity. The girls spend a day and a night at the camp where the class is held, dancing and singing traditional songs about the role of women in the community (ARP graduate, 4/9/2016).

Regarding the Kipsigis, it can be said that the community is apparently emulating other the alternative rite of passage while preserving valuable teachings to the

initiates. For instance, the girls are encouraged to continue with their studies and get married at the right time. Upon completion, members of the community are invited to come to the ceremony and celebrate with girls who have undergone an alternative rite of passage.

#### **4.7 The changing trends in FC among the Kipsigis to 2014**

The major focus of this study was to examine the evolving of trends that FC has undergone over time. However, to a historian, it will be more vital to examine the factor that informed the trends in the foregoing chapters.

##### **4.71 Western Education**

Justifiably, girls' education in England shaped attitudes about female education in Africa and so in Kenya. In England, girls were seen as a power for social and moral progress. The reason for their education was for 'the benefit of the African community (Hurst, 2011).

Religious organizations ingrained a 'profound feeling of equity' that drove girls 'to embrace work for their less fortunate neighbor.' In this manner, because the education of English girls was connected to the enlightening mission and the part of women as social improvers, the education of African girls and women was accepted to be an important primary step for the social change of native people, particularly indigenous women. Rathbone, among others, trusted that the status of ladies gave a pointer of the level of human progress of a nation or individuals. Local society just could advance overall, as British society had, through the education of girls (Pittman, 2010).

The conviction that education would remedy saw social shades of malice of FC was additionally compelling during the late nineteenth-century crusade to end sati (FC) in

India (Hurst, 2011). Firstly, the war against FC has been influential to the dynamic nature of the practice. The war has taken the form of legal action, awareness, campaigns, and rescuing those to be circumcised. What was traditionally a valued cultural practice among the Kipsigis of Bomet County is now termed an evil as well as human rights violation act. FC used to bring people together to celebrate but is now a cause of conflict between the Pro FC and the Anti FC divides. The western education has led to decrease in FC woman, O.I, 25/8/2016).

This was as well echoed by chief who asserted that:

In my location, 75% of women have not been circumcised, and there has been no record of FC in the last two years (chief, KII, 5/9/, 2016).

The above is an indication that FC is drastically reducing in Bomet County in Sigor, Nyangores, and Konga'asis regions. The school going girls upon being orally interviewed boldly said no to FC. For instance, one uncircumcised girl said:

I would rather be called an outsider than being circumcised. Other girls from communities that do not practice FC live normally. I do not see the essence of a girl being forced to undergo such a painful ordeal (girl, O.I, 6/9/2016)

Education is another one chief stride that has led to changes in FC. With the introduction of formal education in Kenya, the demand and the desire for white-collar jobs have increased.

Formal education came with enlightenment and aspects of equality. Women who had an opportunity to education tasted its fruits and noted that they have become economically independent. Educated women easily learned their rights, and that is why they had to break away from the private sphere yolk. For instance, apparently, many of the women Kipsigis know that they have a right on what to do with their bodies. Therefore, it is legally right for them to reject circumcision as it is their right

to do so. This is as well backed up with reasons that through education, many have come to realize that female circumcision deprives women of their sexual satisfaction, hence leading to promiscuity in marriages.

According to another teacher responded:

The school, or rather education, has played a significant role in the eradication of FC in Bomet County. It came out clearly that through schooling, the number of girls undergoing FC had declined since the school empowered the girl and enlightened them on the adverse effects of FC. Through school enrolment, most girls have learned to say no to FC (female primary school teacher, KII, 6 /9/ 2016).

Her colleague from a nearby school said:

None of my daughters has been subjected to FC since I know the dangers associated with it (female high school teacher, O.I, 6/9/ 2016).

From this interview, the researcher established that the school, therefore, was acting as an agent of change in as far as FC was a concern in Bomet County. Several girls interviewed said they would not be circumcised as they want to pursue their education. This is an indication that the increased value attached to education is almost outweighing the FC values in Bomet County. Enlightened women became critical of FC cultural practices and its significance. They noted that the practice did more harm than good, thus stood to oppose it. It is through education that women learned that FC was just favoring men at their expense.

Another oral interview respondent articulated that:

FC barred a girl child from participating in education. I remember I was being forced to be circumcised in order to be married off for my family to get dowry as my family was poor. I escaped and was rescued by our Chief who financed my education, and now I am a high school teacher and am happy that I am helping my family financially. I am very sure that if I had been married off, I would not be in position to lend a helping hand to my now elderly parents (Kipsigis women group member, KII, 6/9/2016).

To achieve a universal declaration of education for all, regardless of gender FC had to be fought. The girl child had to get an education to attain the Millennium development Goals (MDG). Kenya being a signatory to International Conventions, she had to ensure that “education for all” policy had to be implemented. The above could be achieved through among many others fighting all aspects that could limit a girl child from education and FC was inclusive. Educated women are considered more powerful and helpful to the society. Most respondents cherish their daughters to get a good education. A girl child who is educated is prestigious and valuable since dowry payment is more on the educated girls than those uneducated (woman respondent, O.I 7/9, 2016). With such demands for a girl child education, it becomes difficult to force an enlightened girl to be circumcised. Girls’ boarding schools have also helped to reduce FC coupled with early marriages. The opportunity for education implied that girls could learn profitable aptitudes, for example, nursing, educating and homemaking. Accordingly, a girl's personality was no more fundamentally fixed to her initiation age group. She had choices for another social group in which to have a place. Similarly, education gave room for alternative rites of passage hence, initiation without being cut (Pittman, 2010).

#### **4.72 Christian legacy of missionaries**

These European belief systems grasped the nineteenth a patriarchal society that viewed women's parts as responsible for family undertakings, to deal with home and to bear and bring up kids. Subsequently, the cooperation between the African customary male strength observation and the European patriarchal recognition that was showed in its approaches led to the persistent subordination of the Kipsigis women (Murray, 1974). Christianity has immensely informed the changes in FC.

Christian churches have been in the forefront in the fight against the practice. According to Christianity, it is only men who are supposed to be circumcised (Murray, 1974). The above is delivered from the biblical stories whereby Abraham was instructed to all males in his household. Christians argue that Sarah and Hagar were not circumcised. Thus, FC is evil and ungodly.

To an extent, Christian teachings have led to alternative female initiation, which does not entail Genital Cutting. Girls are held in one station in conferences for about a month during the December holidays and are given instructions on adult life. The teachings are holistic in nature, unlike the traditional seclusion that comprised of instructions on the marital obligations of a wife. All though the church has played a principle role in discouraging FC practice among the Kipsigis community, it was found that most of the church elders are apparently holding meetings with their church members and enlighten them on the importance of abandoning the practice. The Bomet County churches therefore stood against FC and on the forefront were the African Gospel and African Inland Churches, followed by other denominations such as the Roman Catholic. Some church elders interviewed had similar opinions on the fight against FC in Bomet. It was established that the perspective or rather the values that were traditionally attached to FC had been transformed to be unethical or rather immoral behaviors on women. This argument was also backed with the biblical teachings advocating for only male circumcision. Therefore, those who practice FC have been regarded to be immoral people unlike in the past when the uncircumcised women were the ones referred to as immoral women in the Kipsigis community.

Another woman, an AIC church leader, responded:

Many of us Christians believe that circumcision is against our religious teachings that only permit the male to be circumcised. This is

written in the Bible whereby Abraham was to circumcise all his male descendants, and the Bible does not mention any female who was circumcised. However, most that still practice FC are not Christians, in fact. A good number of them are pagans, and some are in the traditional churches that are still in existence (AIC church leader O.I, 8/9/2016)

This shows how Christianity that came with colonialism has influenced the way people among the Kipsigis view female circumcision. In addition, the vanishing African independent churches have contributed to the transformation in FC among the Kipsigis. Unlike before, whereby the AIC conserved FC as part and parcel of their culture and therefore the church could not interfere with this vital practice. The newly introduced churches by the missionaries have made a step in advocating for the alternative FC practices other than physical FC. Most of the respondents seemed to have an idea of the existence there of the alternative rites of passage. This, therefore, meant that there is an impact of the interventions being made only that much more efforts are need terms of interventions and awareness to those areas that FC is still being experienced.

A county administrator at Chepalungu remarked that:

Last month a group of girls who had finished their class eight were rescued and were taken to a church. The churches are serving as rescue places hence playing a part in the current changes that are being made as far as FC is a concern. They are simply given instructions based on the values of the society while at the same time teaching them the importance of education to their lives (secretary to DCC, 6/9/2016).

The two weeks church seclusion acts as the rite's (circumcision's) simulation. It gathers together willing young girls for a two week in seclusion (camp) where they get traditional instructions about their future roles as women, parents, and adults in the Kipsigis community. This practice is comparatively a traditional ritual, except that there is no physical cutting of the genitals (Chege, 2001). During the Seclusion,

the Kipsigis girls remain indoors and can only be visited by previous initiates who may have undergone the very original or the simulated one. These include female relatives' parents, neighbors, and friends. A woman who is either an aunt or a friend is assigned the role of a supporter or "godmother." She ensures that the girl gets and understands family life teaching. The two week's ceremony ends with a "graduation" on a chosen day of "coming of age," where religious, political and government leaders are invited to give discourses (Chege, 2001).

During such a ceremony, the girls appeal to their elders to cease circumcision and let them complete their education after which they would decide whether to be circumcised or not. They protest through the market centers, where they dance and sing traditional songs that urge their mothers not give them out for marriage (Chege, 2001). The first ever FC through Alternative means of rites of passage ensued in 1996, when 30 families from Gatunga village in Tharaka, about 200 miles east of Nairobi, initiated their daughters through words. Since then, the alternative rite has been progressively performed among the Kalenjin's of the Rift Valley and the Kipsigis for that matter.

#### **4.73 Legislative Approaches to end FC**

According to studies, the Kenyan legislature's outlawed female genital mutilation partially in 2001 and then completely in 2011, reducing substantially the number of the procedures performed recently. For instance, (U.N. report, 1998), indicates that 38 percent of Kenyan women aged 15-49 has experienced Female circumcision. However, by 2008 the percentage dropped to 26 percent partly due to awareness campaigns and alternative ceremonies. As noted in the above discussions, in spite of a few observed practices of FC, the practice is on the verge of disappearing only if

more efforts will be channeled towards helping the administrators to arrest and fine the culprits, increasing the number of rescue centers as well as more awareness to the local communities.

Female circumcision has been criminalized in Kenya (Chief, 26/8/2016). Those arrested are detained or fined. Reporting on the most recent case in his location some chief notes that:

The woman was arrested and fined Ksh. 6000, 000 or nine years in prison. She could not raise the money. Thus she has to serve nine years behind bars. This has created fear all over, nobody will want to be arrested, and the only option is to do away with FC (Senior Chief: KII, 6/9/2016).

Accordingly, the war against FC coupled with government legal actions and non-governmental organizations have led to the reducing prevalence of FC. Although legislation theoretically offers protection for girls and women and a deterrent to families and circumcisers, it can be difficult to enforce and does not in itself change beliefs and behavior (Population Council, 2007). It is most effective when accompanied by awareness-raising and community dialogue.

If anti-FGM laws are introduced before society it changes its attitudes and beliefs or is not accompanied by the requisite social support. In this regard, it may drive the practice underground, encourage people to cross the border to undergo FGM in a neighboring country (UNICEF, 2005) and prevent people seeking medical treatment for health complications (WHO, 1999 quoted by Population Council, 2007). The legal approach in Sigor has proved to work especially in regions where the community members are well sensitized. Ineffectiveness has however been in cases

whereby those who want to do it and fear of being caught prefer doing it from the Maasai neighbors who still have strongholds in FC (Chief, KII.9/9/2016).

#### **4.74 Existing Kenyan based Anti-FC campaigns to 2014**

There directly related campaigns to FC in Bomet County are assessed as follows;

##### **Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Campaign**

Kenya having gained independence by the end of 1963 and most other African countries, the spirit of freedom and protection of human rights was all over the continent. By 1985, several nations were moving towards globalization and modernity. Education was regarded a valuable aspect of human life. In the same year 1985, Switzerland declared FC a violation of human rights. Feminism also took center stage in Africa and Kenya was not an exception with the establishment of Maendeleo ya Wanawake which had been established and officially registered in 1952. Accordingly, the war and campaigns against FC started and these campaigns affected FC immensely (Schmidt, 2005).

The independence period brought about many changes to the practice of female circumcision as it can be noted from one of the respondent's sentiments:

The colonial masters had a negative attitude towards *yaatet ab tibiik* (female circumcision), they only treasured and advocated for *Ng'etiik* (male circumcision). This made us shy away from carrying out the practice openly. Besides, the rituals that surrounded the *yaatet ab tibiik* were discarded as they could easily be noted through such (priest, KII, 5/9/ 2016).

As discussed in the preceding paragraph, FC was declared a violation of human rights by Switzerland in 1985. This wave of women liberation diffused and spread to

Africa and eventually Kenya. The human rights activists, non-governmental organizations, and feminists have been on the forefront in the campaign against FC. FC has indeed been declared inhuman by the government. It is relevant to note that by 1940s, the AMC had started condemning FC. FC is regarded to be limiting the woman sexual pleasure. It denies them an opportunity to enjoy sex to their fullest. As already discussed in Chapter 2, FC was mainly proposed by Kipsigis men to reduce sexuality of their wives. In so doing, they ensured that their wives remained faithful to them. Moreover, using FC as a way to ensure virginity is injustice and discrimination against women. The above is so because at no point did the boys underwent through virginity test. For these two reasons that activist against FC regard the practice as perpetuating inequality in the society (Schimidt, 2005). We gave insight to the work of Kenyan women's activist. One notable one was Helen Tapelei Rotich that featured on YouTube clips discussing her own circumcision. She is according to most respondents an example of a Kipsigis woman taking innovative as well as "homegrown" approaches to eliminating the practice of FC. For over a decade, she has used secret networks of women who were formerly paid to perform female circumcisions and male community leaders to make extraordinary headway in the battle against FC in her Kipsigis community in Bomet County.

Even after being married against her will, Helen did not give up. She continued to get training with an eye to helping her community, including training in counseling psychology to help girls she saw around her who had been traumatized by FC. In 2001 quitted her job and decided to start being an activist in relation to FC in Bomet (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008). Research findings indicate that in coordination with the Women's Federation for World Peace and the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake

Organization, women rights activists have made steps ever since the beginning of the Anti-Feminine Genital Mutilation program, which targeted male leaders, women circumcisers, and youth. Apart from that, as Komma (1984) asserts, the women have in the post independent Kenya tried to self-help themselves through establishing organizations that enable them, they air their grievances as well as the sort to enlighten each other. For instance, the self-help association movement of the Kipsigis has been on the forefront to enlighten their fellow women to embrace the ARP (woman, KII, 21/8/2016). From her utterances, Helen says that female genital cutting has significantly declined among the Kipsigis community of Bomet, though there is the ongoing challenge that the neighboring communities still practice FC as they are surrounded by two different Maasai communities, in Narok and Transmara (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008).

### **Longisa Beacon of Hope Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) campaign**

In Bomet County, various areas have initiated campaigns against the practice. One of the existing campaigns is Longisa Beacon of Hope Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) campaign. Longisa Beacon of Hope is a community-based organization that leads in the fight against female circumcision in Bomet County. The campaign is spearheaded by Linah Jebii Kilimo having witnessed that practice is rampant in the lower regions of the county. According to Jebii (2016), FC has led to a steady decline in the enrollment of the girls in schools, especially in the upper classes. The high out rate has hindered the girls from realizing their full potential in life which is made achievable through education and development of career. The practice has also led to an increased number of young mothers as the girls get married off immediately after undergoing FC. The group undertakes the campaign through visits to schools,

churches, and even political forums. The campaign funds are meant to enable reach and empower the girl child with facts myths and misconceptions related to FC (Jebii, 2016).

Previously in 2014, the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation national board chairperson Linah Jebii Kilimo presided over the launch of the campaign against FC in Bomet County in 2014. Kilimo was accompanied by Bomet Woman Representative Cecilia Ngetich and former Bomet Member of Parliament Mrs. Beatrice Kones.

As quoted from Jebii Kilimo:

“The government will not tolerate the retrogressive culture saying the similar campaigns launched in Bomet County will be launched in other counties with FC prevalence. The government has declared zero tolerance on FC saying the adverse effect of the cultures was huge” (Minutes during her visit to Bomet in November 2015).

The sentiments of Hon Jebii have always been recalled by Bomet county people. Having undergone training to become a nurse, Cheserem (2010) realized that the young girls and the circumcisers lacked knowledge of the outcomes and the side effects of Female Circumcision on and therefore thought of finding an alternative way that will substitute these harmful cultural practices. There need to be a change in perception and assumption that Female.

According to WHO (1997), the months that traditionally rites are likely to occur are chosen to stage the alternative rite. Tharaka Women's Welfare Program (TWWP) has saved more than 2,400 girls from undergoing FGM, and since partnering with Women's Global in 2007 has saved an additional 260 girls through the Circumcision with Words ceremony (Hernlund, 2000). Formal education has tremendously helped change the perception of female circumcision. Many women are now educated, employed and parenting (Hernlund, 2000). The educated groups have spearheaded

campaigns against female circumcision. They too have not only taught how to combat poverty by educating girls and female empowerment but, have also served as best examples in the communities. Notably, they have made a difference between their families and those whose women (wives) are serving as housewives who yielded to tradition in their youthful past (Adams, Kelly and Paula, 2005).

Victimization of those not circumcised has led to the changes in the age and period of FC. As previously noted, FC is now done on even married women who have children. In some families where FC is still embraced, those uncircumcised are seen as incomplete. Their husbands and relatives regard them as incomplete. In the course of interacting with the respondents one woman articulated that:

I never went through FC as a girl until when I was married with two girls. My husband started behaving funny as he complained that my food stinks like that of a girl. The psychological torture of my food being regarded as undercooked forced me to undergo the cut at the age of 34 years (Circumcised woman, KII, 7/9/ 2016).

Another one circumcised woman responded:

My fellow village women always regarded me as incomplete. Whenever I joined them, they could laugh and halt their conversation. They could claim, “*mamalat got*” (one house is not well smeared). I never used to understand this until one of them told me that I was not cut; thus, I was incomplete. This torture forced me to accept to be circumcised at the age of 29 (circumcised woman, KII. 8/9/2016).

This is an indication that although declining on the young girls, FC is on the rise on married women in Bomet county. Victimization has also been evident in the way the cases of divorce involve many circumcised Kipsigis women who feel dissatisfied with sexual pleasures. Such grave misfortunes are changing the way the FC is lately being practiced with many opting to adopt the alternative rite of passage other than FC (Hayford. 2005).

This Social change within the Kipsigis community has been enhanced by activities at national level and across national borders. At the community level, activities at the national level have proved to promote a process of social change that has led to a shared decision to end FC. Activities have engaged religious and government leaders, parliamentarians and civil society organizations and to some extent some traditional circumcisers who have now been converted to agents of change to alternative rites of passage with their slogan “rituals without a genital cut.”

Another factor of change is the progress that has been achieved on a number of fronts. In essence, FC is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights; a global goal to end the practice has been set by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UN General Assembly, 2002); policies and legislation to forbid the practice have been put in place in many countries including Kenya.

While FC has over time been seen by many men as a ‘women’s issue’, people have been influential in this change. Research has shown that some men are concerned by the effects of FC and would prefer to marry women who have not undergone the procedure (Almroth et al., 2001; Herieka and Dhar, 2003; Draege, 2007). Young men, in particular, are more likely to oppose the practice (Herieka and Dhar, 2003; Draege, 2007).

#### **4.75 Community Interactions in Changing FC among the Kipsigis.**

Among some populations such as the Meru and the Gikuyu where FC is traditionally accompanied by a ‘coming of age’ ritual, alternative rituals that reinforce the traditional positive values but without female genital cutting, have been pursued. Such approaches have added new elements in the rituals, including education on human rights and sexual and reproductive health issues among the Kipsigis of Bomet

County. Alternative rites have been found to be effective to the extent that they foster a process of social change by engaging the community at large, as well as girls, in activities that lead to changing beliefs about FC (Chege, 2001).

The only places where traditional FC rituals are still adamant are those neighboring the Maasai who traditionally carry out FC as it is difficult for one community to abandon the practice if those around it continue. Activities at community level therefore must include an explicit strategy for spreading the decision to abandon the practice throughout the practicing population.

In light of the above sentiments, it can be eluded that victimization of the uncircumcised Kipsigis women has led them to forcefully undergo the practice. HIV/AIDS and related infections have also led to each initiate to be circumcised using her on razor. Traditionally only one knife was used for all the initiates (Draege, 2007). The above was because threats of HIV/AIDS had not penetrated the country and so was Bomet. However, traces of FC still exist but in secretive nature. While the age of FC has also changed, the rituals and celebrations that accompanied the practice rarely perfumed (elderly man, KII.29/8/2016).

#### **4.76 Media Influence on FC**

The media has also played a crucial role both in bringing correct information to households and in informing the Kipsigis people about positive social change (Alternative Rites of Passage) that is taking place in other communities (Hayford, 2005). This is particularly important when discussion of FC is considered banned. Information activities have widely targeted local needs and concerns as well as provided information on a wide range of matters, such as human rights as well as child and women's rights, facts on female sexual organs and functions and

consequences of FC, and the ways in which individuals and communities can combat FC.

In a 2011 report by the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Program on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting discussed their third goal concerning media campaigns and other forms of communication to spread the message of ending FGM. As a participating country, Kenya reportedly had 122 radio and/or TV programs covering FC. The Joint Program continues to support the Kenya Media Network on Population and Development (KEMEP) to develop media reporting of the campaign to end FC. Across most participating African countries, the use of press, television, radio, film, and social media is vital to educating the public on the dangers of FGM and increasing awareness of abandonment campaigns (UNFPA/UNICEF, 2011). In Kenya, radio was ranked as the second highest source of anti-FC messages (Chege et al., 2004).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter looked at the continuity in changes in FC in Bomet County. This was coupled with discussions on the four regimes that have in one way or another contributed to the current manifestation of FC.

It was noted that FC had undergone tremendous changes over time. The findings indicate that there were serious debates and Campaigns against FC during Moi's regime. What followed in the next decades were the enactment of several policies, and laws and the establishment of boards of Right human protection.

Additionally, the findings showed that the campaigns intensified during Kibaki's regime through up to Uhuru's government. Significant changes were witnessed in the

age of initiation that reduced; seclusion became the hiding place and the tools used and songs and rituals fading away.

Furthermore, the introduction of alternative rites of passage was seen to be a major landmark in FC among the Kipsigis. The factors informing these changes include anti-FC campaigns, Western education, and Christianity.

From the findings, we deduced that FC might become extinct if ARP is intensified and stringent laws on the practice executed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter offers a brief summary of the key findings of the study, the conclusions derived from the research as well as the recommendations suggested by the researcher. The summary given here covers the preceding chapter, and the conclusions are given relative to the study premises drawn from chapter one. Having felt that there exist areas that are not adequately investigated, we recommended them for further research.

#### 5.1 Summary

This study sought to examine the transformations in female circumcision among the Kipsigis of Bomet County in the period 1945- 2014. In the background, the study focused on the practice among different communities worldwide. It then narrowed down to address the practice among the Kalenjin in which the Kipsigis are part. In so doing, it looked at the various communities that practices and still practice FC from a global perspective and then narrowed down to the continental level and then country level hence arriving at the practice in Bomet County.

The County was chosen because it borders the Kipsigis and Maasai where FC activities have been greatly felt. The research was conceived on the basis of the oral interviews and focus group discussions with the respondents.

In chapter one, the background upon which this study was contextualized was discussed. The study focused on the transformation in FC among the Kipsigis of

Bomet County. Bomet County was significant because the region has reported several cases of FC and the place houses the Kipsigis people who were the target of the study.

Chapter one of this work presented the background to the study that contextualized the problem that the study fills. The objectives, as well as the questions and premises that guided the study, are highlighted. The scope and limitations of the study were discussed; these were followed by the justification and significance of the study. The chapter also provides an in-depth literature review that identified the numerous gaps that are filled by the study. The theoretical outline and research methodology applied in this study are discussed in the same chapter.

Chapter two handled the significance of FC among the Kipsigis of Bomet County. It was established that FC emanated from the infidelity of the Kipsigis women thus the practice was introduced to function as a punishment and to reduce their sexual desires. In addition, the practice was found to increase the chances of one's marriage, and it as well marked the transition from girlhood to adulthood or rather girlhood to womanhood.

The various preparation and rituals conducted to usher in practice were given a due discourse. It was established that both psychological and physical preparations were done to the initiates before the actual cutting. The chapter also pinpoints that the practice was communal, collaborative and gender specific. It was noted that circumcisers had no any formal training but had a divine call from the spirits and gods. Uncircumcised women were regarded as children, incomplete and songs were the song to haunt them until they could accept to be circumcised.

Chapter Three discusses the impact of colonialism with particular emphasis on the role of Christianity on FC. It was established that Europeans regarded African cultures to be primitive and barbaric. However, the colonial government did not commit itself to ban FC until 1950s. As early as the 1920s, the Christian missionaries led by the Scotland Church had started preaching against FC. While other communities of Kenya formed African independent churches and movements against the ban, in Bomet, the situation remained dominated by the Christian missionary activities. The emancipation of the white women also intensified the war against the practice in the 1930s. By 1950, the colonial government declared FC illegal with a number of people being arrested for undertaking the practice.

In Chapter Four, the trends in FC are discussed in detail. It was noted that how FC was done traditionally is not the same way it is conducted today. Changes have taken place in terms of age and season that FC is carried out. The rituals are no longer performed, and neither are the celebrations. What initially used to be carried out openly and communally has turned to be secretive. Again, victimization has shifted from the uncircumcised to the circumcised women.

The factors informing the changes in FC were discussed. It was established that the war against FC has been critical in the changing nature of the practice as it can be evident in the reduced number of those who are circumcised. The war against FC has declared the practice a violation of human rights and a criminal act. All the above is on health effects associated with FC such as loss of life due to the practice related complication like excessive bleeding, disease transmission, and childbirth complications. According to Human rights activists, FC ought not to curtail women

sexual desires. They require meeting their sexual rights equally as men. Chapter Five provides conclusion and recommendations based on the study findings.

### **Conclusion**

The first chapter provided the background upon which the study was established. The chapter discussed FC from a global perspective narrowing it down to regional and finally national level. The chapter helped identify gaps from the existing related literatures. The chapter also offered the theories that best explain the study in terms of FC, change and the current manifestation. The chapter also guided the researcher with the preferred research methodology.

The second chapter helped achieve the first objective of the study. The findings indicated the significance of FC among the Kipsigis prior to 1945. They also demonstrated the changed perceptions on the relevance of the practice citing various reasons for their changed attitudes towards FC as the coming of presence of colonialists in the region.

The second chapter gave insight into the second chapter on the role of Christianity on FC. The research findings achieved the second objectives on Christianity and FC. From the findings, Christianity played a major role on the current manifestation of FC in Bomet County. For instance, it was noted that the African Gospel Mission and African Inland Mission in the region influenced the conversion of the Kipsigis into their western negative perception on FC. More than half of the population of the being Christians, the Kipsigis apparently devalue FC.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The importance of this study is to give an insight into the FC practice. It seeks deeper into the origin and the significance of the practice. It also describes the changes that FC has undergone up to the current situation in Bomet concerning the practice. Alongside it interrogates the impact of colonialism to FC while proposing further studies to be undertaken in areas experiencing the same. The value of this thesis is generally necessary to the government, policy makers, and the entire societies not only in Bomet but Kenya as a whole.

The thesis describes deeper about the customary beliefs, the reasons as to why the Kipsigis still stick to the FC practice to this day, as well as provide information to the readers about what is happening in Bomet County. The conclusion follows the suggestions and the description of what need to be done.

The study concluded that some cases of FC in Bomet still exist as some of the residents viewed FC as part and parcel of their culture. They were found to be deeply rooted in their culture and even those who had a good education or embraced Christianity still held the practice of FC valuable in remote areas where there has barely been any visible sensitization by legal practitioners as well as anti-FC campaigners. The findings indicate a tremendous shift from the actual FC practice involving genital cut to other alternative rites of Passage among the Kipsigis community in Bomet County.

All the women interviewed during the study to discontinue the practice FC on their girls including instructed women and unmarried ladies who were educators, dental partners or college students. All female participants interviewed reported that FC was all inclusive in Bomet, yet none of them proposed to proceed with this practice with

their little girls. All expressed this was a practice that would be deserted in their County for the long gone ancestors. The end point of this study was that the seriousness of the operation performed had no connection to the social and social adherence to the operation since the Bomet County Kipsigis people who honed the action proposed to abandon this practice. These outcomes suggest a hopeful methodology toward social change including unfortunate social practices and accentuate the significance of intellectual ways to deal with social change- the alternative rite of passage that was officially introduced in 2002 (Saarinen, 2007).

In as far as a transformation in FC is concerned, the Kipsigis community's attitude due to education, and Christianity and also played a big role in the transformation of FC in Bomet County to the extent of adopting Alternative Rites of Passage Practices. This was evident with the fact that the majority of the community members now have a negative attitude towards the circumcised women. This was established to be the reason why Kipsigis girls try as much as possible to escape and therefore even ran away from home to seek refuge, so they are not cut. It was also established that this was further aggravated by the fact that circumcised girls are now not likely to get husbands within the Kipsigis community. This was according to several respondents who preferred marrying uncircumcised women.

Also, a good number of interviewees established that FC practice brings much in more harm and no good at all. Therefore, they urge the government intervention into the areas that still experience FC actions. To them, the practice is a source of poverty, diseases, increased mortality rates as well as underdevelopment. In addition, majority of the respondents held that FC had no significance to the people of Bomet County.

The element of nonmaterial culture (FC) is slow to change and therefore clashes with the other element of nonmaterial culture (formal education) which she also needs at this stage. In this sense, the individual member ( girl child) when caught between the two elements of non-material culture ends up leaning towards that which has a community/cultural identity hence opting for FC at the expense of formal education. It is evident that the Kipsigis girl child is caught between these two elements of non-material culture, FC, and formal 93 educations at the same time. The girl wants to balance between attending formal education as well as undergoing FC which is slow to change hence maladjustment and lag. Caught in between this lag, the Kipsigis girl child is not able to balance, hence in most cases drops formal education for the other element, FC. These two elements of nonmaterial culture are, therefore, maladjusted, as educational practices are not important to the girls after circumcision.

It can be established that Female circumcision in among the Kipsigis of Bomet County can no longer be viewed as a traditional practice. It has come to be recognized as a problem in the modern Kipsigis community. It is projected that with continued ant-FC campaigns and tightened laws enforcements into the interior parts of the County could lead to total eradication of FC. This was also likely to foresee ARP in the entire region.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

FC, the once significant practice in Bomet County has lost the great value it had prior to and even in the onset of colonialism to the first regime after independence. This research established that FC is now regarded as a bad practice in Bomet County. However, the war against FC faces several challenges, which comprise of hostility

from the pro-FC to the extent of attacking administrators such as chiefs who go to rescue the girls that have fallen victims of FC.

There is need for establishment of rescue camps since there is no single rescue camp that exists in Bomet. This has made it difficult to accommodate the rescued victims. Ethics and Anticorruption team of workers should be deployed to the regions to monitor particularly politicians who always play a major role in the release of those arrested due to carrying out the practice. This was noted during the interviews when chiefs complained of betrayal by the county politicians that leak information on any planned operation to arrest and rescue the girls. This makes them go into hidings and still carry out the practice. According to them, a case in point was in 2015 when there was a plan to arrest those who had planned to carry out the practice. Unfortunately, it was later revealed that some political leaders informed the culprits of the plans to arrest them; hence, they escaped with the girls that were to be circumcised. From the respondents, the politicians use these as a campaign strategy to win the votes of the local people for siding with them.

A study of the Kipsigis people in relation to women and girls has shown that the cultural socialization process is associated with the practice of Female Circumcision. It encompasses the transfer of cultural acquaintance, which the initiates have to internalize indisputably; therefore cultural beliefs such as FC are hardly changed. At the same time, despite education taking center stage in other regions of the country, the formal education is also being taken up slowly and cautiously as it conflicts with FC even though the future benefits are evident. The cultural belief system is so entrenched that even the family background cannot exempt the girl child from undergoing FC. Through the process of socialization, the naïve Kipsigis girl child

interacts with her siblings, parents, and entire family members. This social setup socializes the child into the element of non-material culture (FC) and transmits to her the accumulated experiences of her people in order to socialize her to fit into the membership of her group. The Kipsigis community is a closely-knit and self-perpetuating entity that surpasses the individual members who compose it, hence the importance of its cultural identity to its members.

Accordingly, the researcher recommends the need for more awareness campaigns on the dangers associated with FC. This owes to the fact that legal actions require a backup to help end FC practices. Besides, there ought to be unity among the rescue teams. Politicians and administrators need to join hands in fighting the practice to end the FC totally. Lastly, those who help to end the practice such as activists need to be good role models in their campaigns since every region that is affected by FC need to be given due attention in terms of resources allocation, sensitization programs and rescue camps establishments.

Despite the government effort to sensitize the public against female circumcision, among the major challenges to fully curb the practice are related to access, equity, and quality amongst others (Sessional paper no. 1 2005:2). Sensitization should be focused on remote areas of the county where people still carry out FC. In addition, awareness, gender disparity is as well another challenge in Bomet County, whereby women professionals rarely come by. Even in the teaching profession which is associated with females in Kenya, there are a negligible number of Bomet female professionals in Bomet County.

The Kipsigis people have practiced FC for decades and being conservative and not readily giving into current changes in the world despite the entire efforts being

undertaken by various advocacy groups to stop the practice. Due to this inflexibility, the Kipsigis community and in Bomet County particularly has lagged behind in terms of their children accessing formal school education especially the Kipsigis girl child (Aoko, 2010).

Anti FC crusaders and NGOs should be more active in Bomet County interiors and set up more safe homes and rescue centers for girls who have always lacked where to seek refuge in the event of escape from FC practice. There is need for the education fraternity to set up strong counseling units at the County, Sub County and school levels to emphasize on the negative effects of FC and reduce stigmatization on the circumcised as well as uncircumcised girls

Increasing access to education should be key to totally ending FC in Bomet because educated Kipsigis demonstrated to be less likely to allow their daughters to undergo FC. In Bomet County, there still low girls' enrolment in schools. Less than 40 per cent of girls are ever enrolled in school.

To help address this problem, the County government of Bomet should partner with UNICEF in working with the Ministry of Education and the Office of the President to increase access to education through support for mobile schools, boarding schools, improved water and sanitation facilities in schools and better-quality teaching in child-centered, girl-friendly classrooms.

Communities in Bomet County should be encouraged to openly discuss the dangers of FC and promote girl child rights. The Alternative rites of passage already in place ought to be open to the local communities through Barraza's by the help of religious leaders as well as local administrators.

Majority of the participants agreed in one voice that to enhance the rights and health of women worldwide, FC must be stopped. The Kenyan government has expressed its willingness to curb the practice by putting in place several policies and programs, however, limited achievements have been gained. For Kenya to see rapid success in the coming years, the government, development partners, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and faith-based organizations addressing FC in the country should reexamine their stratagems and ascertain those to be improved and new ones that can be executed to eliminate the practice of FC not only in Bomet County but all in regions of country.

From the study, it is evident that girls and women are still being subjected to FC in Kenya despite the laws, policies, and programs that have been put in place to curb the practice. Therefore, stakeholders should evaluate past efforts with a view of improving the current strategies.

Perhaps to conclude on the recommendation, the following are helpful in so far as Alternative rites of passage are concerned in Bomet County.

#### **5.4 Further Areas of Research**

It was established that the Kipsigis typically inhabit the major locations where FC is prevalent. No other ethnic community was identified except the Maasai who border the Kipsigis in Siongiroi. The majority of the respondents said that the area is notorious because FC is still among the Maasai community who are their neighbors. Thus, there is need for a comparative study on FC campaigns among the Kipsigis and the Maasai and the impact of the social organization of each community in terms of initiation.

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#### **Oral Materials**

These are records that the researcher made in the study site in February 2016. The materials comprise of interviews, discussion groups and individual accounts. The researcher has organized and listed them according to the individual providing information. Out of the 79 participants, only 30 are listed using their sir names due to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

**b. Key informant interviews**

Respondent	Age	Place	Date
Secretary to the DCC	30	Chepalungu	6/7/2016
Ex-circumciser	91	Sigor	22/8/2016
Chief	54	Sigor	21/8/2016
Chief	56	Kong'asis	9/9/2016
Chief	57	Bomet town	9/9/ 2016
Assistant chief	49	Nyangores	28/8/2016
Journalist	35	Nyangores	10/9/2016
Priest	53	Bomet town	5/9/2016
Church leader	55	Sigor	8/9/2016
Village elder	87	Sigor	13/8/2016
Village elder	72	Sigor	13/8/2016
Elderly woman	92	Kong'asis	27/8/2016
Elderly man	89	Kong'asis	27/8/2016
Elderly man	92	Sigor	27/8/2016
Teacher	55	Nyangores	26/8/2016
ARP graduate	18	Nyangores	4/9/2016
ARP graduate	19	Nyangores	4/9/2016
Senior chief	67	Konoin	6/9/2016
Circumcised woman	42	Nyangores	8/9/2016
Circumcised woman	47	Kong'asis	9/9/2016
Chief	51	Konoin	21/8/2016
Elderly woman	80	Chepalungu	22/8/2016

**c. Focus Group Discussions (F.G.D).**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Date</b>
Bomet town residents	Sigor market	5	13/8/2016
Village elders	Kong'asis	4	12/8/2016
Kipsigis unmarried men	Nyangores	7	26/8/2016
Kipsigis unmarried women	Konoin	7	26/8/2016
Sigor residents	Sigor Market	8	13/8/2016
Chiefs committee	Sigor Chief's office	4	2/9/2016

**d. Oral interviews**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>
AIC church member	45	Chepalungu	8/9/2016
AIC church leader	55	Bomet	8/9/2016
Teacher	57	Konoin	6/9/2016
Elderly woman	70	Kong'asis	7/9/2016
Woman	35	Sigor	7/9/2016
College girl	22	Chepalungu	8/9/2016
Man (shopkeeper)	47	Sigor market	1/9/2016
Elderly woman	70	Konoin	2/9/2016
Elderly man tailor	46	Sigor market	1/9/2016
Clan Elder	78	Bomet town	1/9/2016

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: STUDY TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	TIME
Proposal drafting	June 2015
Presentation of the proposal for marking	July 2015
Proposal defense	August 2015
Proposal correction	September 2015
Second proposal defense(chairman's )	October 2015
Corrections of the final proposal	May 2016
Data collection	August 2016
Data analysis	August 2016
Thesis write up	September 2016
Thesis corrections	October –November 2016
Submission of thesis	December 2016
Defense	June 2017
Thesis Corrections	July –September 2017
Graduation	December 2017

**Appendix 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE KIPSIGIS COMMUNITY  
IN BOMET COUNTY**

Gender male ( ) female ( )

Age 20-29 ( ) 30-39 ( ) 40-49 ( ) Above 50 ( )

Is FC a good practice according to you?

How often do you hear or witness the FC practice in this particular region?

What is the value associated with Female Circumcision?

In your own opinion is their hope to end the practice in future?

Are you aware of any FC practices taking place nowadays? Yes ( ) No ( ) If yes,  
what do you think is the reason for the continued practice?

Do you think the government is right to outlaw FC? Give reason for your answer.

In your opinion what are the current trends in as far as female circumcision is  
concerned?

What factors do you think inform the prevailing changes?

Are the changes for the better or for the worse?

Kindly explain

Do you still value the Traditional FC practices?

Why

What has changed as far as FC is concerned?

What has not changed in FC practices?

What do you have to say about FC in this region of Bomet County?

Is there anything that you feel ought to be done as far as FC is a concern?

THANK YOU

**Appendix 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE ADMINISTRATORS**

Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

Age: 20-29 ( ) 30-39 ( ) 40-49 ( ) Above 50 ( )

What is your opinion concerning the ban of female circumcision?

What factors do you think contribute to the persistent female practice in Bomet County?

What is making the changes to prevail in FC practices particularly in this region?

What age bracket of girls is the most targeted?

What are the rituals that prevailed during the process?

What was your experience with the practice?

Do women advocate for the practice? Give details please.

Are there changes that the practice has undergone? Give details please

Apparently, how are the rituals carried out during FC ceremony?

Which kind of teachings does Alternative Rite of Passage offer to the initiates?

When is the practice mostly done?

Do you still value FC?

What do you think should be done to better the situation of the current FC practices?

THANK YOU

**Appendix 4: QUESTIONS TO THE BOMET COUNTY CHURCH**

**ELDERS**

Gender: Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

Age: 20-29 ( ) 30-39 ( ) 40-49 ( ) Above 50 ( )

Rank: County Commissioner ( ) Chief ( ) Sub Chief ( ) Clan Elder ( )

What is your perception concerning Female circumcision?

What factors do you think informed the trends in the FC practices?

Do you have any information on who are still carrying out the practice?

Do you think that the government ban of illegal FC changed their operation system?

How?

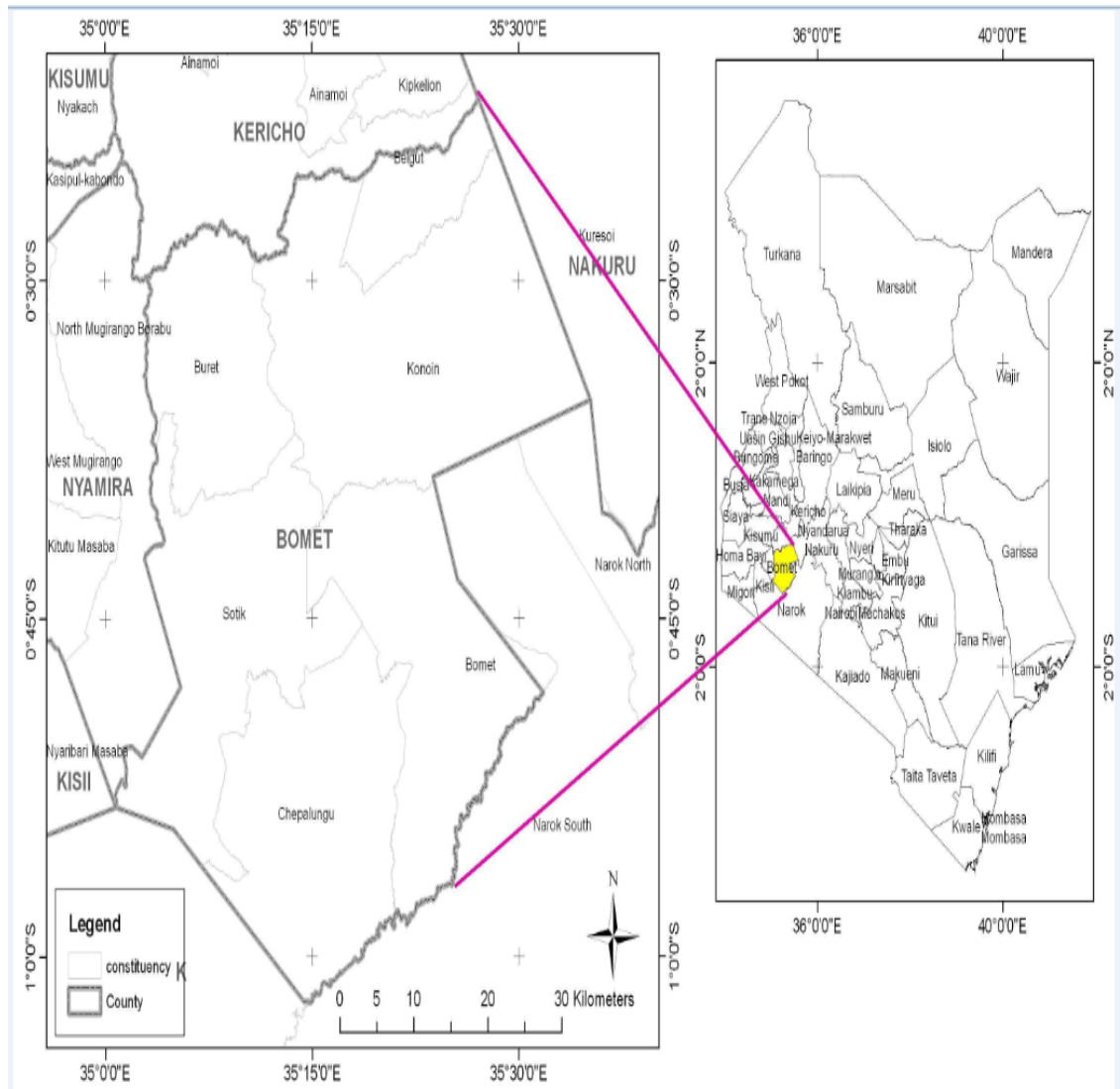
Has the Alternative Rites of passage been positively welcomed by the community members?

If Yes, Kindly explain why

If no, kindly explain the reasons

THANK YOU

**Appendix 5: RESEARCH SITE**





### **Appendix 7: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Chelimen: the ceremonial song, which the girls sang in the morning and in the evening

Kameet-aapTaarysyek: A woman in charge of cooking for the initiates was referred to as

Egesagane: Uncut genitals of a woman among the Abagusii of western Kenya

Imbalu: Male genital cutting among the Bamasaba of Uganda

Irua: Female circumcision ceremony that marks a change in social position of the initiates within the ethnical organization among the Gikuyu of central Kenya

Kaaptiriong': day time shelter for the initiates during seclusion period among the Kipsigis

Kayeek: the Kipsigis naming ceremony when the girls initiate received names after being circumcised

Kaayaet-aaptaarusiekeek: is the teaching period among the Kipsigis female initiates

Keldet: A traditional headgear worn during the female circumcision ceremonies among the Kipsigis

Keebatuum: A rite of passage at puberty among the Kipsigis girls

Korathiama cabana: This is a ceremony that was used to bless the initiates among the Gikuyu of central Kenya the initiates were shaved and anointed as a way of putting them next to *Ngai*, their god

Laurusyoot: the terms used to refer to the female initiates on coming out of seclusion among the Kipsigis

Mabwita: a house where female circumcision among the Kipsigis took place

Motiryoot: a female caretaker to the Kipsigis initiates

Mamalat got: a house that is not well smeared in Kipsigis language

Motirenik: A term used to refer to female circumcisers among the Kipsigis

Ng'echeret: A traditional bowl shaped stool that contained fresh milk.

Njohi: A term used to refer to the sugar cane liquor among the Gikuyu.

Sikiroino: A hut where the Nandi girls and boys preparing for genital cutting slept together to test their ability to control their sexual desires

Taurusyoottaarusyeek: The term that used to refer to the Kipsigis female circumcised initiates

Tumdo: It is the initiation process among the Kipsigis