

MF NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**THE UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF THE MAASAI MALE
CIRCUMCISION RITUAL IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT, IN THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA, NORTHERN
DIOCESE.**

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Abbreviations

Dr.	Doctor
ELCT	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
Pl.	Plural.
Prof.	Professor
T.A.G	Tanzania Assemblies of God
TUMA	Tumaini University Makumira
Unpub.	Unpublished

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1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

A Swahili saying is frequently quoted in relation to changes in the society

“It takes one day to destroy a house but to build a new one will take months, perhaps years. If we destroy our way of life to construct a new one, it will take thousands of years.”

I was born and raised in the Maasai community and as a Maasai boy I had passed all the rituals which a Maasai boy has to pass from childhood to adulthood. These rituals are naming of children (given a new name), circumcision and marriage.

Without circumcision in Maasai you are still called a child, even if you are aged, circumcision is an identity for all the Maasai. Circumcision is like a ladder which you have to climb so that you can reach on top of adulthood. After circumcision you are allowed to participate in all the activities within the Maasai community. A circumcised boy in the Maasai community is called a warrior; he is one who will act like a soldier. He has to care for the whole community including their properties, like cows, goats, and sheep. He has to make sure that these animals are getting enough pastures and water, and are not attacked by the wild animals.

I am writing this thesis concerning one of the important Maasai rituals, i.e. the practice of male circumcision ritual, because as a Maasai I passed all the stages of this ritual, before, during and after circumcision. Through my experience, I have come to realize that this topic is very important in the Maasai community. The Maasai is a changing society; the Maasai of 1900s is not the same as the one of 2000s. The society has changed mainly through education, globalization and Christianity. Many Maasai are now educating their children from primary school to university. Many boys and girls have diplomas and degrees from different fields. Globalization is not only changing the lifestyle of the first world but also the Maasai society, the Maasai has mobile phones, internet, computer, TV and other modern facilities. They can use globalization in doing research, business, preaching the good news to all Maasai. Christianity is another factor which changed the Maasai community, the way to worship God. We can find many churches and denominations in every corner of the Maasai land. Most Maasai, especially

women and teenagers have joined the church. So circumcision is passing through a transition period which needs to be researched in order to bring about a new product on how to practice this ritual without destroying Maasai cultures.

1.2 Statement of the problem.

The Maasai is one of the most famous ethnic groups in east Africa. Because their life of rearing livestock they are moving very rapidly from one place to another. In these days you can find the Maasai in about every corner of east and central Africa, they are moving searching for pastures and water for their animals.

The Maasai have many rituals, for example, circumcision, reconciliation, marriage, and others. In this research I will deal with male circumcision. Male circumcision is practiced by the Maasai very strongly compared to other rituals. This ritual is the one which elevates a boy from childhood to adulthood. The man cannot be allowed to perform any other rituals if he did not pass through circumcision.

The Maasai is a changing society, from their traditional way of living to Christianity, education and also globalization as stated above. Due to these changes, this ritual of circumcision is facing many challenges; Maasai Christians are trying to find a new way of performing it. Those who are not Christians are against this change. In 2012 it was reported several incidents by which Maasai Christians are fighting with Maasai non-Christians, for example one pastor was beaten by non-Christians during the Sunday service in one Lutheran parish. In another church during the Sunday service the non-Christian Maasai youth entered into the church and commanded all Christian youth to go out of their church so that they could be beaten. Also sometimes those boys who are circumcised in a Christian way are circumcised again by force by the non-Christian. The reason why pastors are beaten by the non-Christians is that, they said that pastors are the ones who are teaching these new ways to their people. The question that I must deal with is; what is the background, content and meaning of the Maasai male circumcision?

1. Why are the Maasai people attracted so strongly to this practice?
2. Why did the practice of Maasai male circumcision become an obstacle for the church growth in Maasai church?
3. How should this practice be evaluated from a Christian perspective?

(a) Is this practice wrong or right?

(b) Can Maasai male circumcision be rejected? Can Maasai male circumcision ritual be accepted?

4. Can the church “Christianize” male circumcision? How can it be related to the baptism and confirmation? These are the questions which have prevailed and still prevail in my mind.

1.3 Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To study the whole process of circumcision before during and after circumcision.
2. To examine what Maasai Christians should practice and not to practice before, during and after circumcision.
3. To examine how to overcome the challenges and obstacles created by Maasai male circumcision for the growth of the church in Maasai land.

1.4 Theoretical framework of the study

An anthropological model of contextualization will be used in this research. An anthropological model of contextualization according Bevens has two meanings, first of all; it means the value and goodness of human being in social change, geographical and historical circumstances. It is considered the basic criterion of judgement as whether a particular context is genuine or not¹. Secondly, an anthropological model of contextualization makes the use of insights of social science. This means that the anthropological model tries to understand more clearly the web of human relationships and meaning that make up human culture, and in which God is present, offering life, healing and wholeness². In this sense, an anthropological model points to the fact that the main emphasis on the approach to contextual theology, is on culture. This model is particularly used in a study of, a people’s culture wherein one finds the symbols and concepts to construct an adequate articulation of people’s faith.

¹ Bevens 2002,55

² Bevens 2002,55

In this research we are going to use the anthropological model of contextualization because it takes an open-handed view of human cultures. Its participants therefore take care not to undermine a working culture whose members depend on it for their social well being. Moreover, it does its best to preserve the culture out of respect for the culture and its members. When the people understand that the new religion does not require them to give up their old culture in general, they are likely to be more open to adopting it. And they are also more likely to participate honestly in contextualizing Christianity for their own culture. In time, their unique contextual theology might supply interesting new insights to Christians to other cultures.

Paul G. Hiebert suggests that *critical contextualization* is a good way to balance effectively the development of contextual theology. His four-step concept was developed for use by missionaries ministering in a foreign culture like, the Maasai culture, to help in making sure that the development of contextualization remains properly balanced. Hiebert's *critical contextualization* encourages the participation of all members within a church. The first step is to "recognize the need to deal biblically with all areas of life."³ Step two is for the congregation to meet and analyze the cultural issues they confront from an uncritical perspective. The third step is to conduct a Bible study that is relevant to the particular cultural issue being considered. The final step "is for the congregation to evaluate critically their own past customs in the light of their new biblical understandings and to make a decision regarding their use."⁴

In this research about Maasai male circumcision, the best way of dealing with is to use Paul G. Hiebert's way of *critical contextualization*, by letting people evaluate their own culture. This is because they know their own culture better than the missionary and they are in a better position to critique it, once they have biblical instruction. Moreover, they will grow spiritually by learning to apply scriptural teachings to their own life.⁵

³ Hiebert 1991, 186

⁴ Hiebert 1991, 187

⁵ Hiebert 199, 187

1.5 Research Methodology and Design

In this study we will use a qualitative/empirical research methodology which requires researchers to work towards acquiring descriptive facts through discovery and exploration, qualitative research usually emphasizes words rather than numbers in the collection and analysis of data⁶. The use of qualitative research methodology necessitated to analyse, describe and interpret data with solid field notes or interview transcripts or documents examples which aims at producing systematic and descriptive facts about people's beliefs, values, rituals and other general patterns of behaviors⁷. Furthermore, since a qualitative research method strives to produce descriptive results, scholars are expected to have close interaction with their informants. In this research therefore, I used the qualitative method so as to acquire data on how Maasai male circumcision ritual is practiced among the Maasai people. As such, this method helps me to establish report from my informants and interact with them in order to get their views and experiences on the Maasai male circumcision ritual. In the next section, I discuss the types of sampling tools I used while doing field work

1.5.1 Sampling.

I used purposive, snowball and stratified sampling techniques to gather data for this study. Purposive sampling, which involves choosing informants who can offer closely guarded informants, was employed because not all people were able to give the required information.⁸ In fact, during the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual, not all my informants directly know everything about Maasai circumcision. Therefore, I selected elders, Christian leaders in order to share their experiences about Maasai circumcision rituals. Similarly, I selected people with special knowledge and skills of circumcision, that is the above mentioned people, because they know society secrets about Maasai circumcision rituals which the ordinary Maasai cannot possess.

⁶ Bryman 2008, 366.

⁷ Bryman 2008, 538.

⁸ Creswel 2007, 46

Further, I used also snowball sampling techniques to gather data. This sampling technique is a method whereby the researcher uses the known contacts to be introduced to informants he does not know.⁹ In this regard, I was introduced to Maasai informants I had neither known before nor planned to interview them. Snowball sampling technique enables me to learn the views of other informants concerning Maasai male circumcision ritual.

Finally, I used stratified random sampling technique, which involved classifying informants in groups in order to have a fair representation of the population and examination is represented in the sample.¹⁰ As such, I classified informants according to age, role, and level of education. For example I chose old men, young men, and educated men who have all passed through Maasai male circumcision ritual. I also chose society trainers, circumcisers, pastors, and evangelists, among other church leaders. Randomly, I selected people from each group for interview, discussion, and conversations. I did the selection process during the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual. I considered education as one of the factors to classify my informants since people with formal education tend to present ideas influenced by what they learn at school as opposed to their counterparts, who do not have formal education. As much as stratified sampling enhances a fair representation, it involves a tedious process of classification in order to make sure that all groups of my informants are represented correctly.

1.5.2 Research Tools.

Given that I did a qualitative study, I found it necessary to use the following tools of research. 1. Participant observation; 2. Interviews; 3. Library literature; and 4. My personal knowledge and experiences. These study tools are essential for studying Maasai male circumcision ritual, they enable me to gather and describe data in this study.

⁹ Berg and Lune 2012, 52.

¹⁰ Berg and Lune 2012, 51.

1.5.2.1 Participant Observation

Alan Bryman define participant observation as a research in which the researcher immerses him/herself in a social setting for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and the fieldworker, and asking questions, collecting documents about the group and write up the detailed account about that setting.¹¹

Participation observation is one of the tools I employed to gather my data for this research. This tool of study requires the fieldworker to immerse in the culture and experience what is going on in that culture, as Bryman explained above. As such, I got involved in Maasai male circumcision ritual by observing songs sung to the initiates who are waiting to be circumcised. During this study, I also participated in observing people dancing during the ceremony, which was going on the day after Maasai male circumcision ritual.

Furthermore, the Maasai discern the candidates' resolve for circumcision by examining how the candidates sing and dance before circumcision. As such, I attended *engipara*¹² dance, and participated observing in the songs sung on the eve of circumcision and also heard the kind of remarks elders made to approve the candidates 'ready for circumcision. I also observed the reactions of the candidates to the words spoken to them. I attended the purification ritual before circumcision, whereby the candidates are purified by water, in the river or in the nearby bush with poured water, washing his whole body. After purification, the elders blessed him by using water mixed with milk. I observed how this ritual of purification is administered and heard the words related to the role of men in Maasai culture.

¹¹ Bryman 2008, 402-403.

¹² The time whereby the people sing the abuse song to the initiate the day before circumcision.

1.5.2.2 Interviews

Interviewing is another tool which I used to collect data for this study. I interviewed various informants, including traditional elders, church elders, pastors, evangelists, circumcised and uncircumcised boys, and the circumcisers. I used both formal and informal interviews with open ended and non structured questions. For formal interviews, I made appointments with my informants. To have a systematic discussion, I wrote down the themes and questions about the topic of investigation to guide me during interviews. Because of using open ended questions, I was able to have free interaction with my informants by asking follow up questions to interrogate further the new ideas brought up by the informants. In this research only one of my informants was anonymous.

Furthermore, I employed informal interviews especially with members of the audience during and after the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual. This was like a conversation interview since formal meetings were not possible for informants who could not there and then have time for formal interviews. Informal interviews may take place anywhere, including at their home, markets place, church, during cattle grassing, or anywhere else. Since interviews expose researchers to deep interactions with their informants, they require that the researcher builds rapport with them. As such, I cultivate a good relationship with my informants through excising patience with them and not rushing them to give answers they would otherwise not have wished to.

1.5.2.3 Literature Research

Since new knowledge is built on old knowledge, I reviewed works of scholars who have written about circumcision rituals, the relation between this ritual and Christian ritual. I reviewed work of scholars with respect to the content, nature, methodologies, and the trend of scholarship on circumcision ritual to inform this study. As such, I used MF Norwegian School of Theology Library in cooperation with other libraries in Norway. This source included books, articles, journals, research report, and dissertations. I visited some academic websites as well

1.5.2.4 Personal Experience

Being part of the Maasai culture, my personal experience also informed the research of this study. I was circumcised in 1989, and I had participated in all the processes of circumcision since childhood, before and after circumcision, so I have a wealth of data. Besides my grandfather was a medicine man of Maasai customs and cultures, which I had access to from childhood. This experience certainly informed the topic, but also asked a number of questions.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

I carried out two kinds of data analysis in order to make this study complete both in field and after field analysis. This is because there is a need for researchers and their informants to interact, and share knowledge and experiences, which may lead to academic analysis. As such, I conducted in-field by playing back some of the interviews to my informants and cross checked whether all the themes for the study were covered.

After data collection, I went through an intensive process of analysis which involved transcription of interviews as well as organizing the data in themes. I transcribed interviews as well as literature for easy access during the writing process.

1.5.4 Ethical Considerations

During field work, I respected the right of my informants such as the right to remain anonymous. If an informant requests to remain anonymous, this request must be granted. As such, I used pseudo names while referring to informants whose identity I need to conceal. Further, I was cautious to consult the informants before engaging them in any of my research interviews or discussions.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This thesis is done in the African context, in Longido district of Arusha Region in Tanzania, and it has been done among the Ilkisongo sects group of Maasai people among many other sects groups found in Arusha. Longido District is where I was born, raised and circumcised which offered an advantage of knowledge of the language as well as important informants for the study. Indeed, I had witnessed a lot of circumcision rituals in Longido and other Maasai places. I had also visited cultural sites, witnessed how the already circumcised boys are singing and are proud of their new stage as an adult.

Furthermore, since the language is important for any successful interviews, I chose Longido district due to the fact that Longido is occupied by the Maasai, and I understand the Maasai language. Further, there were easily accessible informants in Longido district including elders charged of smearing candidates, church elders, pastors, circumcised boys, and clan leaders among others. All these informants were ready to share their experiences with me during the research

Theologically, the research falls under missiology and systematic theology looking for Maasai male circumcision and its rituals, in the systematic analysis of rite of passage. Taking into consideration that in Africa everything has the meaning before, present and after, that is why circumcision has a big meaning and role for the Maasai people before Christianity and after Christianity. The circumcision rituals enable a person to pass the following stages, such as childhood to adulthood, killing a lion, performing rituals, and marriages, having cattle, and other Maasai property, etc. The implications of this research is towards understanding and presenting Maasai circumcision in a Christian way, and also try to implement a new alternative ritual. More specifically, the project is African contextual systematic theology and missiology. In many respects, African religion has so much in common; therefore references from other traditional African communities are carefully and selectively used to clarify Maasai traditional expression.

1.7 Literature Review of the Study

The title of this study on the understanding and practice of *Maasai male circumcision ritual in a Christian context* has been researched by some scholars but not as a single topic. Most of the researches applied in this study had limited their research to a general Maasai male circumcision ritual as subtopics of their researches. Among the few scholars some mentioned Maasai circumcision in subtopics or in a paragraph. Dr. Kristel Kiel in her research on Maasai Mission in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, North Eastern Diocese, mentioned Maasai male circumcision as a celebration of passages from one stage of life to the next. Male circumcision is celebrated by special feasts; Kiel went further saying that celebration of circumcision has elaborated more rituals and greater variety of ceremonies for boys and girls¹³. Kiel did mention neither what these rituals are nor their ceremonies.

Dr. Rev Leonard A. Mtaita did research on contextualization as the way of doing mission among the Maasai in the ELCT-Pare Diocese. He wrote that circumcision of boys in Maasai community is a communal ritual as many boys from several villages are circumcised¹⁴. Mtaita only researched a small part of Maasai circumcision; he did not go further showing which of the rituals are to be practiced before, during and after the Maasai male circumcision rituals. Mtaita did not have any experience about the Maasai because he is not a Maasai; he is from the Pare ethnic tribe found in Kilimanjaro region.

Professor Rev. Wilson J. Parsalaw in his research on the *History of the Lutheran Church Diocese in Arusha Region*, mentioned circumcision of both boys and girls. He said that circumcision of both boys and girls is done simply as a means and procedure of climbing the society ladder from immaturity to adulthood.¹⁵ He did not mention which procedures are to be followed before during and after circumcision.

¹³ Kiel 1997, 34-35

¹⁴ Mtaita 1995, 192-195

¹⁵ Parsalaw 1999,41

Tipilit Ole Saitoti, an old man from Kenya wrote much about the Maasai culture, his book is called *Maasai*. In the section about male circumcision; he wrote how this ritual is practiced by the Maasai. He explains about the Maasai boy from when he was born up to when he becomes an elder. According to Saitoti, circumcision in Maasai community is a graduation by which a boy is changed from childhood to elderhood. This graduation cannot be escaped by any Maasai. To be accepted as a real Maasai mentally, physically and socially, one has to pass through this important graduation. Circumcision, the initiation of boys and girls into adulthood is a mental as well as physical process.¹⁶ Tipilit Ole Saitoti was not a Christian, and he wrote his book in 1980s while the Maasai were still holding/maintaining their culture very strongly. During his time, this ritual was not facing challenges as now. However, his work will contribute to this research giving knowledge about the Maasai and their culture, and how to contextualize this old culture into a Christian perspective.

Kim Groop in his book *With the Gospel to Maasailand* wrote that male circumcision among the Maasai, Arusha and Meru tribes was troublesome also due to its collective nature. Almost simultaneously, throughout the entire Mount Meru region and Maasai land, circumcision among Maasai, Arusha and Meru boys was not simply a manhood ceremony but it served the crucial purpose of turning children into warriorhood and adulthoods. Circumcision provides security and meaning to the Maasai.¹⁷ Kim Groop was trying to show how the missionaries tried to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to the Maasai, Arusha and Meru people who are maintaining their culture very firmly. He tried to do contextualization in some Maasai, Arusha and Meru cultures. However, he did not explain the entire process of Maasai male circumcision.

Vincent J. Donovan in his book, *Christianity and Rediscovery: An Epistle from the Maasai*, wrote in one of his paragraphs that, the heart of the Maasai culture is in the warrior class, being guardians of the flocks and of the tribe itself. He said that these

¹⁶ Saitoti 1980, 77

¹⁷ Groop 2006, 77

young men enter their majority on the day they are circumcised.¹⁸ Donovan continues to explain the responsibilities of these young men. After circumcision they are defenders of the society, and keepers of herds, and are enlarging the herds through cattle theft from their neighbours' tribes.¹⁹

Donovan only explains small parts concerning circumcision among the Maasai. He explained what procedures the Maasai should followed during this practice. Donovan's book helps this research to discover how the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached during the time he wrote his book.

In my research I have to suggest how to reconcile the non-Christians and Christians in the Maasai context. This will show how the male circumcision ritual can be practiced by Christians without causing conflicts between the two groups.

1.8 Thesis Layout

I present my findings in six chapters as follows:

- Chapter one, discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem of the study, the objectives of the study, area of and scope and limitations of the study, methodology and design of the study, ethical consideration, literature review of the study and tentative outline.
- Chapter two describes the Maasai society that is within the context of the study.
- Chapter three analyses and examines the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual, the days before, during and after circumcision.
- Chapter four describes Male circumcision ritual as an obstacle for the growth of the church among the Maasai.
- Chapter five discusses which Maasai male circumcision practices should be accepted and which are not accepted by Christians before, during and after the circumcision ritual.
- Chapter six, conclusions.

¹⁸ Donovan 1978, 17.

¹⁹ Donovan 1978, 17

2.0 DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 The Historical Background of the Maasai society

The Maa is shortened form the word Maasai or “*Ilmaasai*” which means the people who speak the Maa language²⁰. The following sections are called the Maa speaking society, because they speak the same language all over east Africa, these are; *Il’aikipia Il-sikirari, IL’arusa I-siria, Il’damat I’l-wasin-ngishu, Il’kapute Il-parakuyu, Il’keek-onyokie Il-pusi-kineji (Samburu), Il’kisongo il-tiamus (Njemps), Il’matapato Il-laitayok, Il’moitanik Il-moipoi (Ilkonere), Il’oodo-kilani Ilkiteto, and Il’loita.*²¹

Today, the Maasai occupy distinct areas in both Kenya and Tanzania and numbers over one million. In Kenya, they occupy Narok, Transmara, OlKejuado, Laikipia, Central Baringo, and parts of the Nakuru districts, as well as the Naivasha areas of their former traditional territories. In Tanzania, they settled the northern part of the country of Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and Manyara. In Central Tanzania they are found in the areas of Morogoro, Dares saalam (Chalinze and Mukuranga and Bagamoyo). In the south they settled in Iringa, Mbeya and Rukwa regions.

In East Africa there are main languages groups, which are Bantu, Khoisan, Cushitic, and Nilotic. The Maa speaking people (the Maasai) belong to the Nilotes. Other members in this Nilotic speaking group are the Baari and the Lutuko in southern Sudan, the Barbeing, the Turkana, the Karamojong and the Teso are settled in eastern Uganda. The Maasai people regard other ethnic groups who are not Maasai as *Ilmeek* or *ormeeki* (Pl.) meaning non Maasai. The white’ foreigners are called *iloibor*, which literally means “the whites.”

The background and origin of the Maa speaking people is not exactly known. However, some traditions state that the Maasai are said to have come to their present home in East Africa from somewhere in the northeast of Africa in the Nile river basin, in the southern

²⁰ Parsalaw 1999,36; Mtaita 1995,20

²¹ Spear & Waller, 1993,30.

part of what is called the Sudan. Thus, the ancestors of the modern Maasai speakers are the result of general north-south movement, which started in southern Sudan sometimes during the 1st millennium AD²². The movement was slowly going down the rift valley that cuts through central Kenya and Tanzania. Other ethnological researchers suggest that the Maasai have their origin somewhere in the Middle East, as their culture seems similar to that of Jewish. They are thought to have lost contact with their fellow Jews in the Middle East because of their migrations and wandering²³. But in real sense it is difficult to find the true source of the Maasai people because their history was given orally from one generation to the next.

The Maasai society is divided into two major clans, *intaloishi*. The first clan is called *Ilaiser*, generally called *orok- kiteng*, which means black bullock. They are regarded as the right hand of the Maasai group. The second clan is *Ilmollelian* also called *Odomong'i*, meaning blood-red bull; they are also regarded as the left hand of that particular group. The Maasai believe that the divisions originated from a certain legend of two wives married to a certain man. The first wife built her house to the right side of the entrance. The second one occupied the left side of the entrance to their homestead²⁴. And this is said to be the origin of the two Maasai major clans *Laiser* and *Mollet*.

2.2 Geographical Area/Location

Geographically the Maasai people occupy almost three quarters of East Africa grasslands, which extend from one degree north to six degrees south of the equator.²⁵ Furthermore, Maa speaking peoples grew more numerous and moved southward to occupy much of the East Africa Rift Valley region on which is semi arid and arid land.²⁶

²² Spear & Waller 1993, 1.

²³ Mtaita 1998, 21.

²⁴ Parsalaw 1999, 44-45

²⁵ Kimirei, 1973, 1.

²⁶ Voshaar, 1979, 13,

In Kenya they live in the southern parts of the country, while in Tanzania they live in the northern and central and southern part of the country, i.e in Arusha, Manyara, Morogoro, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, Dares salaam, Dodoma, Iringa, and Mbeya.

2.3 People's Life, Social Structure and Economic Activities

Most of the Maasai prefer life in the remote places where they can have good pastures and good water supply for themselves and their herds. However, the situation nowadays is changing because more people are moving from the interior places and settle down in nearby towns in order to get their basic needs.

The Maasai homesteads consist of a large circular enclosure surrounded by thorn bush fences. Most of the Maasai families are still living in communities, which are usually gathered in a big kraal, *inkang'itie* or *enkang'* (sing), which are normally known as *bomas*, a swahili word. Similar to other African ethnic groups, the Maasai society is patrilineal and this follow the system follows the extended family. One family includes the father, mother, children and all the people found in a particular boma. They have equal rights to share anything in that family²⁷. The husband is regarded as the head of the whole family. The boma can be big or small, depending on the number of families living in it and the quantity of the cattle owned by that family.

Formerly, all the houses were small, oval shaped or rectangular, with a slightly domed roof with poles and saplings, intertwined with grass, and plastered with cow dug. These houses were so low in height that one had to bend when entering. There were no proper doors but only a small entrance. There were small holes *Ilusieta* (Pl) or *Elusie* (sing.) instead of a proper window. However, nowadays the situation has changed and modern houses are constructed in the Maasai bomas.

The Maasai society is well organized and structured according to a tightly knit pattern or an age oriented system. Their age-group system helps to govern or determine the major

²⁷ Parsalaw 1999, 43.

factors of their traditional, societal, political, and religious as well as their daily life. Furthermore, this age-group system determines behaviour and the differences of responsibilities in the society²⁸. Each man passes through three main stages or age-grades, i.e. boyhood, warriorhood, and elderhood. The transition from one stage to another is marked and celebrated with special ceremonies or feasts.²⁹

Each age group or age-set in the Maasai society has its own specific role to play in the community. The young boys (uncircumcised), *Ilayiok* (Pl), *Olayioni* (sing) are concerned with looking after the cattle on the grazing land, and during such a period the boys learn how to use spears, clubs, and swords³⁰. Warriors, *Ilmurran* are regarded as the soldiers of the entire society. They are concerned and responsible for the protection of the society and their properties from outside invaders and predators, which include both human beings and wild animals like the lion. The uncircumcised girls are called *intoyie* (pl), or *entito* (sing) and young women who are at the age bearing children are called *isiankikin*, older women are called the following names *inkituak*, and *intasati*. They are concerned with keeping the families, and milking the cows. The male elders are called *ilpayiani* and are regarded as peaceful people by whom the growing generations depend on as the source of advice and wisdom³¹.

Every age set has its own political and religious or ritual leader. The political leader is called *olaigwanani*. He is the chief counsellor with a full authority, over his age-set³². Traditionally women do not have their own age sets, but they depend on their husband's age sets. The ritual leader is called *oloiboni*. He is normally elected in each age-set i.e. warrior hood stage. He is a divine, prophet and ritual expert. He is consulted for ritual purposes, difficulties and any crucial matters in the society. He gives instructions on what will happen, what is to be done and how it will be done. Normally, *oloiboni* is a male and he must belong to the *ilaiser* clan³³.

²⁸ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama

²⁹ <http://www.predators-tz.or/maasai.htm>, 26.08.2012.

³⁰ Mtaita 1995, 31

³¹ Kiel 1997, 78

³² Interview with Rev Immanuel Laiser, 12.08.2012, Irkaswa

³³ Interview with Kumbau Saning'o, 21.07.2012, Irkaswa.

Marriage is one of the most important events after circumcision among the Maa speaking society. It is a complex affair with economic, social, and religious aspects. Marriage is requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone has to take part. It is not an option but a compulsory act. It is seen as a stabilizing factor in one's life and as a test of one's maturity³⁴. However, it is allowed only for the ones who have undergone the circumcision rite of passage. Therefore, after circumcision rite one must get married. This obligation is for both male and female. According to the Maasai context it was and is still considered abnormal, unnatural, and ungodly not to be married. This is because man and woman need each other, and it is the only way to expand the family, clan and the whole Maasai society. The Maasai regard marriage as the part of God's plan and gift to the human being. Marriage has to be valued and respected by every one. In this institution of marriage god intends that man and woman should live together in love and rear children³⁵. After marriage one is allowed to participate fully in all societal, religious, political, and economic activities within the society. They are officially allowed to become father and mother for one is regarded as a grown up person. Before the circumcision rite of passage one is regarded as a child, regardless of his or her age.

Polygamy is the common form of marriage among the most African ethnic groups. In the Maa- speaking people it is a lawful union, an accepted valid form of marriage. A man can marry as many wives as he wishes depending on the number of cattle he owns. Monogamy had been seen and regarded as for the people of the lower status or the poor ones³⁶. The Maasai polygamy is an official or open polygamy for it is accepted and practiced openly and publically by the society³⁷. This form of marriage still exists among the Maasai society both among Christians and non-Christians, though the church strictly forbids it. However, the situation seems to have changed so that today most of the Maasai men do not have more than one wife.

³⁴ Interview with Joshua Laiser 23.08.2012 Masama

³⁵ Kyomo 2004, 195-198

³⁶ Waruta 2000, 105-106

³⁷ Interview with Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012

Although open polygamy is not officially practiced in some other African ethnic groups, it still exists in other forms (hidden or unofficial polygamy) by men having concubine. There are different reasons for polygamy in the Maasai society; these reasons can be categorized religiously, economically, and socially. According to the religion it is believed that God, *Enkai*, has allowed them to practice this form of marriage in order to have many children to help in milking their cattle and to enlarge their generation³⁸.

Economically, the Maasai people depend a great deal on their cattle for their daily subsistence, and as their main economic source. The cattle kept by the Maasai are of *zebus*³⁹ type. This type of cattle produces only a small amount of milk, they need to have a large number of cattle in order to obtain sufficient milk for the family. Due to this reason, the Maasai believe that one wife cannot and will not manage to milk all the cattle, and they would not have enough children to help with milking and raising the cattle⁴⁰. The herds need many boys and many milking maids; hence they need more wives who will produce more children to solve the problem of the labour force. Women and children are an important labour force for the family. In addition to the economic reason, some Maasai families also intend to increase the number of their cattle through the bride price of their daughters.

Socially, marrying more than one wife for a man means a good reputation and prestige within the whole community. Polygamy among the Maasai is considered to be a simple way of enlarging and expanding the family, clan, and the whole Maasai society. Another reason is that the Maasai people believe that if one has only one wife, anytime that woman might be sick or die, then who will replace her? Who will take over her responsibilities, like caring for both the family members and the cattle? The solution is to have many wives, which is polygamy.

³⁸ Interview with Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

³⁹ Zebu is the type of cattle usually kept by the maasai people because they are resistant to diseases, and also able to adapt the semi arid environment.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ev. Yusufu Mamasita, 18.08.2012, Irkaswa.

The Maasai regard cattle as the main economic source, and the backbone of their life. That is to say that the Maasais' life, i.e. economically, politically, socially and religiously, is centred on the cattle, cattle determine Maasai life. It is believed that cattle are a special gift from God, *Enkai*. It is the most fundamental and valued property. From the cattle the Maasai get their daily meal or food, i.e. milk, meat and blood. The cattle also have a great and vital importance because they are used for multiple purposes. They signify wealth and confer status, serve as a medium of exchange, legitimate marriage i.e. bride price, and traditional rituals. They also provide dung for fuel (a substitute to the firewood) and plaster for their houses, skin for clothing mattresses, belts, for making shields, making special bags which are used for carrying loads by the donkeys. The Maasai drink blood on special occasions, it is normally given to sick people, women who have given birth, also given to the boys right after circumcision as the first food given to them, it is believed that it is very rich in protein and good for the immune system. The Maasai regard the one who has a good number of cattle and many children as a good and intelligent man, *olparakuoni* or *orkarrsis*, and the opposite of it is *oltorroboni*, the one without cattle, just a hunter of wild animals in order to get his daily food.

Farming among the Maasai was formally regarded an offence to God, *Enkai*, however, due to the economic instability and climate changes, and the loss of livestock, for example 2009-11, which was caused by drought and diseases, many of the Maasai are forced to find jobs in towns while others had started to engage in agriculture as their primary mode of subsistence. The Maasai are now growing in numbers and are producing cash and food crops i.e. maize, beans, wheat, and sunflower and so on. They also engage in different business activities, especially buying and selling cattle and crops. Due to this reason the Maasai are no longer purely nomadic, but semi nomadic as they are now engaging in other and different activities rather than depending only on cattle. These changes also change their way of living, the Maasai have started to construct permanent houses.

2.4 Religious Life

The Maasai, like other ethnic groups in Africa, have their own way of worship. The Maasai have no doubt about God's existence. They believe that God, *Enkai* existed, exists and will exist. They are religious people just like other African ethnic groups, and their lives are characterized by worship. The Maasai used *Enkai* primarily to refer to God, whom they consider as a morally upright being, merciful, protector, and guardian. God, *Enkai*, is a word for the deity, and is neither male nor female. They also regard *Enkai* as Holy, infallible, the provider of rain and cattle, the sustainer, the ultimate controller, who is the first and the last, and the universal creator. *Enkai* is the source of life of all living organisms.

The Maasai conceptualize their God, *Enkai*, as rain, they believe that God is a spirit without a form. In Maasai there is not any picture or symbols to represent God; this is because God has no form. The Maasai believe that there is only one God, *Enkai*, and originator of all things, macro and micro organisms. In Maasai, *Enkai* is the first and the last who knows everything, *Enkai* is everything in the Maasai land, guiding, protecting, teaching, and giving the Maasai all his basic needs especially cattle, grass and all blessings.

The Maasai believe that *Enkai* is the High God, *Enkai* brings rainfall, which can give water and grass for their animals, so sometimes rainfall is known as *Enkai*. *Enkai* who brings rainfall to the Maasai is dwelling in the sky, *Ekai eshumata*, which literally means the one who is above or in the sky.⁴¹ *Enkai* could very well be called a sky God not only because of His name *eneshumata*, but because he is believed to reside in the sky. However, at the same time God is always near people, he is omnipresent, *altaani dapash*.⁴²

Another name for God in Maasai is *parsae* which means the one whom we worship; this name for God among the Maasai is mostly used by women when they say their prayers.

⁴¹ Hauge 1979, 17

⁴² Interview Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012 Masama.

When the Maasai call upon God in their prayers, they often say the God of Mr. So and So, mentioning the names of well known and respected ancestors just as the Old Testament often said, the God of Abraham, the God of Jacob, and the God of Isaac.⁴³

Enkai is always good and has none of the attributes of the devil. The Maasai worship their God in the open. The Maasai has no holy buildings or shrines for *Enkai*. This means that the places for worshipping *Enkai* are not fixed. The one who decides the right place to worship is called *oloiboni*⁴⁴. There are, however, certain places where the Maasai believe that God is dwelling, for example in a tree called *oreteti loo ngaik* found in the rivers. During the time of drought the Maasai go under this tree to ask *Enkai* for forgiveness and have intercession prayers like asking for rainfall or to cure a certain disease.

The Maasai pray to God every day, in the morning and also in the evening. After milking the cows, any woman of each family offers some milk to *Enkai* by throwing it in the direction of the morning sun. Then she fills the lid of her calabash once more with milk and this time she throws the milk towards the west. When doing so, she says short prayers to Enkai. This prayer is called *esayata enasirie* morning prayers. When I was very young I observed my mother in the morning and evening doing prayers by the use of milk, this is a short prayer which I crammed from my mother during those times of childhood: “*Enkai papa lang otii keper kiomon naa pee ipaliki iyiook, mimut iyiook iltungana linono lintaiyio iyie openy too nkaik inono. Tangamu naa kule nikincho iyie, ingurrie iyiook nirripiyiook openy. Olaitorani lang kiomon iyie esaae*⁴⁵”.

Translation in English: “Our Enkai, the maker of everything, we pray you not to destroy the creation you have made with your own hands. Receive the milk we give you our God, so that you may share, or you may know that whatever you give us we are ready to return it to you. Amen”.⁴⁶

⁴³ Hauge 1979, 18.

⁴⁴ Medicineman/deviner/prophet

⁴⁵ Amen.

⁴⁶ My mother’s prayers.

3.0 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE OF THE MAASAI MALE CIRCUMCISION RITUAL

3.1 Introduction.

Circumcision among the Maasai is practiced for both boys and girls, but in 1998 the government of the United Republic of Tanzania enacted a law to stop circumcision for girls. In despite of this law still the Maasai circumcise girls in a secret way right after the girl is born. The Maasai believe that circumcision is a gift from God, *Enkai*,⁴⁷ so there is no way to escape because it was commanded by God, *Enkai*, and you can participate in religious affairs only if you pass through circumcision, whether you are a boy or a girl.⁴⁸ Circumcision is a means and procedure of climbing the society's ladder to maturity and adulthood.⁴⁹ Although circumcision is a very painful operation, the boys are expected to remain quiet and endure the pain. Before I go on with explaining the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual let us look at the reasons for practice at this ritual. They are as follows:

Firstly, Maasai male circumcision ritual creates an identity which every Maasai male must pass through. Circumcision is strictly practiced and this becomes therefore one of the permanent and vital branding of all Maasai identity.⁵⁰

Secondly, Maasai circumcision separates one step from another through the life of a Maasai, this is to say, it separates childhood and adulthood, the cutting of the flesh turns a boy into the man. Without circumcision one is never called an adult. Circumcision is the first and only qualification for one being a full man. The uncircumcised person even if he is an old man, is put in the category of children; circumcision changes the title of a boy to become a real Maasai man ready to protect his society as a soldier.⁵¹ He is called a *morán*, meaning a warrior.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ole Tionga 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁴⁸ Interview with Samuel Mollel 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁴⁹ Parsalaw 1999, 41

⁵⁰ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser 23.08.2012, Masama.

⁵¹ Interview with Kashuma 12.07.2012, Irkaswa

Thirdly, male circumcision is a mark of unity with the people in the society; the boy is sealed to his people and his people to him. This is a religious step, during and after circumcision, the elders gave the initiate blessings which bind him with the society and their God, Enkai.⁵²

Circumcision also enables the initiate to get the moral teachings of the society during the seclusion; the young men should undergo a period of education or traditional schooling. These teachings are all about society's life and matters which equip them to live now as full members of the Maasai society. These teachings also include how to fight with the enemies, like the lion, how to have courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience. These trainings also equip the initiates mentally, bodily, emotionally and morally, for adolescence and adulthood. The initiate advances to a young adult in the eyes of the society.

For the Maasai a man has to pass three stages in his life, boyhood, warrior hood, and elder hood, the middle stage warrior hood is only received from circumcision. After circumcision the warrior has to be given military responsibilities, this is as protector of the Maasai society, making sure that the cattle have good pastures and enough water⁵³. Also after circumcision the warriors are allowed to participate in worship as free members of the Maasai religion, the right for marriage, to have children, to feel bravely as a Maasai, to have freedom and power, and leadership.

3.2 The Days before Circumcision

When a father wants to circumcise his grown son for the first time, he must undergo certain traditional rituals. These traditional rituals are first of all for his own sake as a grown up father and secondly for the sake of his children he wants to circumcise

The permission for initiation of boys among the Maasai is always given by the religious man known as *oloiboni*, (sing.) or *iloibonok*, (Pl). *Iloibonok* are very respected and feared

⁵² Interview with Kashuma 12.07.2012, Irkaswa

⁵³ My observation, I was a warrior one time, I experienced this function as a warrior

people due to their religious duties and also as mediators between God, *Enkai* and the Maasai tribe as a whole. These mediators belong to the sub clan called *Ngidong'i*, of the big *Ilaiser* clan⁵⁴. Female circumcision is different from boys, because there is no permission given from *Oloiboni*, instead parents decide themselves when the operation will take place. This is after their daughters have reached puberty⁵⁵.

3.2.1 Going to *Oloiboni*

A special delegation called *olamal*, led by the father /guardian of the forthcoming age set, is awaiting initiation sets of the first consultation with their *oloiboni*. Members of any special delegation *olamal*, in consultation with their religious man, do not carry any protective weapons with them, e.g. spears, shields, etc.⁵⁶ However, they can have their swords to help them to eat meat and other uses on their journey but not for defensive purposes, because this is a religious journey. They believe strongly that God, *Enkai*, is taking care of them. When asked, “what if something fierce happens?” the delegation simply answers through the elder. “We have not heard that this has ever happened.”⁵⁷

The first delegation, *olamal*, consists of four respected elders and some boys selected from different corners of a given area. For instance, the boys were about ten from Irkaswa, Kitenden, Leragwa, Olmolong, and Elerai. The leader of this delegation of elders, *olamal* usually has special qualifications, he is particularly the father of that age set. He should be available to become the father of that age set, which is an exacting job. He represents his age set group to the boys. He instructs them in all things concerning warrior hood, in its duties, privileges, and ceremonies. He is blessed by his age set.⁵⁸

In order to perform circumcision the father of this age-set must qualify as a man of wisdom, good character, be married and preferably with many wives with children and

⁵⁴ Interview with Lenkai, 12.07.2012 Irkaswa.

⁵⁵ Interview with Lenkai, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁵⁶ Interview with Melami, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁵⁷ Interview with Olaiwanani, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁵⁸ Interview with Lomunyaka, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

cattle. A leader among the Maasai is selected by his peer groups because of his pureness as a Maasai. This standard can only be judged by being and living as a Maasai.⁵⁹

When the delegation, *olamal*, will goes to *oloiboni*, they take one young heifer, bull which is not castrated and honey as a presents. The bull and the heifer symbolize the full fertility for the age set.⁶⁰ The present of both sexes of animals to the religious man will in turn mean the first good wishes for full fertility to the newly formed age-set. The gift of their own animals to their religious leader is more precious than giving him money; this is due to the fact that, cattle are objects of affection and supreme religious significance. To the Maasai, cattle give meaning to life, and mean life in themselves.⁶¹

The special delegation comes back from the religious man, *oloiboni*, with special instructions to be done concerning the boys awaiting initiation. But the most remarkable thing they come with is the new name from their *oloiboni* and the name must have a good meaning. Historically the following are the names of the Maasai age set; *Ilkigirio*, *Ilimirimi*, *Ilmeiri*, *Ilkidotu*, *Ilnyangusi Il emek*, *Ilkitoip*, *Ilaimer*, *Iltalalani*, *Iltwati*, *Iltareto*, *Ilterito*, *Ilmeshuki*, *Ilseuri*, *Ilkishumu*, *Ilantiis*, *Ilkishili*, *Ilkuryanga*, and *Ilnyanguloni*.⁶²

These are the Maasai age sets which are still remembered and others still exist. By the way what do we mean by age set? Age set is a social group whose members are recruited on the basis of their approximate age into a named group of age-mates, who are organized as a corporate body and have a hierarchically ranked position in relation to each other in such groups⁶³. An age set comprises those persons only who are recruited during the same tribe-wide open initiated period. The membership of an age-set is life long. The age sets are distinguished from each other by a closed period of seven years, during which new initiates cannot be recruited. Opening a new initiation period initiates

⁵⁹ Benson, J.S, 1974, 176.

⁶⁰ Interview with Rev Yoshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

⁶¹ Interview with Rev Yoshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

⁶² Seneto Parpai reseach, a Maasai student at Natal University, south Africa.

⁶³ Hurskainen 1984.29

the formation of the new age set after again another seven years of the practice of male circumcision.⁶⁴

3.2.2 Going to Engipaata

The first ceremony which opens a new age set is *Engipaata*. This is a big ceremony which comprised young uncircumcised boys from the age of 10-18 years previously, now the age has changed to 10-15. The function of this ceremony is only for purification for a new beginning of a new age set.⁶⁵

During the time of *engipaata*, these boys who are starting a new age set had to be taken in a place where there is a natural dam full of water, this is a place whereby purification should take place. Specifically, the dam belongs to the Maasai; the dam is used both for ritual occasions and for watering cattle of the surrounding areas⁶⁶. After these young boys stayed over night at the ritual dam the initiates, in the following morning at dawn will take off their togas and other outfits, and get into the dam for a thorough washing of their bodies. No doubt that the meaning of washing is purification for the following sins like stealing, killing, fornication⁶⁷, etc. it is the first washing of sins since childhood until that particular time of initiation.

Apart from washing themselves into the ritual dam initiates will receive many blessings from elders, when they go back to a selected kraal of a perfect elder. An elder who must be a respected one, of good conduct, having several wives with children. He must also be wealthy enough to at least accommodate sufficiently the congregation of the boys and their father.⁶⁸ Special appointed elders, usually eight in numbers will stand around the boys and pronounce special blessings for that occasion. The boys will certainly respond *naayai*, which is the nearest meaning of “may it be so my God.”⁶⁹ The word *naayai* is

⁶⁴ Interview with a group of elders 24.07.2012 Kitenden

⁶⁵ Interview with Loserian, 24.07.2012, Kitenden.

⁶⁶ Interview with Ev. Lomayiani, 24.07.2012 Kitenden.

⁶⁷ Interview with Ev. Lomayiani, 24.07.2012 kitenden.

⁶⁸ Interview with Ole Nailugo, Kitenden, 24.07.2012

⁶⁹ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

indeed equivalent to the Christian word *Amen*; also Solomon Ole Saibulu in his book writes the word *naayai* can mean “please God.”⁷⁰

The following is just a part of the blessing itself;

The blessing in Maasai language

Endumunyan anaa retet

Endoropilo

Mishoo Enkai indai enkarna

Mishoo ndai enamelok

Mishoo ndai olporor

Endubul anaa ngujit

Endahoito anaa ildoinyo

Entaa Ilmuran sedan

Esula inguapin

Metamelono ntai kule

Metamelono ntai ingariak

Mishoo ntai Enkai ilpuli

Mishoo ntai Enkai ingera oo ng'ishu

Mishoo ntai Enkai endaa

Mishoo ntai enabaiki

Translation in English

May you be blessed like *retet* (figus)

May you have a good smell.

May God give you a name.

May He give you a sweet one.

May God give you an age-set.

May you multiply like grass.

May you stand like mountains.

May you be good warriors.

May you defeat and conquer.

May milk be sweet for you.

May waters be sweet for you.

May God give you meat feasts.

May God give you children and cattle.

May God give you food.

May God give you sufficiently.⁷¹

In the above blessings as it can be seen four main things are mentioned. First the identity, i.e. name and the age set system. Secondly, ceremonies of the tribe, thirdly, bravery and strength throughout their life long, finally but not least, wealth, i.e. wives and children, and cattle. There are mainly three attributes; identity, responsibility, and wealth. Identity, as a people with soul, responsibility as they are part of the society, i.e. the Maasai society, and wealth as part of their right⁷².

The second *engipaata* will take place after an interval of one or two years. It is always performed when there is rainfall so the ritual dam may contain enough water. The

⁷⁰ Saibulu 1981, 67

⁷¹ My observation

⁷² Rev Joshua Laiser 24.08.2012 Masama.

procedure for that second pilgrimage, which is the last one, is the same as the first one.⁷³ But the kraal can change to be another one according to qualities or preferences desired by the father of the age set. This final *engipaata* will mark the official beginning of circumcision of all those boys for whom their fathers had already done the preliminary rituals of killing animals, as explained in the following.

3.2.3 The Killing of Animals

The killing of animals, as said above, is for the sake of the father himself and for the children he wants to circumcise. The killing of animals is directed to the father while other animals are for the children to be circumcised.⁷⁴

3.2.3.1 The Killing of *Olkine loo m-benek*

Literally translated it means *the goat leaves*. This is a perfect goat killed some few metres away from the kraal. When asked what qualities a perfect animals has, Rev Joshua Laiser said;

“a perfect animal must have good health and be fat enough. It must have good color and not mixed ones. It must have good horns, which points upward, long enough, and equal size and not broken. It must have a tail, a good tail not cut or broken pointing to its proper direction. Generally without any organ missing for example eyes, ears, hind or forelimbs etc”⁷⁵.

The qualities mentioned apply for cows, sheep and goats also. The goat is killed at about two hundred meters from the kraal. All the meat is roasted and not cooked.

The most important occasion after the meat is the sharing of brisket, *engiyeu*, between the ritual father and his guardian. The guardian must be a man of good character, polite, wise, and therefore to be respected by the ritual father himself and his whole family for

⁷³ Interview with traditional leader, Ole Moinget, 23.07.2012, Olmolong.

⁷⁴ Interview with Rev William Mollel, 29.07.2012, Moshi.

⁷⁵ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

their good lives. Usually he should be of the same age set with that of the ritual father. When the following special blessings are pronounced, the brisket is shared ritually by the guardian to the ritual father⁷⁶.

In Maasai

Engiyeu aai taramatihare

Iata ingishu inono oo ngera

Tanapa olosho

Mikitanapa siye olosho

In English

The one I gave the chest live and prosper.

Be prosperous with your animals and children.

May you take care of the society.

May the society take care of you.⁷⁷

There are many outfits which the ritual father must have. The father is shaved and on top of his usual red dyed toga he puts on a calf skin. He also puts ostrich feathers on his head using a specially made of cowhide. Blue beads worn around the neck, and coiled brass are worn on both ears denotes that he has some feminine responsibilities. The coiled brass is worn by women on different occasions. A flywhisk is another outfit as a symbol of elder hood and it is only used by elders for expelling flies around. A black wooden knob Kerrie is given to the ritual father as a symbol of wisdom and leadership⁷⁸. The outfit is only held by a traditional leader, *olaigwani*, and in these respect men only, for women do not have such roles. A bow and a quiver filled with some special made arrows for bleeding cows are also given to the ritual father. Another important thing is the traditional chair which symbolizes elder hood. Later in the evening the ritual father will continue with more other rituals including the blessing of animals, cattle, calves, sheep, and goats. The blessing of the animals accompanied by sprinkling of a special mixture of milk and water, put together into the calabash with the grass stopper, and then used to bless the animals. The blessing of the animals will take place while the ritual father will be sitting on the traditional chair at the right side of the main entrance of the animals⁷⁹.

⁷⁶ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama

⁷⁷ My observation

⁷⁸ Interview with Rev William Mollel, 29.07.201, Moshi.

⁷⁹ My observation 10.08.2012, Ormelili.

The ritual of killing animals will end on the following morning. The main purpose of killing these animals is to bring the person from childhood into full maturity. It differentiates the ritual father from what he was before when he was without any fatherly responsibility. All those outfits he puts on as a father and elder give him a sense of higher level of maturity than he had before.

3.2.3.2 The Killing of *Olkiteng loo Ngulalen*

This is a perfect ox killed at about eight kilometers away from the kraal. Its literal meaning is the ox of pegs. The killing is done and people sleep there to form a meat camp for four days, sometimes it could be three to five days for those who are not having good numbers due to theirs being odd. The ritual father goes to the bush and prepares two ear pegs for his lower ear lobes.⁸⁰ It is a custom among the Maasai to pierce their ears in several places in order to wear various ornaments.

Some certain parts of meats called *ngupesi* are taken home by two or four women, the mother of the ritual father should be among the women. The purpose of this ritual is not far from the previous one. Generally the killing of this animal is to show that one is now to endure pains of life going to face him. Carrying the ear pegs symbolize one's burden and hardships of life which he must confront⁸¹.

3.2.3.3 The killing of *Olkiteng loo l-baa*

This also should be a perfect ox, killed also for the sake of the father. It is killed at about two hundred meters from the kraal. During this the ritual father puts on many outfits as described before at the killing of the first animal. But just to add some to the list, the ritual father is given a long, thick cattle stick, snuff or tobacco container, a sword to be fastened to his waist and new hide shoes⁸². The ritual father is also shaved and puts on a non-beaded goat skin worn by men, *orkila*. These outfits have different meaning from

⁸⁰ Interview with Ole Saning, 12.08.2012, Irkaswa.

⁸¹ Interview with Mayasek Oltwati 12.08.2012 Irkaswa.

⁸² Interview with Nguyaa, 12.08.2012, Irkaswa.

one another. A long cattle stick is for attending cattle while the snuff or tobacco container is a symbol of elder hood. A sword is for defending purposes and the non-beaded goat skin symbolizes male responsibilities. The shaving makes the ritual father a new matured person and shoes symbolize the new life journey to go through by the help of them.⁸³

The important occasions for this ritual include a special ritual fight game done outside the kraal by two equal groups of men and women. *Morans*, boys and girls are not allowed to participate in this game. The fourth time of the game is the winning time by women⁸⁴. Four in Maasai symbolize the number of completeness⁸⁵

More ritual occasion will take place at the roasting place of the animal between the ritual father, his mother, and the first wife if he has more than one. The following blessing will take place between the ritual father and his first wife with exchanging new whippy sticks.⁸⁶

Maasai

The ritual father	His wife responds
<i>Shomoo kitoo</i>	<i>Kiboita ooye</i>
<i>Shomo kitoo</i>	<i>Kiboita ooye</i>

In English

The ritual father	His wife responds
May you reach elder hood	Together with you.
May you rich elder hood	Together with you. ⁸⁷

The above exchanged blessing by the couple is an evidence of strong love and respect in the oneness until death separate them. At home the ritual of blessing animals, cattle, sheep, and goats is done as it was described before. There is also a name blessing between the ritual father and his mother by elders in the late evening.

⁸³ Interview with Nguyaa Oltwati, 12.08.2012 Irkaswa.

⁸⁴ Interview with Medot Loibangutii, 12.08.2012, Irkaswa.

⁸⁵ Interview with Ole Sipira, 12.08.2012 Irkaswa.

⁸⁶ Interview with Simanga, church elder, 13.08.2012, Irkaswa.

⁸⁷ My observation

In the following morning a sharing of animal brisket by all the children of the ritual father is done. The meaning of this lovely sharing of the brisket is to symbolize a sincere escort as well as paying respectful tribute and well wishing by the children to their father's ritual. Secondly, the sharing together of the brisket for that family, children from their father can symbolize their birth as real members of that family.⁸⁸

After the children ate meat they put out a single piece of fat to their father's neck and, the fat is put around the neck ritually. This is equivalent to receiving or taking one's birth rights. The putting of fat is done following age seniority; older boys start first and then girls following the girl's age seniority as well.⁸⁹ This sharing feast can be shared with neighbors, Ole Sarika add that neighbors share everything.⁹⁰

When we come to the meaning of killing this ox we find that it has a very important role to the ritual father. The ox of wounds *olkiteng loo L-baa*, belongs to the totality of animals slaughtered ritually.⁹¹ The ox of wound is literally translated and the following is the elaboration of that literal meaning; the wound refer to the battering that time inflicts on man especially in the relationships between man and woman and those of a man and a child.⁹² From childhood to adulthood and more over every human being is subject to innumerable wounds of life, some wounds are consequences of ones faults while others are quite accidental.⁹³ But all these have to be cleared off ritually in order to live another phase of life in a good harmony with God and people as Ole Saning'o comments:

Sometimes rituals are performed to purify people who have committed serious moral offences and to renew their good relation with other members of the tribe.⁹⁴

More clear meaning of this ox is given by Ole Tipilit in his book; that *olkiteng lorrbaa*, which literally is an ox to inflict injures, this is a purification ceremony whereby all of the elders past misdeeds are forgiven⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

⁸⁹ Interview with Ole Sarika, 12. 08.2012, Irkaswa.

⁹⁰ Interview with Ole Sarika, 12. 08.2012, Irkaswa.

⁹¹ Interview with Rev Emmanuel Laiser, 10. 08.2012. Moshi.

⁹² Interview with Lee Olduka, 25.07 2012 Olmolong.

⁹³ Interview with Lee Olduka, 25.07 Olmolong.

⁹⁴ Interview with Ole Saning'o , 25.07.2012 Olmolong.

The killing of an unblemished ox gives an impression that the ritual father also become unblemished hence becomes fit and acceptable to his Maasai society. Another purpose of killing this ox involves the rest of the members of the ritual father's who will accompany him in his whole course of life. Further more the ox prepares the father to be a whole some involvement into his society. The following gives a dramatized elaboration of the ritual;

The changes of a man during this period of life are dramatized during this ceremony. There is a mock beating between the man and his wife, a mock fight between the men and women present and beating of the cows by the man.⁹⁶

The wounds of the *olkiteng loo l-baa* refer directly to the wounds that result from those beatings. The time in which the feast is celebrated is also a time of deep concern at which the husband father needs a merciful attitude to be able to hence forth take full responsibilities for his children in leading them through the various stages of initiation and maturation. Through this ceremony of *olkiteng loo l-baa* a man enters into a relationship with his children like that between mother and child and through it he gains entrance to the world of ritual which he has to perform on his offspring⁹⁷.

To finish up this ritual, Ole Tipilit shows to us how great the necessity of the ritual is to every Maasai elder, he said;

each elder must undergo this ceremony individually in order to be allowed to initiate his children into manhood and womanhood when the time comes.⁹⁸

3.2.3.4 The killing of *Olkiteng le Ndomono*

The preceding ceremony after *olkiteng loo l-baa* was killed for the father's ritual, is *olkiteng le ndomono*. This ceremony is directed to the initiate who is awaiting for circumcision, whether a boy or a girl. In literal translation it can be the ox of

⁹⁵ Tipilit 1980, 184

⁹⁶ Interview with Ole Twanga, 17.07.2012 Irkaswa.

⁹⁷ Interview with Ole Twanga 17.07.2012, Irkaswa.

⁹⁸ Tipilit 1980, 184

ceremonies.⁹⁹ *Olkiteng le ndomono* has another name called *olkiteng le kutukaji*, which means of the door. It is called so because this ox is killed in the kraal near the door of the initiate mother's house. The animal will be caught by two *morans* outside the kraal and led into the kraal up to the right place of killing. Standing in the right position of the main entrance the mother of the initiate will sprinkle a mixture of milk and water to the ox accompanied with the following blessings.

Maasai

Tumunyana taa pa sinaai

Taa oloo ndomon oo ngera.

Tamelono taa pa sinaai.

English

Be of blessing you my dear.

Be of ceremonies of children.

Be sweet you my dear.¹⁰⁰

Sharing of the animal's blood mixed with fresh milk by the elders first, then children (boys and girls) and later women, is one very important occasion. *Morans* do not partake because that blood has been seen by women, hence it is a taboo. But the whole tribe has this true belief about that nourishment. "Blood is life, the life of our herds which passes into our body and gives us strength:"¹⁰¹

There are outfits worn by the initiate, a beaded hide cloak used by girls is put on by the initiate. The father remains as usual but the mother puts on garments. She will decorate herself with tradition ornaments. The common thing of all them (initiate, mother and father) is the head shaving.

Another important occasion is the ritual of drinking water in the late evening, the water is brought from a nearby river and put in every calabash there are four small river stones. The meaning of this is to symbolize the imparting of the same hardness to one's heart so as to ritually prepare the initiate to face courageously all sorts of difficulties and ills through his life.¹⁰² It is true that life difficulties cannot be confronted with a softened

⁹⁹Interview with Ole mbao, 17.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁰⁰ My observation

¹⁰¹ Interview with Ole Naronyo, 24.07.2012, Kitenden.

¹⁰² Inerviued with Yona, 21.07.2012, Irkaswa.

heart if one wants to conquer. The giving of the new name to the initiate is done after the ritual of drinking water. A special blessing is pronounced by one of the elders.

In Maasai

Mikinjooo Enkai ina arna

Mikinjoo nimiliare.

In English

My God give you that name.

May you give yours for ever.

The initiate's father and mother will be called (one after another) after the very new name of their initiate and is given some blessings also accompany the calling afterwards. Here follow part of it.

In Maasai

Mishoo ndai Enkai ina arna.

Mishoo ndai nimiliare.

Mishoo ndai Enkai ngera naipot ina arna

Mishoo ndai Enkai ngishu oo ngera

In English

May God give you that name.

May God give you for ever.

May God give you children who will call that name.

May God give you children and cattle.

After the blessing of the parents by all the elders present inside the house, there follows a breaking of thighbone of the ox ritually. The breaking of the bone is done by the selected elder of moral conduct and good personal qualities. He does it once and not more. This breaking of the thighbone may symbolize a strong confirmation of the initiate and his parent's acceptance to the new name which bears them some identity.¹⁰³

Therefore it is a shared sense of identity through new names. Another clear meaning of the new name to the initiate is to be a seal for a new life anticipated within the whole society of the Maasai. The general meaning of the ox can therefore, be a kind of preparation for the recognition of the initiate entering into the life anticipated as a matured person. The giving of the new name, the drinking of the fresh blood mixed with milk, and water and the breaking of the thigh bone is an on going process of the one getting into matured life from childhood. The ritual is an introduction of the initiate to his or her own family and society after childhood recognition. Full recognition of a person as an adult for the Maasai is attained after circumcision.

¹⁰³ Interview with Luka Saiguran, 25.07.2012 Olmolong.

3.2.3.5 The Killing of *Olkitupukunet*

This is the second animal killed for the sake of the initiate. It is a perfect ram killed just at the door of the initiate mother's house. The ram is killed by women and no men will eat the meat for it is ritually done by women. In a closer translation the ram stands as the one which leads out. The ram will be brought from outside the kraal by two women carrying the ram on their backs. The women will go twice round the usual branch of tree called *oltim* which is used to shut the main entrances and on the third time, they proceed to the door of the initiate's mother's house. The initiate will be inside the house when the ram is being brought and killed. A special meat called *enaikuti* is served first by women and the initiate is now free to go outside of the house.

The initiate must have some outfits, the shaving of head, and the putting on of a single skin cloak marks a new stage of life for the initiate. There is another outfit known as *olekimojik*, which is worn around the neck. That is a kind of amulet for preventing any ill will from outsiders. Another outfit is from the skin of the ram called *olkereti*, which is specially made to put around the neck of the initiate and another piece worn by his mother around the wrist. These long thin strips of leather worn by the initiate and the mother have the function of protecting them from evil and misfortunes, for according to a common proverb, God said, "help me and I will help you."¹⁰⁴

Another important occasion in this ritual is when the initiate, with other two people including his mother, go four times around the branch of the tree outside the kraal. Going slowly in a single file every person holding tightly two goat dungs, called *ilkileleng'* in between their toes. In this going round, the initiate remains last. This can symbolize obedience to all those who are ahead of him, that is to be ready to follow the steps of one's ancestors as a dying Maasai elder uttered these words: "I have spoken and acted bravely all the time and I feel good about it. I hope my children will be able to follow in my foot steps."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Nankokoo, 25.07.2012 Olmolong.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Ole Twanga, 12.07.2012 Irkaswa.

The initiate is told to press hard the things between the toes so as not to drop any of them, also to follow carefully people ahead of him. After that all the goat dugs are kept on the roof of the initiate mother's house.¹⁰⁶ One should not, therefore, miss the following and do what his ancestors did. However, it should be clear that the Maasai did not give sacrifices to their dead but what the ancestors did for the present generations is always respected and remembered. It is very common for instance to hear a dying father or mother summons his or her children and forbids them on certain issues, for whoever goes against those orders, the father or mother will punish the offender while in the ground (dead).

Firstly, the general meaning of killing this ram is first to be the handing over by the initiate as the name indicates *olkitupukunet* to the new stage of life anticipated after operation. The translation of that which brings or leads out has a clear symbolic meaning of the animal to the initiate. This animal is the last one of all the animals killed before the initiate's circumcision. It is the showing in public of the initiate, and now he has reached the final permit before the real transformation, which is circumcision¹⁰⁷.

Secondly, as we have seen the women participating in the ritual is a symbol of grave traditional role as mothers, moulding one's life portraits as Fedders comment, a woman is literally a home maker.¹⁰⁸

Thirdly, to show the eventual role of the initiate as to follow carefully the steps of the ancestors and one of the very important steps to be carried on by all Maasai generations is the preserving of cattle, sheep, and goats, it is a pastoral culture that is meaningful to Maasai, still there are many other ancestral things for one to preserve¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Mekuretu Lobikieki, 12.07.2012 Irkaswa.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Obed Mollel 25.07.2012, Olmolong.

¹⁰⁸ Fedders, 1974.15

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ole Nailugo, 24.07.2012 Kitenden

3.3 The Beginning of Circumcision and the Circumcision Day

3.3.1 The bringing of *Elatim*

Before the day of circumcision, the celebration of *elatim* starts. In the morning about 11.00 am two *morans*, preferably those who brought water on the previous day, and the initiate himself go to the forest to bring a special branch of tree known as *elatim*. The following types of trees are used *oloilaei*, *oloirien*, and *oiti*, these types of trees are used because they have good omen¹¹⁰. The use of the branch of the tree depends on the family clan, for example *illaiser* clan use *oloirien*, and *illmollelian* use *oloilaei*.¹¹¹ After reaching the very type of tree in the forest one *moran* sprinkles some milk to the tree before he cuts it down using an axe and not any other instrument. The milk is sprinkled from a small calabash closed with green grass; green grass is a symbol of life in Maasai society¹¹². During the time of sprinkling milk, the following blessing is pronounced the one who will cut the tree down.

Maasai

One Moran: *Leshani tumunyana taa*

Response: *Naai*

One Moran: *Intamelono ena masho*

Response: *Naai*

One Moran: *intumurru taa ena masho*

Response: *Naai*

English

The tree, be blessed.

Amen.

Be sweet in this event.

Amen.

Be enjoyable in this event.

Amen.

The *moran* did not bring the *elatim* directly home, instead it is left bent over against a tree at about fifty meters from the boma of circumcision. It will be there until tomorrow after circumcision. The *morans* and the initiate will be received by the already circumcised boys. Many times, just at the first glance, they take off his single black cloth garment so that he remains totally naked for everybody to see. After circumcision, the branch of the

¹¹⁰ Interview with Yohana Narewaki, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹¹¹ Interview with Ole Sikorei, 12.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹¹² Discussion with recently circumcised school boys Enduimet Secondary school, Olmolong, 21.07.2012

tree will be brought to the boma of circumcision. The function of the branch of tree is to show people who are passing by that there is a ceremony at that at that boma. Also it separates the boma in which the occasion takes place from the other bomas¹¹³.

3.3.2 The Singing of the Abusing Songs

Throughout that evening the initiate is surrounded by recluses singing and disgracing him. Spitting on his face, insulting him of his mother, father, sisters, and the in-laws to be, is part of the singing. Sometimes beating him by their arrows and all kinds of mockery are applied to the initiate.¹¹⁴ Here follows an introduction of one of the many songs.

Maasai

English

Olayioni kiyengi mangiteng

You boy you will be slaughtered like a cow.

Kimorr taata gutunyi oo minyi.

We will insult your mother and your father.

Kimor taata eningito

they will hear our insults.

Then every bad insult of incest which is not worthy of being mentioned, follows at length for everybody, old and young, to hear. The motive for such songs is given below;

during the entire day before circumcision, the youths who have already been circumcised sing songs of encouragement to the expectant boy, such songs are crudely worded. These songs are meant to insult the boy and anger him so much that he will be better able to stand the pain of the knife.¹¹⁵

Later the boy is given fresh milk by his mother and he sleeps in his mother's house until 4.00 am when a final session of singing is done. But there is another fact about the boy to be circumcised; the singing continues until it is time to sleep and, as the others retire one

¹¹³ Interview with Ev. Yusuf 18.08.2012, Iirkaswa

¹¹⁴ My observation during the initiation ceremonies, and my experiences, also during my research I attended several initiation ceremonies, at Iirkaswa, Kitenden, Ormelili, and Olmolong.

¹¹⁵ Tipilit 1980, 79.

by one the candidate for circumcision often faces a sleepless night.¹¹⁶ The initiate becomes calm.

3.3.3 The final Singing and the Cold Bath

From about 4.am in the morning the final session of singing to the boy is done. This time it is done more vigorously than before for the time of pain is nearer. The initiate is given fresh milk after the singing and thereafter a cold water bath near *olatim*, *olatim* is a branch of tree used for closing the main entrance. Inside the water pot is an axe *endolu* and a traditional needle called *oltidu*. The head of the axe is mainly to lower the temperature of the water. More about this bathing is given by Ole Tipilit as follow;

This water is called *engare endolu* (literally axe water) has been kept outside overnight with an axe head placed inside the container to make it colder. This washing symbolically marks the boy's entrance into a whole new life by cleaning away all the wrong doing he has committed during his past life as a youth. On a more practical level it also numbs him somewhat for the operation.¹¹⁷

In a practical sense water helps to reduce pain of the knife during the operation of circumcision, and secondly for purification of the boy's body. After the bath, the boy takes a big hide to the right side of the main entrance of the kraal ready for the operation. He sits on the hide and being supported from the backside by a perfect elder.

The surgeon, *olamuratani*, usually comes from a hidden place and smears a white chalk to the boys face and to his own. The use of this white chalk or wash is to perfect them from evil's eyes, or people with ill will. Another use of the white chalky mineral is given by Ole Tipilitit,

Once the boy is set the circumciser splashes his face with *enduroto*, a chalky white mineral mixed with water or milk which is often used in Maasai ceremonies as a symbolic blessing.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Tipilit 1980, 80.

¹¹⁷ Tipilit 1980, 80

¹¹⁸ Tipilit 1980, 81

The operation is performed in a quick way usually not more than five minutes and it is not true to take less than a minute. However, it depends on how quick and sharp the surgeon is.

After the operation is done the wound is washed using fresh milk from a perfect cow, the cow by which all calves are all living. The washing of the wound with milk is done purposely because milk is commonly used by the Maasai as one very important item for performing blessing and purification. Also the knife used for operation is washed as a blessing by the same milk. If the initiate has bravely persevered the pain then his relatives rewards him with cows, goats, sheep. These rewarding is done before the initiate is taken to his mother's house. No rewarding is given to the initiate if he has not pursued the pain. Again the celebration will neither be done nor cheerful if the initiate kicks the knife.

Most of the time the initiate will be held in contempt, no help is really given to stop pain to the initiate as Saibul says,

But a Maasai will not move, he needs no drugs to overcome the pain, he will rise above the physical torture of the surgery that will make him a man.¹¹⁹

The pain endurance also is believed to have symbolic significance in one's life, the Maasai believe that the youth who survives unflinchingly the pain of such an operation, will emerge as a man able to endure the challenges of life.¹²⁰

The celebration starts officially when a team of girls and *morans* go in a procession outside the kraal to bring *elatim* from where it was put during the last evening. They bring it home through the entrance by singing and it is planted upright to the wall facing the door of the initiate mother's house. The top end of *elatim* is not completely cut. It must have some leaves probably to resemble a lion's tail when a *moran* kills it and holds it to celebrate with. The celebration goes on through singing, and dancing.

¹¹⁹ Saibul 1981, 71

¹²⁰ Tipilit 1980, 77

The full share of alcohol made with honey is served for the elders as a continuation of what was left from yesterday. Milk and meat are served for the rest of the celebrants.

3.3.4 The breaking of *Elatim*

The final event of the celebration is known as the breaking of the *elatim*. It is the final celebration done by all women, mainly those interested in more singing and dancing after the previous one. It is their duty to assemble at the initiate mother's house for the final ritual of singing and dancing.

Including the mother of the initiate, one woman after another holds the *elatim* and jumps high in the air in a response to a solo. This dancing is recognized as a victory over the long hardships of the mother while bringing up the initiate until that particular day the initiate is transformed into adulthood. It is a kind of prayer to God and also a kind of blessing to the initiate parents and to the ritual itself circumcision.¹²¹

I agree that the Maasai women are very closer to their God, *Enkai*, than men, they have many songs of praising, thanking, and praying to God. Men can only have their songs which include war-like, boasting of cattle and cattle theft, about ladies and killing of a lion. So women in the Maasai society pray to God more than men do, of all ritual ceremonies and celebrations, circumcision ceremony is the most celebrated one for it brings together almost all the groups of people in a community. Elders, that is men and women, *morans*, and girls who are their great companions, young ladies and even boys to attend the ceremony. However, boys and children do not attend officially for it is not yet their right. During such ceremony every age-set and both sexes have their proper shares of meat. This means an animal is killed, meat is divided according to the age-set and sexes.

As the recluses enter a new way of life they can not forget two ritual places, the place of the operation as a theatre and the mother's house as a ward;

¹²¹ Interview with Saning'o 25.07.2012, Olmolong.

The fatherly kraal entrance as a place of operation and the mother's house as a secure place of recovery during the seclusion period after operation led themselves as a natural places of initiation.¹²²

Anytime you mention circumcision to a Maasai, he will immediately most likely recall the operation place and the nursing home as both bitter and sacred due to a great pain he experienced at the two places.

3.4 The outfits worn by the Recluse during Seclusion and at the end of Seclusion

The circumcised boy is a special person now; he has to wear some outfits so that he can be differentiated with other people within the Maasai society. In this paper I have to mention and discuss some of the outfits which are very important to the initiate after this time of circumcision.

3.4.1 *Olekimojik*

This outfit is worn around the neck. On each side of *olekimojik* there are small blue beads. A literal translation of *olekimojik* is that which has fingers. Its function mainly is to protect, to kill or stop any ill will from people. Also it is meant to prevent sickness so it is more or less an amulet. It is believed that the *loibonok*, religious men use *olekimojik* to make many of their charms and amulets. It is a kind of a tree and very rarely obtainable. It is put to the initiate two days before circumcision, during *olkitupukunet* ritual.

3.4.2 The Black Skin/Cloth

The black skin is called *olkila orok*, it is worn since *olkitupukunet* as the sole cloth for the recluse and this is always powdered with black charcoal mixed with ghee or butter.

Butter too, of course is a holy object full of meaning. Not only is it meaningful as a wholesome food. Connection with milk and motherhood are obvious too. Butter is used in blessing and various rites.¹²³

¹²² Discussion with circumcised school boys, Longido Secondary school, 26.07.2012, Longido.

¹²³ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser 23.08.2012 Masama.

Its black colour is meant to associate the recluse with a woman's delivery seclusion. Delivery proves fertility of the woman.

3.4.3 Ostrich Feathers, *Loopir*

These are worn by the circumcised boys on their head; by wearing these he becomes quite unclean to the *morans*. He will not leave them off except during the night. By unclean it means any meat and fats touched or even seen by any recluse will not be eaten or used in any form by the *morans*. This outfit is also believed to be protection for the recluse.

3.4.4 Birds, *Motonyi*

These are birds of various good colours and killed by the circumcised boys only, and they are worn on the head together with ostrich feathers. While the ostrich feathers are worn on both sides of the head, right and left, and smoothly lie on shoulders pointing towards the back side, the birds are attached to the shoulders pointing towards the back side, the birds are attached to the feathers but go around the head. Mainly birds are decorating the circumcised boy, but the inner parts (intestines) of the birds which get rotten easily are removed.

3.4.5 *Olmarisian*

This is another outfit which is also worn on the head; it is made by joining together palm tree leaves or any tree of that type, with threads. It is decorated with some beads or cowries shells which denote fertility.

3.4.6 Blue Beads (*Engonongoi*)

These are worn around the neck by the circumcised boys; these are meant to associate the circumcised boy with some feminine qualities.

3.4.7 The Coiled Brass (*Surutia*)

For the circumcised boy he wears a pair of coiled brass hanging in both ears, this is different from circumcised ladies who wears only one coiled brass in one ear, which is the right ear. These coiled brasses also associate with woman characteristics to the recluse.

3.4.8 Beaded Belt (*Engimeita*)

This is a large beaded belt for the circumcised boys fastened on their wrist. It is meant to associate the recluse with girls but is also for decoration. They obtain these belts from girls. This belt should be made from a cow's skin.

3.4.9 Club, *Oloikumu*

This is a short thick piece of club for men recluse only. They are use it to kill birds and not for defensive purposes. However, it is unavoidable to spare the *oloikumu* when a recluse encounters with snakes or any other enemy.

3.4.10 Finger rings, *Ilgiso*

These are normal rings made with brass or beads, no particular reasons for wearing these rings apart from a mere decoration on their fingers. However, it is usually associated with girls who always appear to have many rings on their fingers. Male recluses always go around chasing girls to obtain rings from them. For rings can be put on one. After

seclusion male recluses will return the beaded belt to the owner who must be a girl adding some rings as one way of thanking her for the beaded belt.

3.4.11 Leather Sandals, *Namuka Enjoni*

These shoes are made from a skin of a cow which did not die due to illness or war or was hurt in any part of the body while living. These shoes are worn by both sexes; function is to protect the feet from thorns and hot earth etc. Also the sandals symbolize a new life journey in its ritual sense.

3.4.12 A Bow and Arrows

These are for the boys who are circumcised only and they are meant for killing birds by shooting them. These arrows are also used to threaten girls so as to obtain finger rings from them. The arrows are covered with wax to lessen pain when shooting at girls.

3.4.13 White Chalk, *Enduroto*

This is a white mineral powder mixed with water or milk for the circumcised boys to paint their faces. Its purpose first of all is believed to work as a kind of preventive decoration for evil eyes or bad eyes. By all means, it is the bad eyes of people with strong ill will. Another use is simply for decoration.

3.4.14 During Seclusion

During seclusion there are many restrictions on the recluses. One of the most important restriction include not to work outside the kraal during the night, not to have any sexual intercourse, not to quarrel or fight, not touch any meat, blood, fats to be used by the morans, not to drink water and many other things.

3.4.15 The End of Seclusion

The end of seclusion becomes a long waited for day for all male in recluses. It is a joyous day from the fact that male recluses will receive full rights as junior warriors, *morans*. They are no longer unclean to the *morans*, they will now join with senior *morans* so that they can strengthen their society together, and as Hiebert adds; guarding the country and holding the land¹²⁴.

The beginning of junior *moran* is the beginning of wearing new outfits, they wear the red clothes, have spear, sword, club, shield, and wear *moran* beads on their neck, hands, legs and on their head they applied red ochre for their whole life of *moranhood*.

3.4.16 Taboos and Abstention

There are many taboos imposed to the new *morans*. They are not allowed to use any meat, blood, and fats seen by Maasai women; this is the strangest taboo. Also not to eat other foods apart from milk, meat, blood and fats from animals. A *moran* should not cut his hair unless seriously sick or being taken to jail, school or outside the Maasai community.

¹²⁴ Hiebert 1983,342.

4.0 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MAASAI MALE CIRCUMCISION RITUAL AS AN OBSTACLE FOR THE CHURCH GROWTH IN MAASAI CHRISTIAN CONTEXT.

4.1 The meaning of the term “Church Growth”

The phrase ‘church growth’ is a complex concept to define, particularly because growth itself is a relative term. Growth can be understood in the light of its context since it takes place at different levels, growth is a dynamic word. “This is a word that suggests mobility. Literally it means increase, development, expansion, and enlargement.”¹²⁵

As I said above, church growth is a complex phenomenon because it takes place at different levels and in many dimensions. It involves the empirical observation and measurement but also theological understanding of the growth of the church. “Church growth is that holistic expansion of the church which can be expected spontaneously from everyday action of the church functioning as a redemptive community of God.”¹²⁶ Costas believed that the authentic church of Jesus Christ was meant to grow in four dimensions simultaneously: numerical, organic, conceptual and incarnational. But Van Engen adds the spiritual dimension as the fifth one.

Engen uses these dimensions to elaborate the spheres touched by the church growth. He explains spiritual growth to mean the depth and breadth of the covenantal relationship of the people of God in intimate spiritual closeness with God, called out of the world through faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. By this he means the depth of spiritual maturity of leaders and members in their degree of immersion in the Holy Scriptures, lifestyle and ethics, involvement in prayers dependence on God, search for holiness and vibrancy in worship.¹²⁷

The numerical growth is explained to be recruitment of the people for the kingdom of God. This is done by calling them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord

¹²⁵ Costas 1974, 87-88.

¹²⁶ Costas 1974, 89.

¹²⁷ Engen 1981, 344.

and savior of their lives. They are also called for their incorporation into the local community of persons who have made similar decisions of, worship, obedience, and gives witnessing, collectively and personally, to the word of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ and his liberating power¹²⁸

Costas describes organic growth as the internal development of a local community of faith. This is the system of relationships among the members in terms of a form of government, financial structure, leaderships, and types of activities in which resources are invested. By conceptual growth, he means the degree of consciousness that a community of faith has with regard to its nature and mission to the world. This is the image that the community has formed itself, the depth of its reflection on the meaning of its faith and in Christ, and of its image of the world.¹²⁹ The fifth dimension, which is incarnational growth, is taken to mean the degree of involvement of a community of faith in Christ in the life and problems of its social environment. This is a participation in the afflictions of its world; the intensity of its preaching to the poor, the broken hearted, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed, (Lk. 4:18-21).¹³⁰

McGavran seems to be biased on numerical church growth. He writes,

“Church growth depends on winning converts. Church grows from nothing but convert, people who believe in Jesus Christ intensely enough to break with their past sins and cleave to Him as Lord and Saviour.”¹³¹

These converts are won by active church members who are empowered with the Holy Spirit; the spirit of God who leads, convicts of sins, converts, builds up, selects the missionaries and thrusts them out to ripened fields.

McGavran is however, careful when he cautions that: “It is not a mere adding of names to the roll or baptizing those who have no intention of following Christ.”¹³² Instead,

¹²⁸ Costas 1974, 90

¹²⁹ Costas 1974, 90.

¹³⁰ Costas 1974, 90.

¹³¹ McGavran 1970, 58.

¹³² McGavran 1970, 58.

church growth is like a growth of a child, who needs sufficient food, a maturing social awareness, and intelligence as desirable elements of growth. In order to grow, the church needs well committed followers in terms of being equipped with the word of God, living Christian's lives and active in proclaiming the message to the unreached.

Since the church's primary mission is to reconcile immortal men with God, and only secondary to saves bodies, this is not done in isolation but always intends to bring men forth in to the family of God. Therefore, numerical churches are indeed a crucial task in mission, including the number of people coming into the church and the number of churches constantly increasing.¹³³

It is important to view the position of church growth in the light of the New Testament. Tippet states that, "the New Testament has a rich range of picturesque imagery that shows growth is to be expected both as physical and numerical growth from outside and spiritual, qualitative growth from within."¹³⁴ This can be substantiated by exploring the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, which is filled with growth metaphors. Some of these metaphors include the calling of fishermen to become fishers of men (Mk. 1:17); the kingdom of heaven is like a net when thrown into the sea gathers fish of every kind (Mt. 13:47); the world is like a field of wheat into heaven (Jn. 4:35); he is the vine and those he calls to himself are branches, they are to bear fruits (Jn. 15:5, 8); recruiting people from the highways and hedges to the great banquet (Lk. 14:21-24), and by penetrating with the light of the world into the darkest places (Mt. 5:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ views the growth of the church not only quantitatively, but also as the one that grows organically, from very small seed to a large tree (Mt.13:31). He was open to remind us of the existence of resistance to the seed growth, but also he promises a healthy growth when it falls into a good soil (Lk. 8:5-8).¹³⁵

¹³³ McQuilkin 1974, 72.

¹³⁴ Costas 1974, 92 quote Tippet 1970, 9.

¹³⁵ Costas 1974, 92-93.

Besides the metaphors in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the New Testament presents other growing images of the church especially in the Pauline epistles. A few examples are as follows, the church as a building growing into a holy temple (1 Cor.3:9-11, Eph. 2:22), the church as a family, growing by the spirit of son ship (Rom. 8:15); Christians are growing unto salvation by drinking the pure spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2.2). Paul also uses the concept of the stewardship, particularly the use of the idea of fellowship worker (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1).¹³⁶

When we discuss the biblical perspective, it is worthy to cite many missionary examples that led to the growth of the community of faith. Generally, these examples show that expansion of the community should be expected as a result of communicating the good news of the kingdom; for example Jesus' own ministry linked with the calling of his disciples (Mk. 1:14-20); his preaching and formation of the community of disciples (Mk. 3:13ff); training of the disciples (Lk.6:12ff); commissioning them to preach and have authority to cast out demons (Mk. 3:14-15); and finally he sends them to the ends of the earth, "to make disciples of all nations" (Mt.28:18).¹³⁷

At the end of the ministry Jesus had only 120 followers (Acts. 1:15), yet there was growth. They grew in knowledge and in their internal structure. But with action of the Holy Spirit the slow numerical growth was quickened and in, "one day as many as 3,000 believed, were baptized, and incorporated into the church (Acts 2:41)."¹³⁸ The Lord increased the number day after day but this numerical increase was accompanied by growth in apostolic teaching, in the fellowship, worship, and service (Acts. 2:42-45).¹³⁹

In this paper the phrase 'church growth' is used to imply all the five dimensions discussed, namely numerical, organic, conceptual, incarnational, and spiritual growth. This is because of the interrelatedness of these dimensions of the church growth.

¹³⁶ Costas 1974, 93.

¹³⁷ Costas 1974, 94.

¹³⁸ Costas 1974, 95.

¹³⁹ Costas 1974, 95.

4.2 The Hindrance of the Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual to the Church Growth in ELCT Northern Diocese

When Christianity comes in contact with Maasai cultures, clashes occur. These clashes, however, do not involve the whole culture of the tribe in question but some components appear to impose challenges to Christianity. In certain instances, Christianity is faced with challenges on whether to accept, reject, or modify certain components of culture. These challenges become more challenging when Maasai culture in conflict is popular to the tradition of the people to be evangelized. This case applies to male circumcision ritual among the Maasai.

As this research indicates in chapter three, the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual is basic in terms of the Maasai tribal organization and is an important rite of passage. Among many, male circumcision is one of the strongly held traditions. Any Maasai male is expected to undergo circumcision as an initiation rite of passage in order to be accepted by the Maasai society as a mature and a reliable person. Mtaita gave a remark on this:

Becoming a man implies for a Maasai to undergo circumcision, to defend the society, to take care of the cattle and to retrace the cattle which were given to them at the beginning of all times but now are in hands of other people. After having fulfilled these duties at the estimated age of 25-30 years, the *moran* join the group of *junior elders* and are called *ol-moruo*, they are now allowed to marry.¹⁴⁰

It is interesting to note that, many if not all adult male Maasai Christians, both the lay and clergy, admit openly to belong to a particular traditional age sets or groups.¹⁴¹ The question arises to these Christians as to how did they happen to be in those particular age groups if they did not first undergo the circumcision ritual that is the only means to belong to a certain group? Are they not the cause and provocative agents of clashes between the Maasai culture and Christians? How can they belong to what they are not part of it?

¹⁴⁰ Mtaita 1995, 31.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama

History show that, whenever the initiation ceremonies are at hand, conflicts arise on whether or not Christians should participate. Professor Parsalaw of Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA) quotes Donald C. Flatt as he wrote:

...on conversion, radical separation was made from tribal costumes, the young converts being strong warned and discouraged from participating the pagan rites and ceremonies, and especially the initiations ceremonies of the warrior age grade, which was considered to contain features utterly contrary to Christian ethics.¹⁴²

The most crucial question is: if the Maasai circumcision rite is to be abandoned by Maasai Christians, what will be a proper replacement of this strong Maasai traditional ritual among the Maasai Christians? This study shows that most of the Christians wish to have the circumcision rite maintained but also modified.¹⁴³ This is clear from the fact that when non-Christians suspended male circumcision for about seven years, the Christians too stopped circumcising their sons. When the traditionalists resumed the ceremonies, the Christians immediately joined and practiced the ritual of circumcision by initiating their sons under the same set/group. Another question is: if modifications are necessary in order to avoid conflicts, then, whose task is it and which modifications should be done?

The non-Christians are by no means comfortable to see their fellow Maasai Christians abstaining from circumcising their sons. This is because the strong belief that the Maasai Christians are their followers and they should not be neglected despite the difference in faith. They still need them, so they will not easily let them go. This tribal link and difference in faith create misunderstandings, which commonly result into clashes.

¹⁴² Parsalaw 199. 118

¹⁴³ Interview conducted among Christians, both lay and clergy, 25.07.2012 Imurtot Lutheran parish

4.2.1 Misunderstanding between Christianity and the Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual Initiation Rite

In order to illustrate the clashes between Christianity and Maasai male circumcision ritual in 2012, it is good to give some cases, which demonstrate the nature and outcomes of these conflicts. Here are two cases concerning Maasai male circumcision rituals:

Case 1:

One pastor of the Pentecostal church at Irkaswa village of Longido district denied his sons to undergo the circumcision ritual. Since the relatives and neighbours knew about the issue, they convened at the residence to witness the attempt. As the pastor declared his intention of circumcising his son without undergoing the normal procedures in circumcision ritual, he was himself apprehended, clothed with plastics empties, and forced to undergo all the proceedings of the circumcision ritual. He was humiliated, beaten up and being treated as an uncircumcised person.

This was done not only as a punishment to the pastor, but also as a lesson to other pastors who may not abide to the Maasai circumcision ritual. Despite these atrocities, the boy was forced to undergo the proceeding and circumcised the second time, this to make sure that the pastor's son had followed the Maasai way of circumcision in the manner of the Maasai society requires.¹⁴⁴

Case 2

A Maasai Christian father of four initiation candidates decided that his sons who were also Christians, should not undergo the traditional rituals of circumcision, because in his views these rituals are satanic/evils. He planned to invite his fellow Christians so that the church songs would be sung as a preparation for circumcision of the boys in the following morning. In order to avoid the neighbours and relatives who knew about the preparations before hand, he sneaked the boys to his young brother's house that collaborated with him in the deal. The house of the brother is located a few kilometers away. When discovering the father plans, the warriors invaded the residence in an

¹⁴⁴ Interview with the pastor who was concerned with this case, 26.07.2012, Irkaswa.

attempt of snatching the two old men i.e. the father and the young father. They managed to escape, but the four boys voluntarily submitted themselves to the invaders. The warriors started, on the spot to sing traditional songs of abusing which prepare the boys for circumcision, and all other proceedings went on as far as the Maasai ritual of circumcision is concerned.

This case was reported to the police who offered a Land Rover car with three armed policemen. The policemen were overpowered and beaten by Maasai multitude of warriors. When more armed policemen arrived, they found the warriors had already taken the boys deep into the wilderness and the night had already fallen. When this case passed locally it was said to be a traditional issue, so let it be solved traditionally.

The matter did not end there. The victimized fathers were harassed and declared enemies of the Maasai society. They were advised by good wishers to surrender themselves to the traditional leaders. They did that, and were heavily fined before being reaccepted to the Maasai society again. This case took place at Olmolong parish, in the beginning of 2012.¹⁴⁵

The following are two other cases that took place during the time when the boys went to *oloiboni* before the circumcision ritual had started. The main problem here is being the contributions needed to meet the costs of going to the *oloiboni*. Some Christians usually claim that they would not contribute because some of these costs involve giving sacrifices to the ritual medicine expert or prophet, *oloiboni*.¹⁴⁶

Case 3

Big numbers of Maasai Christians boys refused to contribute to *engipaata* i.e. going for purification initiation ceremony before the beginning of circumcising their age set. They claimed that they will not involve sacrifices to *oloiboni* which is not in line with Christian faith. Even after several meetings between Christians and non Christians, agreement was

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Rev Maimu, 08.08.2012 Olmolong

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Ev. Kinana, 27.07. 2012 Irkaswa.

not reached. The non Christians organized a force operation of taking Christians' properties worthy the amount to be contributed.¹⁴⁷

Following the illegal taking of the properties, the Christians reported the issue to the police. Three elders of the boys were put in custody following the saga. The non Christians organized themselves to wage a war against Christians until their leaders are released unconditionally. The police Field Force Unit was called to control and take over that alarming situation. Much worse, the Maasai warriors raged with fury and anger, and refused to abide by the orders given by the soldiers. They declined to disperse; and they vowed to fight back against any attempt of forcing them to disperse. The Government Ward Counsellor, the Maasai pastors from different denominations in the research area, and traditional leaders, pleaded to the policemen not to use force which could have resulted into bloody or fatal.¹⁴⁸

The Maasai non Christians leaders were released on the condition that the matter would be settled between traditional and church leaders. The matter has not yet been settled and the Christians' properties have not yet been returned to the owners up to the time of this research.¹⁴⁹

Case 4

In Karansi Lutheran Parish of ELCT Northern Diocese, the Pastor of that parish narrated to me an incident that non Christians insisted that Christians must contribute toward the costs of *engipaata*, going to the *oloiboni*, religious leader. The Christians refused to do that, the reason being that these contributions are related to worship of gods. The two parts met several times in order to solve down the matter but in vain. This time, the non Christians reported the issue to the government leadership, claiming that the Christians are endangering peace in the area. They threatened to take the Christians' properties

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Ev. Obed 08.08.2012 Olmolong.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Mathis Mollel, 09.08.2012, Olmolong.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Rev Maimu, 08.08.2012, Olmolong.

forcefully if the Christians would not abide by the Maasai male circumcision preparation rituals.¹⁵⁰

Based on these claims, the village Executive Officer wrote a letter to all pastors of that area warning them that in case of any peace breaking related to the matter the pastors or Christians will be responsible. All the pastors held a meeting and they came with their claim that Christians would not contribute to those rituals, instead they would circumcise under the supervision of the church. Since that was the first time to hear Christians doing circumcision rituals on their own, the non Christians calmed down waiting to see such strange event. The ritual really took place under the church leadership in that area. Since year 2012, the Christians in that area are practicing circumcision under the supervision of the Maasai pastors and church elders; and it is celebrated in church buildings.¹⁵¹

The four cases above portray the clashes that exist between Christianity and Maasai male circumcision rituals. These clashes, automatically, create fear, confusion, tension, doubt, and a certain kind of resistance among both Christians and non Christians. These situations create challenges to church growth, either as obstacles, or as sources of weaknesses for conversion and Christian faith.

4.2.2 The Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual as an Obstacle to Conversion

Since male circumcision among the Maasai is regarded to be an orientation into various stages of life for the youths, and the community at large, an attempt to introduce a new way of orientation, in this case Christianity, by missionaries, was strongly opposed. The traditional Maasai elders commonly ask the following questions: how can such an established Maasai tribe initiate her youth by using other people (missionaries) initiatives? Will it suit our situations as long as we continue to live as a Maasai tribe?¹⁵² Such kinds of questions provoke resistance among non Christians as members of the tribe. Many believe that, this was the end of having faithful, courageous and well

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012 Masama.

¹⁵¹ My observation in Ngaritati Lutheran parish, 25.08.2012.

¹⁵² Interview with Ruth Saningo 04.08.2012 Mukao.

disciplined warriors who are the very people whom would make wise elders for the future leaders of the community.¹⁵³ That is why the number of female Maasai Christians exceeds that of males. “There are very few male Christians in Maasai land because most of them normally fear that when they become Christians, they will lose their power and therefore fail even to defend themselves, if there is a fight”.¹⁵⁴

Out of such beliefs, elders trained the youth to despise the newly introduced phenomena. Since the introduction of Christianity in the Maasai land, missionaries were mistreated by non Christians Maasai and called them bad names. Children were denied from going to missionary schools in order to avoid being polluted. They sometimes tested these new beliefs and educational aspects by sending first those children considered weak; in order to test what could be the outcome of the spoilage. For instance, when the government insisted on sending children to school, the parents picked out those children with weak characters, in order to minimize the loss. They are the same who happened to be in schools that easily got access to Christianity. Therefore, it was those children who were considered weak who chanced to be in schools, hence easily converted to Christianity.¹⁵⁵

Today, it is the women who are easily converted to Christianity. One reason for this is the fact that, in the Maasai traditional society women are regarded to be a weak group of which the society does not lose much by having them Christianized. First of all, they are not directly involved in the determination of setting the age groups, hence considered less effective in defending the tribal cultural basis. Second, women do not own much in term of property in the Maasai society. Men in the name of society own property such as cattle and land. So when women join the church, men can still control them even to the extent of forcing them to participate in cultural practices that are contrary to the teaching of their church.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Interview with Ole Mushao, 04.08.2012 mukao.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Melau 23.07.2012 Imurtot.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Loitore 23.07.2012 Imurtot.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Ole Tionga 22.07.2012, Irkaswa.

The Maasai traditional societal set up, particularly when it comes to male circumcision ritual, has hindered the missionary work much by discouraging individuals and groups, especially male's to be converted into Christianity. This is because that kind of initiation ritual compels all the male Maasai members into age groups. Each group makes sure that individuals are strictly instructed to know and observe tribal rules without betrayal. Therefore, any attempt of an individual to get converted to Christianity, is regarded by the age group and the society at large as a betrayal to the rules and regulations set up by the tribe.

Those who happened to be converted into Christianity were despised, mocked, down trodden and sometimes beaten in order to discourage more tribal members from joining Christianity, and if possible to bring back the new converts to Maasai traditional orders, regarding this Leyian Lendulo tells me the following:

It is about 15 years now since when the Maasai were converted to Christianity. During this time they faced many challenges because of their new faith, for example beaten severely when they had to go and worship with the chagga¹⁵⁷ people. The warriors teased the young women and their fellow warriors who were converted to Christianity by abuse songs. They sang songs with strong abusing words which can discourage those Christians.¹⁵⁸

The practices and so many others by all means hindered the spreading of the Good News among the Maasai people. Many of the Maasai members hesitate to join Christianity not because they do not believe the message of Jesus Christ, but simply because they will be rejected by their age groups for failing to observe the Maasai male circumcision ritual.

In the Maasai society, male circumcision ritual places each male in a particular social category in which he expects and is expected by others to achieve something at the end of the period of his age set. One is expected to undergo male circumcision in a traditional way as it was explained in chapter three of this research, the reason for is to be obtain and be regarded as a *moran* and a grown up person. This is a great thing because contrary to

¹⁵⁷ One of the biggest tribe in Tanzania staying in the slope of mount Kilimanjaro, this are the first christian and missionaries to other tribes in Tanzania and outside Tanzania.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Leyian Lendulo 13.07.2012, Irkaswa.

that, one is treated as a child throughout his life. That is why, Saitoti Ole Tipilit remarks that, “Among the Maasai, circumcision separates one’s adulthood and childhood. The cutting of the flesh turns a boy into a man...”¹⁵⁹ Since each person needs respect and appreciation of the community, many Maasai young men tend to postpone the idea of becoming Christians until they first undergo the important initiation stages in their lives.¹⁶⁰

Besides the delaying obstacles to conversion, the intensity of the teaching to the initiates during circumcision creates another big hindrance to conversion. The teachings are seriously instructed and through very stern procedures. They are directly connected to the daily lives of the Maasai society. The candidates are anticipated not only to observe but also to the practice and live with those practices. To observe and to live with means to abstaining from any other foreign tradition, including Christianity.¹⁶¹

Pride is another obstacle that keeps the Maasai from becoming Christians. After circumcision the circumcised initiates are very proud of their new status and they have to defend it with all means. To them all cultures or religions are not only regarded as primitive and inferior, but are despised and ignored. They strongly believe that their culture is the best compared to others. They strongly attribute their culture to God’s endowment. Donovan observed that, “the Maasai are utter conservatives, afraid of change of any kind. They are practically the only tribe in Tanzania that has been exposed to every kind of change and have resisted it.”¹⁶² They easily appreciate those who happened to imitate from them, and such people are said to be “enlightened.”¹⁶³ during this research, one old man pointed out that, “it is wonderful to learn that we always argued by our own children to emulate the foreigners and not vice versa.”¹⁶⁴ This shows how the Maasai old generation is so surprise on modern changes.

¹⁵⁹ Tipilit 1980, 78

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012 Masama.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Syaiti Ole Mbao, 13.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁶² Donovan 1978, 21.

¹⁶³ Interview with Zakayo Lukumay, 29.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Goodluck Melami, 29.07.2012, Irkaswa.

These are the basic factors that hinder the Maasai from being converted into Christianity. These obstacles are shared almost throughout the Maasai sections due to common sharing of the initiation rituals. News and recent events on attempts to change cultural elements are usually narrated in the meetings and other conversations, whenever two or more of the Maasai met. News about changes are deeply shared critically discussed and analyzed.¹⁶⁵

4.2.3 The Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual as a Source of Syncretism

Despite the Maasai male circumcision ritual is an obstacle to the conversion into Christian faith, a reasonable number of the Maasai have managed to jump the hurdles and has become converted. This is not however a total victory. Some of the Maasai Christians, despite their Christian faith, still continue to be attracted by cultural elements and practices in their tribe. Besides being Christians, some of them get themselves involved in cultural practices that are utterly contrary to Christian's teachings. These Christians commonly fail to determine what is not compatible between the gospel and Maasai male circumcision customs. They take both the new faith in Jesus Christ and the Maasai male circumcision cultural practice without restrictions. They combine the Gospel and some of the Maasai male circumcision rituals to form what is called neo-paganism, this combination of Maasai circumcision rituals and Christian faith results into syncretism.¹⁶⁶

In this way, certain Christians participate fully in church activities, such as confessing the Christian faith, witness the good news of Jesus Christ to others, and even becoming church elders/leaders. But, the same Christians are overpowered by the traditional cultural activities, such as forcing other Christians (in the name of tribal authority) to violate the Christian ethics. They fully get attracted and participate in Maasai male circumcision rituals activities. They contribute to sacrificial rituals especially those given

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Goodluck Melami 29.07.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser 23.08.2012. Masama.

to *oloiboni*¹⁶⁷ the traditional man. The problem with *oloiboni* is that he entices the worship of other gods.¹⁶⁸ Apostle Paul warns the Corinthians to avoid things given to idols:

“No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demon. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.” (1 Cor. 10:20-21).

This shows that the Maasai Christians, still need to be educated about the scriptures.

Many Christian’s initiation candidates decide to undergo all the traditional rituals before, during and after circumcision. They even participate in those rituals which are clearly known to be contrary to Christian ethics and faith. After the whole process of circumcision is finished, they confess to their church leaders who re-admit them to the church. This becomes stubborn during the circumcision period. One boy, whom I met after he was circumcised during this research told me that: “I have to become a Maasai warrior first, then I will go back to the church, I have first to recognize my Maasai society and then later, after all the rituals are finished, I have to accept Christianity”¹⁶⁹ This results in two big problems; lack of commitment to Christianity, and desire for social recognition and honour.

Even a more disgracing situation is when Christians are elected to become traditional ritual leaders. This is because they have to fulfil all the demands of the rituals without reservation. There is no excuse for them as Christians to skip aspects that do not conform to the Christian ethics. Instead, they indulge completely in the rituals, only to stand as church leaders in the following morning.¹⁷⁰ The word of God calls Christians to dissociate with unbelievers, “Therefore come out from them, and be separated from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Here again the Maasai Christians need to be taught to understand the word of God and confess their faith in Christ only.

¹⁶⁷ Refer chapter three.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Lenanu Oltigidi, 02.08.2012 Olmolong.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Ev. Lomayiani Sangale, 09.07.2012, Kitenden

This behaviour does not only weaken their faith in Jesus Christ but also discourage others who would wish to get converted. Their witness is unclear by the double dealing attitude towards faith. They make both Christianity and Maasai male circumcision like two different clothes that can be worn by the same person at different times or even at the same time. The non Christians fail to get convinced to join Christianity since such people do not make any difference between the two faiths. Such people seem to reduce Christianity to only a particular fashion change of life. Here Christianity is reduced to a certain fashion of life.¹⁷¹

The confusion is mainly associated with the circumcision rite of passage vigour of some members to remain full Maasai warriors or elders who can command respect from the society. Those who fall as victims for syncretism normally seem to stand more as Maasai than as Christians.

Unfortunately, due to some reasons such as fear, ignorance, desire for recognition and honour, together with social pressure, some of the Maasai Christians fail to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ over any culture. A good number of Maasai Christians fear to be tortured by the traditionalists, either physically or psychologically, in the case they abstain from participating in the traditions of Maasai male circumcision rituals which are contrary to Christian ethics. Some are mainly affected by ignorance of understanding the scriptures. Many of them cannot differentiate between what a Christian is or not supposed to do.

There are, however, those who know the scriptures very well, but because they need to be respected and honoured by the society, they decide to participate without restriction in both faiths. The rest of the Christians find themselves pressurised by the Maasai society to perform circumcision rituals, which they wouldn't wish to perform as far as their Christian faith forbids them.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Daniel Ole Mbalai 09.07.2012, Kitenden.

All these reasons lead the Maasai Christians to mix the Christian teachings with the Maasai male circumcision ritual without specific boundaries, this result into syncretism.

4.2.4 The Maasai Male Circumcision as a Source of Reverting Among the Maasai Christians

Another big set back caused by the Maasai Male circumcision rite, is the reverting of some Christians. Because of its strength and influence, circumcision among the Maasai has chiefly attracted some Christians to go back to some traditional beliefs and practices. This is a slow process, as Christians get involved in the Maasai male circumcision ritual without understanding how some of these circumcision rituals contradict with the Gospel. They later on find themselves completely absorbed and overwhelmed by the circumcision ritual. Some of them may even give up their Christian faith and fall back to traditional beliefs.¹⁷²

To affirm the word of God from 2 Pt.2:20-21, these backsliders sometimes become like big enemies of the Gospel. They usually pretend to know much about the word of God hence using that opportunity to mislead other people by falsifying the Christian doctrines. They do not only mislead those who are not yet converted but they also are bad examples on how Christians can sometimes become non Christian believer. Such a person was heard boasting saying that “nothing can be told to me about Christianity since I know each and everything about the Bible. It is full of deceitful teachings; only traditional rituals are realistic and true to me.”¹⁷³

These are dangerous people for the mission work of the Church and the entire Christian faith because they are hard elements to win back and deceitful to others.¹⁷⁴ Most of such people are those who were formerly baptized when they were infants. Thus, when they grow up, they made a lot of doubts towards the Christian faith, because it was not their personal faith they favoured traditional faith.

¹⁷² Interview with Yusuf Saiton, 27.07.2012, Imurtot.

¹⁷³ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Ev.Luka Lotagamwaki 11.08.2012 Irkaswa.

4.2.5 The Maasai Male Circumcision as a Source of Division in the Church

Since many Maasai Christians still participate in male circumcision before, during and after, while a few attempt to abstain completely from these practices, division among members of the church has been inevitable. Due to this fact, the church finds itself divided into three groups. They are those who actively participate in Maasai traditional ways of circumcision, and admit openly to be advocates and defenders of these rituals of circumcision. Another group comprise Christians who undergo those traditional ways of circumcision unwillingly; they participate either from fear of being harassed or because they do not have a church liturgy to abide with when it comes to a matter of circumcision initiation ceremonies. The third group is Christians who completely regard circumcision rituals as devilish and boldly decide to stand firm to oppose them due to their Christian faith. This group is ready to be rejected or tortured by the traditionalists or by their fellow Christians rather than participate in Maasai circumcision rituals. Each group, therefore, develops a kind of hatred towards another. They keep on pointing fingers to one another as either less Maasai or less Christian respectively.¹⁷⁵

The Christians who remain loyal to the practice of Maasai circumcision rituals despise those who are against this rite. They regard them to be of less Maasai value and people who have betrayed their basic origin and culture. During conflicts, these groups usually join hands with traditionalists against the Christians. Due to this, they are usually spared by non Christians and are regarded as good fellow Maasai.¹⁷⁶

Christians who remain neutral to both parts also place themselves on the safe side during conflicts. They decide to be neutral so that they can obtain to be good Maasai and good Christians at the same time. This position, however, is not very safe as far as the Christian faith is concerned, because it makes them less confident to preach and rebuke what is contrary to the Christian teachings.¹⁷⁷ The word of God instructs Christians to act without fear against other beliefs. For example, 1 Tim. 5:20 read, “as to those who persist

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Rev Kanai Saanane, 13.08.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Rev. Jonas Ole Meliyio, 13.08.2012, Irkaswa

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Rev Raphael Ole Sangale, 13.08.2012, Irkaswa.

in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.” Also Christians are called “...to preach the word, be urgent in seasons and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.”(2 Tim. 4:2).

The third group is Christians who regard Maasai male circumcision ritual as evil. This group is wrestling with the non Christian over this practice. They would like to see the Maasai male circumcision rite removed; and be left with the modern ways of practice to dominate the whole structure of the tribe. They believe that the modern way on how to practice circumcision ritual are all pleasing to God. They wish to see the tribal ties broken so that each individual could do the way he wishes, provided one does not break the state law.¹⁷⁸ The group is usually targeted when conflicts occurs between Christians and traditionalists. The problem with this group is the fact that it does not have a specified liturgy to follow when it comes to the initiation of their youth.¹⁷⁹ Another problem is their ignorance about the compatibility between peoples’ culture and the message of Christ. They do not consider the context of the message preached as of any relevance to Maasai male circumcision practice, but rather they only challenge the traditional patterns of their tribe.

These misunderstandings among Christians have become a great source of division in the church. Instead of becoming good witnesses of Christ among the non Christians, the Christians keep quarrelling among themselves over the issue of initiation of their youth. They do not only waste much time and resources in conflicts among themselves, but also loose the validity of being good witnesses to the non Christians. The non Christians know very well how much threatened the Christian unity is especially when it comes to the issues of male circumcision rituals.¹⁸⁰

In this way there have been many divisions in the church as far as the Maasai male circumcision rituals and the Christian faith is concerned. These divisions among the Christians regarding the Maasai initiation rites have been a great hindrance to the growth

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Mathayo Naikara, 13.08.2012, Irkaswa.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Ev. John Koyeyio, 19.08.2012, Olmolong.

of the church among the Maasai. Church growth prospers well where there is unity and peace. McGavran points out that the righteousness and peace are important aspects of church growth.¹⁸¹ Since these divisions weaken peace and harmony among Christians, the church prosperity among the Maasai societies is so much distorted. Generally speaking, the church does not grow.

With these divisions in the church, the Christians need to be reminded that the relationship between the gospel and culture has to be made more precise to allow the useful participation of Christians in the process of social transformation. There are some Christians who do not see any link between the Gospel and culture. It must also be borne in mind that Christians are supposed to be ordinary people living in the world among other mortals (Acts 17:28). Those who do not see any link between the Gospel and culture think that the Christians society is only concerned with the life after death. But there are also some Christians who think that the Gospel is completely attached to culture, to be a Christian, one has only to approve and apply some Christian moral values.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ McGavran 1970, 2

¹⁸² Mugambi 1989, 45.

5.0 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE PRACTICE OF THE MAASAI MALE CIRCUMCISION RITUAL IN THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

5.1 Introduction.

In chapter three, I analyzed how the Maasai practice male circumcision ritual in their old way. In this chapter, I will try to contextualize the Maasai male circumcision so that Christians may see what to practice and not to practice before, during and after circumcision. But before explaining contextualization, I have to explain the understanding of the term ‘ritual’ because in this thesis I deal with the Maasai ritual of circumcision.

5.2 Understanding of Rituals

The term ‘ritual’ is not easy to define, Jacob Z. Kibor is quoting Samson Njuguna Gitau, he noted that “ritology”, the science of ritual studies may include all types of rituals such as celebrations, political ceremonies, funerals, wedding, and initiations.¹⁸³

In defining the term ritual, F.W. Clothey in *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions* claims that ritual is so important for understanding religion that it functions as a paradigm and dramatization of the intent of religion itself. It does this, he adds, by the use of symbols, both visual and aural, which along with intellectual and sensual images provide the participant with a sense of identity. The paradigmatic elements of ritual is seen in that during their performance they transform the participants into a new mode of being¹⁸⁴

Roger Schmidt said that ‘holy rites’ are formalized and symbolic actions which direct people toward experience of the sacred. He adds that rituals do this whether or not the sacred is conceived of as a personal being or as an impersonal creative process.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Kibor, 1998.10, Gitau 1994.96.

¹⁸⁴ Clothey 1981, 624-28

¹⁸⁵ Schmidt 1988, 392

J.M Smith said that ritual is a mode of paying attention; space directs or focuses the attention. Sacred places, therefore, represent the extraordinary setting wherein quite ordinary activities take place.¹⁸⁶ This setting provides ritual with its power and makes clear the contrast between the way things are and the way things ought to be. Rituals perform or act out how the religious person perceives the ideal

Another scholar who explained the term ritual is J.G. Platvoet, he said that ritual is refers to any sequence of customary symbolic actions which are standardized through repetition in social interaction. He continued saying that, ritual utilize symbols to express and conveying meanings and thus at a non verbal. These characteristics of ritual can be applied to any form of customary, standardized and symbolic social communication and is not restricted to religious ritual¹⁸⁷. The important of this definition in my suggestion, results from its stress on standardized behaviour as a means for communicating meaning within any society.

In the above understanding of the term ritual it help us to get a general definition as, a ritual is a repeatable and symbolic dramatization directing attention to a place where the sacred enters life thereby granting identity to participants in the drama, transforming them, communicating social meaning verbally an non verbally and offering a paradigm of how the world ought to be.

Rite of passage is also used very widely; for example, Arnold van Gennep refers rite of passage as a ritual process shared in life cycle rituals and calendrical rituals.¹⁸⁸ Victor Turner used rituals of affliction, referred to here as crisis rituals, into rites of passage. Crisis rituals aim to rectifying misfortunes in life as diverse as illness, barrenness, drought and war. The rituals are undertaken usually in response to information provided by a religious diviner who explains why the affliction has occurred.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Smith 1987, 109.

¹⁸⁷ Platvoet 1995, 6.

¹⁸⁸ Gennep 1965, 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ Turner 1969.208.

Calendrical rituals according to Van Gennep, are seasonal rituals and is a part of communal rites of passage. They refer to rituals which occur at a set time according to the seasonal or liturgical calendar. Example includes new year festivals, planting and harvesting rituals, thanksgiving ceremonies , annual or regular rituals honouring the ancestors, preparation for hunting, and in case of liturgical religions, festivals which reenact regularly the key stories of the faith such as Christmas and Easter for Christians and the Passover for the Jewish community.¹⁹⁰

C.R. Taber explained another type of rituals, these are life cycle rituals, he said that the related communities are comprised of social systems with clearly defined properties, rights and obligations for their members. He said that individuals in societies pass through transitional phases which reinforce their roles in the community and which are marked by the rites of passage.¹⁹¹

In the above rituals, according to Taber it is seen as the movement from one state of being to another, as in the case of initiation rituals in this case the Maasai male circumcision rituals whereby a person is transformed from the state of being a child to that of an adult. The Maasai society has different age sets rituals and mark the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. Victor Turner lists the rituals which fall in life cycle rituals as follows: prenatal e.g. rituals to confirm pregnancy, for fetal growth and for safe delivery, naming rituals, pre-puberty, puberty initiation rituals for the entrance into adulthood, betrothal and marriage, initiation into prestige bestowing adult associations, rituals elevating a person into a high officer or priestly functions and lastly funeral.¹⁹²

Maasai male circumcision ritual transforms the Maasai boy into a man ready to serve the Maasai community, the terminologies which the Maasai use, reflects this process. A young uncircumcised boy is called *olayioni*, after circumcision ritual is called a warrior *moran*, after *moran* he become an elder, *olpayian*

¹⁹⁰ Gennep 1965. 178-179.

¹⁹¹ Taber 1981, 426.

¹⁹² Turner 1969.206.

5.3 Meaning of the Term Contextualization

Before explaining the meaning of the term contextualization by the help of different scholars, it should be said that historically the term was introduced in 1972.¹⁹³ Before this term, the following words were used: first indigenization, then, the term *inculturation* was introduced as the term *indigenization* was discovered to be dealing with a static culture. However, this term was seen as not to meet the demands of a developing the culture and thus the term *inculturation* was developed. Furthermore, the term *inculturation* as well was later thought to be dealing more with cultural and anthropological issues rather than theological issues. Hence, the term *contextualization* was developed to fit the theological demand of doing mission within a given cultural context¹⁹⁴.

Doug Priest Jr., defines *contextualization* as the process by which the gospel does not only takes on the forms and idiosyncrasies of different cultures but also maintains a critical stance and seeks to transform them.¹⁹⁵ Bevans defines the word *contextualization* as the theology that takes human experience, social location, culture, and cultural seriously, which must keep balance. Bevans said that *contextualization* in addition to considerations of the gospel; traditions of the Christian people, and the local church, contextualization must take into account the social changes in a society. This includes technological advances on one hand and struggle for justice and liberation on the other.¹⁹⁶ Leonard Mtaita also defines *contextualization* as the understanding, presentation and concrete interpretation of Christianity in accordance with the people's aspirations, needs, thought patterns and mentality.¹⁹⁷ The term *contextualization* also means a weaving together, thus interweaving the gospel with every particular situation. Instead of speaking of particular culture, whether traditional or modern, it speaks of contexts or situations into which the gospel must be contextualized.¹⁹⁸ Edward Rommen and David J.

¹⁹³ Bevans 2002, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Taber 1981, 175.

¹⁹⁵ Priest Jr., 1990,154.

¹⁹⁶ Bevans 2002,26.

¹⁹⁷ Mtaita 1995, 73.

¹⁹⁸ Schineller 1990, 19.

Hesselgrave¹⁹⁹ present three meanings of the term contextualization as defined by three scholars as follows:

1. "...making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation" (Byang H. Kato).
2. "...the translation of the unchanging content of the gospel of the kingdom into verbal and formal meaningful to the peoples in their separate culture and within their particular existential situations" (Bruce J. Nicholls).
3. "...to discover the legitimate implications of the gospel in a given situations (George W. Peters).

Also Schreiter writes that the dynamic interaction of the Gospel, church and culture will work to produce a local theology or contextualized theology.²⁰⁰ Engen said that contextualization as a model of incarnation which has to do with the cultural relevance of the church once the gospel has taken root in foreign land.²⁰¹

David J. Bosch one of the famous missiologist, wrote that there is difference between historical theology and contextual theology. He said that historical theology followed the top-down approach. Since the time of Constantine, theology was conducted from above as an elitist enterprise. Its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) was philosophy, and its main interlocutor the educated non-believer, Contextual theology is theology "from below", "from the underside of history", its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) is social sciences, and its main interlocutor the poor or the culturally marginalized.²⁰²

In the above definitions, they reveal two main concepts of *contextualization*. These are the Christian message, i.e. the gospel, and the culture of those to whom the gospel is preached, whether traditional or modern. Contextualization is thus characterized as a *practical* and *on going process* and, therefore, much of it will be dealt with extensively as we advance to apply this concept in our approach on how to deal with Maasai male circumcision ritual.

¹⁹⁹ Rommen and Hesselgrave 1989,33.

²⁰⁰ Schreiter 1997, 20.

²⁰¹ Engen 1996,73.

²⁰² Bosch 2010, 423

The process of contextualization takes place when these two components i.e. gospel and culture, interact in an acceptable way. Because of this interaction, contextualization can also be said to be a dialogue between Christian message and human culture. Thus, contextualization will be achieved when the gospel enters into critical dialogue with the Maasai circumcision ritual. In its practical application it will meet the theological demand of doing this ritual within the Maasai Christian congregation and in their cultural context.

Paul Hiebert a famous anthropologist explains contextualization as it deals with the old culture. These cultures are the old beliefs, rituals, stories, songs, customs, arts, music etc. He said that by dealing with the old cultures it is called *critical contextualization*. Hiebert continues to say that, in doing contextualization we have to do the following: 1. to gather information about the old culture, 2. study the biblical teachings about the event, 3. evaluate the old culture in the light of the biblical teachings, and 4. create a new contextualized Christian practice.²⁰³

In this research we are going to use Paul Hiebert's mode of contextualization. He presents two common ways through which different missionaries approach other cultures. The first one is the denial of the old tradition. Here, the church responds by rejecting all the old customs as pagan and unfit Christian ethics. However, may be, as a result, the gospel is rejected because it becomes foreign in the society it approaches.²⁰⁴ When the missionaries used this way of rejecting some basic Maasai traditional customs especially the Maasai male circumcision ritual, as a result, conflicts and misunderstanding arose. In that way, the gospel did not find a rapid acceptance in the Maasai society. Therefore, we cannot blame the Maasai to be stubborn or resistant to the gospel, since, as Mullinex and Mpaayei say; "...unreached people should not be dismissed as a resistant to the gospel if the gospel is not presented to them in a manner consistent with their social system."²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Hiebert 1991, 186.

²⁰⁴ Hiebert 1991, 184.

²⁰⁵ Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

5.4 Rejection of Contextualization: Denial of the Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual

The missionaries were supposed to know that culture is a man's rooted experience which helps him place his existence in his own environment. This means that it is not a simple thing to tell people to stop a certain tradition and custom.²⁰⁶ Probably the missionaries thought that by condemning these cultures, the Africans would have easily dropped them for the sake of the newly introduced ones. It seems that the missionaries forgot that, "condemnation also does not have much effect on the person who in all his life so far has grown in that system. If change has to take place it must come from within and not without".²⁰⁷

There might be several reasons for the missionaries to reject old cultures when they approach people of other faiths. These are some of the reasons; firstly, the missionaries may regard their own cultures as positive. Probably they do this because they understand and appreciate their own culture as better than any other cultures. Therefore they normally fall into the temptation of prejudging other cultures by using their cultures instead of the Bible. An example can be taken from 1908 when missionaries Fokken and Schachchneider decided to forbid Maasai circumcision. They stated that: "the Maasai circumcision is allowed neither for Christians nor for boarding boys. Whoever refuses to let himself be circumcised in the Bantu way must leave the station."²⁰⁸ This deliberate refusal of Maasai male a circumcision ritual and replacing it with Bantu circumcision ritual has had a negative influence in the hearts of many Maasai Christians. In this research I quoted one pastor saying, "even the first European missionaries refuted this dirty kind of circumcision."²⁰⁹

The second reason is from the fact that, in most of the traditional cultures there are no sharp lines which can be drawn between religious and everyday practices. When the missionaries saw the traditional costumes being associated with religious practices, they

²⁰⁶ Niwagila 1991, 407.

²⁰⁷ Niwagila 1991, 407.

²⁰⁸ Parsalaw 1999, 118.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Q, 22.08.2012, Siha

immediately deduced that they were against the gospel. Therefore, they have to be rejected totally.²¹⁰ Some religious practices, which are found in Maasai circumcision ritual rite, have made some Christian preachers to condemn this ritual, and regard it as satanic and unchristian even without making a thorough and proper examination on it.²¹¹

The third reason for the rejection of the traditional cultures is the uncritical acceptance of missionaries' cultural expressions as a compatible with the Bible. It is very unfortunate to find that missionaries fail to allow the word of God to critically change their own culture heritage and likewise they reject other cultural heritage uncritically. This is a kind of superiority complex that is common when two different cultures come into contacts. Sometimes the missionaries have a tendency of blending their own cultures in accordance with the word of God so as to produce what they call ethics or church regulations.²¹²

The total rejection of traditional customs of the local people creates serious theological and missiological pitfalls. First of all, it creates an implication that the cultural forms of western Christians are themselves Christians.²¹³ Many of the Maasai Christians are still practicing a good number of western cultural forms in the name of Christianity, for example, the new way of circumcision ritual performed by Christians. Those who circumcise their boys in infancy are not aware of the fact that they are practicing a western way and not a Christian. Jesus Christ was circumcised on the eighth day, but not for Christians to emulate, rather the parents of Jesus were fulfilling the Jewish culture (Lk. 2:21; Jn. 7:22; Lk. 1:59).

The second problem is for new customs to replace the old that are being rejected. These customs need to be identified because it is dangerous when a vacuum remains in the society. The question is: which customs will fill the gap created by missionaries' refusal of indigenous people's culture?

²¹⁰ Hiebert 1991,184.

²¹¹ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

²¹² Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

²¹³ Hiebert 1991, 287.

The missionary often made the decisions and tended to reject most of the old customs as pagans, because there were thought to directly or indirectly relate to traditional religions, hence un-acceptance for Christians.²¹⁴ For instance, the famous Christian term of *amen* which means, let it be so, relates to the similar Maasai word *amen*, but which means, I despise you. The appropriate Maasai word that resembles the Christian meaning of *amen* is *na Ai*, which literally means *o God* and probably expresses one's wish to God that 'let it be so. Many of the Maasai elders have been questioning the use of the word *amen* when it comes to Christian prayers.²¹⁵ Hiebert says:

Past missionaries often made the decisions and tended to reject most of the old costumes as 'pagans.' Drums, songs, dramas, dances, body decorations, certain types of dress and food, marriage customs, and funeral rites were frequently condemned because there were thought to be directly or indirectly related to traditional religious, hence un acceptable for Christians.²¹⁶

Another problem created by the suppression of the traditional customs is the fact that very often these customs go underground and can lead into undesirable customs which belong neither to western nor to local customs. "They usually combine these customs with public Christian's teachings and form christopaganisms."²¹⁷ Today we have the so called Christian youth who are a result of this kind of combination. They completely lack proper identity. They are neither Maasai nor European, worse enough they are not even Christians in the proper sense of faith.²¹⁸

The church that relies on the command of the missionaries does not grow with full spiritual confidence; instead the members remain spiritually as children who agree too do willingly what the missionaries' wishes and demand. The spirit of discipleship becomes rudimentary in nature. There will be no well defined initiatives until a missionary give commands.

²¹⁴ Hiebert 1991, 84.

²¹⁵ Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012 Masama.

²¹⁶ Hiebert 1991, 184.

²¹⁷ Hiebert 1991,184.

²¹⁸ Interview Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

The missionaries black or white, western or non western, are supposed to know that people's culture is within them as well as around them. These people cannot forsake their culture, although it is possible to innovate, replace, add to, transform, and in other ways alter their use of culture which they have received.²¹⁹

5.5 Uncritical Contextualization: Acceptance of the Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual

The second reaction of the missionaries to traditional customs has been to admit the members uncritically into the church. In this approach the old cultural ways are taken to be basically good when people become Christians. Here, a deep respect is given to the local people and their cultures. The missionaries recognize the value of people and their cultural heritage. They also recognize that the foreignness of the Gospel has been one of the major barriers for it to be fully accepted. As a result, such missionaries stress communication of the Gospel in indigenous forms and call for little or no cultural rejection.²²⁰

Like the first one, this approach also has some weakness. For example, it usually ignores the existence of mutual and cultural errors as well as personal weaknesses. To ignore this is like blocking sin at the front door of the church but permit it in the back. It is very important to remember that the gospel call both persons and societies to change. Hiebert reminds his readers that: "indigenization is communicating the gospel in ways that challenge them in their personal and corporate lives with God's call to discipleship."²²¹

Another great weakness of accommodating culture uncritically is the fact that it opens a door for syncretism. Because Christians are free to continue with their beliefs and practices that stand contrary to the Gospel, they ultimately blend them with the Christian faith to make diverse forms of neopaganism. The new converts will easily get confused as they continue in their old way while at the same time they are obliged to follow the

²¹⁹ Kraft 1979, 106.

²²⁰ Hiebert 1991, 185.

²²¹ Heibert 1991, 185.

Christian faith. A newly convert mother told his Christian son that: “I will no longer participate in the traditional ceremonies because I may get mixed up with unchristian values in them.”²²² It is very true that, new converts bring with them the most of their past customs, and they cannot immediately change all those values that may need to be changed.

Although mature Christians can claim to have changed from the old ways, they still have many areas in their lives that call for deep examination in the light of the biblical reality. They should all mature in their Christians lives, and this stress that they persistently assess their actions and beliefs, which are contrary to the scriptures.²²³

5.6 Critical Contextualization of the Gospel in Relation to the Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual.

If both uncritical rejection of the Maasai male circumcision practice and uncritical acceptance weaken the mission task, what should the church and the Christian converts within the Maasai society do about their cultural way of practicing circumcision ritual?. A third way of contextualization will help the Maasai church to evaluate what to practice before, during and after circumcision. This is what Hiebert calls critical contextualization whereby the traditional beliefs and customs are neither discarded nor acknowledged without examination. They are initially studied with regard to the meanings and functions they have within their cultural setting and then evaluated in the light of the Bible²²⁴

Critical contextualization can be achieved by the following series of steps. The first step is that of identifying the problem or the challenge facing the church at that particular time, for instance the practice of circumcision ritual. The church has an ample chance to recognize her surroundings and serious problems or challenges confronting her members and their environment such as participating in male circumcision practice. Because the

²²² Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

²²³ Interview with Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

²²⁴ Hiebert 1991, 186.

Maasai male circumcision ritual is seasonal,²²⁵ there has always been a danger for the church to forget the rising conflicts as soon as the circumcision initiation ceremonies are over. Instead she needs to address the conflicts that trouble her members, and as a result hindering the church growth, the church has to remember that she is called to address complicated issues that weaken the faith of her members.²²⁶

The second step is that of church leaders should lead the church members in analyzing the traditional customs in questions in accordance to the Gospel. They are supposed to carefully analyze the details and proceedings of the custom i.e. the Maasai male circumcision rituals. Let the church members discuss this rite that include the meaning and functions within the overall ritual. The aim here is to understand well the practice of Maasai male circumcision and not to criticize it. The church leaders have to avoid to jump quickly to criticism, otherwise the ordinary members will not openly talk about this ritual in fear of being condemned.²²⁷

The third step is to have an open Bible study related to this topic; in this case, they need to study keenly what the Bible says about Male circumcision. This step is very crucial because it bridges the traditional customs and biblical teachings. The church leader in charge of this study has to ensure that he makes a thorough exegesis on the biblical truth about traditions, so that the church members can understand well.²²⁸

In the fourth step the church members need to come together to assess seriously their traditional customs in the light of their new light of biblical understandings and to make a resolution regarding their use. It is significant here for the people to make the decision, for they must be confident of the results before they transform. The leaders can present their views and convictions. This is the basic step in order to remind about the conclusion

²²⁵ Refer chapter three.

²²⁶ Hiebert 1991, 186

²²⁷ Hiebert 1991, 186.

²²⁸ Hiebert 1991, 186.

of the decision that will be reached, but the members themselves are left to reach the ultimate decision.²²⁹

To engage the church members in the evaluating male circumcision draws upon their vigour. They more often know their customs better than the missionaries and can criticize them if they are well taught about what the Bible says about their practices. In that way, the church members can grow strong in faith, and can relate to biblical teaching to defend their Christian position against circumcision practice patterns that contradict with the Gospel.

There are several ways through which the congregation may respond to Maasai male circumcision practice from the outcome reached in appropriate and critical contextualization. They can keep, reject, modify, substitute, add or create new ones. All depend on the resolutions reached on the steps mentioned above, which attempt to relate the old customs to the biblical norms.²³⁰

The Christians may decide to retain many of the Maasai male circumcision practices if they discover that they are not against the biblical teachings. For instance, the act of circumcision by itself has nothing wrong to do with the Christian faith. Fiedler agrees that, “surely there is nothing contrary to Christian faith in, for instance the act of circumcision.”²³¹ In the Old Testament God Himself ordered Abraham to be circumcised and the same to his generation as a sign of the covenant between him and God (Gen. 17:10-14). In the Old Testament circumcision was done on the eight day after birth, not at puberty stage as we can see among the Maasai who are 10-15 years old (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). So circumcision has nothing to do with puberty and adulthood training. Since it was done to a newborn baby boy²³² there was no painful memory involved. Also in Exodus 12.43-49 it also tells us about the connection between circumcision and the

²²⁹ Hiebert 1991, 187.

²³⁰ Hiebert 1991, 187.

²³¹ Fiedler 1996, 189.

²³² Africa Bible commentary, “Genesis.”

Passover observance, slaves who eat of their master's Passover offering must be circumcised, no uncircumcised male may eat the meat of paschal sacrifice.²³³

Circumcision in the Bible is a personal relationship with God. This results in holiness of life and this is what it means by circumcision of heart (Deut. 30:6), it unites heart and soul to the LORD. So in the Bible true circumcision is a spiritual procedure and not a physical thing (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 9:26).

Circumcision was also practiced in the New Testament to prominent figures such as John the Baptist and our lord Jesus Christ according to the Law of Moses and Jewish tradition (Lk. 1:59; 2:21; Jn. 7:22-23). The circumcision of Jesus in Luke is associated with textually with naming, sacrifice and salvation. These themes were taken up and develop by the early church fathers like Ambrose and Augustine in the allegorical reading of circumcision was related to three set as follows:

“first, it was connected with a set of moral dispositions to by followers of Christ: kenotic obedience, self denial, and renunciation. Second, it was linked to a set of soteriological criteria: the blood letting as a down payment for redemption to follow, a token of the sacrifice on the cross. And third, it was related to a set of eschatology values: the eight day on which the liturgy proceeded was symbolically linked to the final resurrection.”²³⁴

In the Pauline letters, Paul pointed out that physical circumcision has no spiritual value today but keeping the commandments of God (1Cor.7:19). It is the spiritual circumcision of heart that is of value today, (Col.2:11-13). The spiritual circumcision is a union of the death and resurrection of Jesus, this spiritual circumcision is done through baptism (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11-13). So in the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision has been replaced with the ritual of baptism as a sign that one has become a full member of God's covenant with his people (Rom. 6:1-4, Acts 2:38).

Paul asserts that circumcision is a merely cultural because it has nothing to do with Christian faith. For him, what is most important is ones' faith in Jesus Christ rather than

²³³ Bernat 2009.25.

²³⁴ Brook 2000.38-39

thinking of circumcision (Gal. 5:6; 6:15). Therefore, the church must be careful when approaching the practice of Maasai male circumcision. She has to critically analyze whether it contradicts with Christian faith or not by using critical contextualization as Paul Hiebert suggested above.

5.6.1 Going to the Religious Leader *Oloiboni*

Going to *oloiboni* for any religious purpose is a ritual which puts a man on another human is dependence. Despite the fact that *oloiboni* can perform many extraordinary things, for example prophesying the future whether bad or good in front of people yet he remains a simple human being created by God. He should never be relied upon by other human beings as a spiritual healer or diviner for, just like other human beings, he is totally subjected to God (Rom. 14:10-11).

The tendency of consulting the sacrificial medicine man *oloiboni*, whenever circumcision is going on in a Christian context, should be rejected. This famous man in Maasai is consulted to foresee, predict and even to prevent misfortunes by giving charms and sacrifices. The *oloiboni* approves or disapproves to any ceremony before it starts.²³⁵ He sometimes put restrictions such as slaughtering of a sacrificial animal. The Maasai rely very much on him whenever they need to know the wishes of *Enkai*, this is obviously brings contradiction to the Christian faith.²³⁶ Therefore, it is very right for the Christians to keep away from the contributions to be given to this person, *oloiboni*.

The church is now in the new context of practicing Maasai circumcision without contacting the *oloiboni*, she has to substitute pastors, evangelists and other church leaders. These leaders should be in prayer contact, reading the Bible and also be singing Christian songs. Jesus should be accepted as the initiator of all Christian rituals, while the pastors, evangelists and other church elders are simply his servant.²³⁷ During baptism every Christian is anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be servants of Jesus. But

²³⁵ Interview with Rev William Mollel, 29.07.2012, Moshi.

²³⁶ Interview with Ev. Yusuf Mamasita, 18.08.2012, Irkaswa.

²³⁷ Interview with Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

for the sake of good order, a few Christians should be chosen to officiate the Christian rituals.²³⁸

5.6.2 Going to *Engipaata*

This ritual has also nothing to do with Christian faith. The purification of ones body according to the Christian faith is only through Jesus Christ the Lamb of God who was crucified on the cross to shed his precious blood in order to be the only purification of sins. The price paid to purchase sinners from the slavery of sin was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus is a dam for us Christians in which we can purify ourselves. We meet Jesus purification in the sacraments, both in baptism and in Holy Communion as the Lord's Supper.

The main use of *engipaata*²³⁹ is to remove sins when the initiates reach the ritual dam. The climax of *engipaata* is the bathing inside the dam, and they wash their sins away as they believe to be so. The purpose of washing is only for purification. It is straight clear that Christian youth should not participate in this ritual of purification.

5.6.3 The Killing of Animals

In chapter three I analyzed how these rituals of killing of animals' are very important to two people, both the father of the initiate and the initiate himself. A Maasai Christian should neither kill the animals for the sake of the father nor for his children he wants to circumcise. The killings of the animals differ from one animal to another but all have one common result to the person concerned, the animal becomes an object of faith²⁴⁰. This means that the person, who is connected with the ritual, throws some part of his faith on those animals in order to reach God. A certain portion of one's faith goes to the work of that animal in the belief that the animal can do a miracle or some favour for him.

²³⁸ Interview with Ev. Lomayiani Mollel, 24.07.2012, Kitenden.

²³⁹ Refer chapter three.

²⁴⁰ Rev Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

5.6.3.1 *Olkine loo Mbenek*

For instance, *Olkine loo mbenek*, the ritual father gains some belief that the sharing of the brisket of the animal is a ritual with his god father that does him well. This use of the animal (goat) as the way to separate one's adulthood does not mean anything for a Christian. The Christians have the confirmation ceremony instead. Baptism which is the acceptance of a person by God is followed by confirmation which endorses the person as an adult and ready for God's ministry.

5.6.3.2 *Olkiteng loo Ngulalen*

Olkiteng loo ngulalen (an ox) is used to mean bearing of one's life burdens. A Christian Maasai has already endured life burdens through Jesus Christ, His saviour, "come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find a rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mt.11:28-30). A Maasai Christian has no need to worry about life with its problems. Jesus strengthens Christians every time they are weak and increases endurance in problems. The ear plugs which symbolize one's burdens cannot be useful to Maasai Christians, who really know the bearer of his life ills²⁴¹.

5.6.3.3 *Olkitneng looIl baa*

Olkitneng loo baa (the oxen of wounds) has one big purpose as given before, to purify the father for a new phase of life with his children. This also is meaningless in the life of a Maasai Christian since no purification can be done without Jesus blood. The Christian faith asserts Jesus blood as the only asset for our purification²⁴². Being the last animals are for the sake of the father, it also means to bless him for prosperity throughout his life. True blessing comes from our Lord Jesus Christ and not through the killing of

²⁴¹ Interview with Ev. Lomayiani, 24.07.2012, Kitenden.

²⁴² Discussion with Pastors, 29.07.2012, Moshi.

animals. In Christianity, let the animals slaughtered be eaten as food without mixing any faith.

5.6.3.4 *Olkiteng le Ndomond and Olkitupukunet*

Olkiteng le ndomond and *olkitupukunet* , these are for the sake of the initiate and not the father. The first animal is for giving the initiate the new name as recognition into the society. The purpose of other animals is mainly for leading the initiate into to the real life to come after the circumcision ritual. All these procedures have nothing to do with a Christian youth who got his new name through baptism. Again through confirmation he is introduced more to the reality of a Christian life. The youth renounces the works of satan and pledges for himself to bear the cross of Jesus as an independent Christian. He is free from childhood membership of the church and shares with others a special responsibility in the body of Christ²⁴³.

My concluding remark about these rituals of killing animals is that they should remain as food eaten during the practice of Maasai male circumcision ceremony. The father of the initiate should kill the animals for food purposes in the celebration for his children. Also he can decide to kill animals during the confirmation ceremony and invite all the people without regarding their faith to celebrate the upgrading of his children from childhood to adulthood in a Christian way. The system of dividing meat to each group, and age set should remain as it was during the traditional circumcision. This is because there is no relation to faith; it is just done in respect to each group. *Olkitupukunet* should be eaten by all people and not by women only.

²⁴³ Discussion with Pastors, 29.07.2012, Moshi.

5.6.4 The Bringing of *Elatim*

The bringing of *elatim*, a branch of tree, has nothing to do with Christian youth awaiting circumcision; the cutting of the branch is full of rituals. Sprinkling of milk to the branch of the tree is a ritual, also to leave it outside the kraal until morning is a ritual. All these procedures are not used for a Christian youth because he will be associated him with worshipping idols, “what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for we are the temple of the living God,” (2 Cor. 6:16).

My opinion of the branch of tree *elatim* is, it should be cut without doing any ritual, and should be used as a decoration during Christian circumcision. During the time of traditional circumcision, the *elatim* branch was used to distinguish the houses and families which had been circumcised from others. The branch should also be used to show that a certain *boma* has an ongoing circumcision ceremony.

5.6.5 The Singing of the Abuse Songs

For Christian initiates, the singing of abusing songs is a total degradation of the image of God. Though it is intended to prepare him endure the pain of knife, totally naked for everybody to see him, does not guarantee the unflinching of his body during the cutting. Still there are many who flinch their muscles despite the total degradation and heavy insults during the whole night. It is also common that some initiates, against their fathers will, get circumcised at other places without undergoing the abusing songs by recluse. But whether the abusing songs help the initiate or not, the facts stand as it is that a Christian initiate should not undergo this abuse. A Christian initiate’s body is the temple of God, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are.” (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

How shameful a growing up initiate feels or becomes in front of young children, girls and women without even a single cover on his manhood. This is more than strengthening the

initiate with courage and anger in order to persevere that non anaesthetic circumcision. Because the degradation is done openly for young and old to see, many times the initiates refuse to take off their single black cloaks they put on. But recluses beat them until they agree. This shows that the degradation is painful for every human being regardless of its ritual purpose.

A Christian initiate should be prepared in a Christian way, through the word of God, prayers and Christian songs as the word of God says,

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in you heart to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the father through Him.” (Col. 3:16-17).

During the day of preparation for Christian circumcision, Christian’s songs should be sung, and also Christian teaching should be given by pastors, evangelists and other church leaders.

5.6.6 The Day of Circumcision (Operation) for a Male Christian

On the day of circumcision, a Christian should do the operation of male circumcision. The giving of presents to the initiate after enduring the pain, should be at the celebration after circumcision. Circumcision of males has no contradiction with the Christian faith. Circumcision started from Abraham (Gen. 17:9-11). It was God who ordered circumcision from the beginning; it was a new covenant between God and us (Gen. 17:14). Abraham obeyed God and was circumcised at the age of 99 years (Gen. 17:24-27).

The giving of the presents to the initiate is quite good also, as there is no any contradiction with Christian faith. So due to the fact that the boy has gone through a very critical operation on his flesh, he must be congratulated. Also the boy has attained adulthood through pain without anaesthetic. The presents may be cattle, sheep and goats

from his family, relatives and friends. This is one way of appreciating the initiate as a brave man in the Maasai society.

During and after the operation, the drawing of white lime/ chalk on the faces of the initiates is not a mere decoration as might appear to the non Maasai. It is believed by the Maasai to ward off evil. This lime is believed to contain some natural powers to ward off ill fate caused by people who are believed to have bad eyes, which may cause bad omen to the initiate.²⁴⁴ This thinking contradicts with Christian faith because it relies on powers other than the almighty God. According to Christian faith, misfortunes and evils are warded off through prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, and not by using earthly materials.

The celebration if done in a good Christian way is good; the serving of food i.e. meat, milk and any other foods available during that time, should be preceded by a Christian prayer. The singing should be Christian songs. However, to me the other types of Maasai songs and dancing should be performed by non Christian celebrants. They should not be chased away for it is an opportunity for the pastors, evangelists and other church leaders to witness the Good news to them through preaching and Christian songs.

5.6.7 The Outfits Worn During Recluses

The outfits worn by circumcised boys in Maasai tribe are not fit for Christian recluses. Some of these outfits mentioned in chapter three, are worn under a certain beliefs accompanied with those outfits. A Christian recluse should not put on the traditional outfits for it will be contrary with Christian faith (ostrich feathers, birds, blue beads, coiled brass, *oloikumu*, *emonyorit*, *enduroto*, *olekimojik almarisian*, bow and arrows). But those which are not contrary to Christian faith, the Christian initiate should wear.

The clothes worn by the recluses during circumcision are black clothes which signify a new way of life. If the Maasai Christians want to use their clothes used during the

²⁴⁴ Parsalaw 1999, 117.

previous time, before they became Christians, it is good because there is no contradiction with Christian faith.

During seclusion time, there are teachings given to the initiates. These teachings are not only basic to the daily life of the initiates, but they are also in the line with biblical teachings in regard to respect, courage, wisdom, love, working hard, taking care of the family, bravery, and other important responsibilities. The initiates are basically taught how to keep and protect the Maasai natural environment, not only as their natural resources bestowed to them but also God's creation that ought to be honoured.²⁴⁵ In these teachings, the initiates are basically taught how to respect their parents, and also respect God as their creator and saviour. The teachings intend to mould, form and raise up a person in all aspects, which is physical, intellectual, and moral behaviour. These teachings prepare the *moran* for a meaningful and a better future in life. It is helping in two ways as Rev Joshua Laiser explains during the interview, firstly, it provides education for life, secondly, it is education for a living, about skills, information and techniques needed in the Maasai community.²⁴⁶

5.6.8 The end of Seclusion

The end of seclusion is always marked ritually. The shaving off of hair by the father, mother and the initiate is done as a ritual of beginning a new life. This is a non Christian way of giving a new life to a person. New life for a Christian is through salvation in Jesus Christ and that salvation is a gift. For Christian recluses the shaving should be done just as removing off hair if it is necessary to shave. The shaving therefore should not be done as a ritual.

When we come to the outfits worn during the end of seclusion, these outfits worn by initiates are not to combine with any belief. The red dyed clothes are for ordinary wearing. These clothes are bought from the shop, the neckbands, earrings, anklets, arm

²⁴⁵ Interviewed with Ev. Yusuf Mamasita 18.08.2012, Irkaswa.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

bands etc are worn only as ornaments, no belief is accompanied to them. The spear, sword, and sticks are enabling the *moran* to live according to the Maasai society. The *moran* used these weapons to defend his cattle from wild animals, defend his society from invasions and to tend cattle, sheep, and goats. A Christian Maasai can as well appear in those ornaments and tools for work, the spear, beads and swords are also bought from the shops.

5.6.9 Taboos and Abstention

It is not good for a Maasai *moran* Christian to abstain from foods given by God, food like maize, banana, vegetables, cassava, rice, stiff porridge etc, should be enjoyed by every Christian *moran* as well as milk, blood, and meat. All food is given to us by God without any restrictions (Acts 10.12-15). These Bible verses can mean food as well as what St. Peter was being told of the Gentles. Does it not mean eating everything that harm a person? Some food for example fish, eggs, some vegetables according to their smell and taste can easily make a person vomit. For such situations a person is not forced to partake in eating that type of foods. But it should not be an abstention due to taboos. Christians *moran* should set good examples to all those who are non Christian on this issue of taboos and abstention. God has purified our animals' food as well as agricultural foods. No food should be unclean for human consumption unless it harms the person.

Also, a Maasai Christian *moran* should not be considering other human beings as unclean to see his food. Women are not unclean according to our Christian faith. They are of the same value and dignity as men before God our creator. When it comes to the taboo of one *moran* should not eat or drink alone, it is of love to the neighbour but it is a very discriminating one. Why should the sharing of food be only with one's age set members, and not with any other fellow human being? A Christian Maasai *moran* should show a good example of sharing food with all kinds of people. He should love others equally as Jesus loves us all (Jn. 13:34-35). In the New Testament time, Jesus referred to his disciples and today he refers to all of us who are Christians.

5.7 The Parallelism of Baptism, Confirmation and Maasai Male Circumcision Ritual

In these two Christians' rituals, and an important one in Maasai traditional ritual, there are things which are similar to each other; these are starting point, communal ritual, water, prayers, clothes, sponsors and teachings.

The Maasai initiates washed before circumcision, the Christians are washed by Jesus in baptism (Jn.1.29-31, Mt.28.18-20, Col.3.17, Acts 2.38, 1Pet.3.21). As circumcision is the end of childhood life and the beginning of adulthood life, so Christian baptism is also an end point and at the same times the beginning of a new life. In baptism the old Adam dies and a new Christian evolves. In the congregation Baptism can be depicted as a washing for regeneration which means it is grace only which brings spiritual regeneration.

The result of Christian baptism is salvation this cannot reduce the social concept of Maasai male circumcision which is considered as a communal ritual. For through baptism one is incorporated into the new unity in the body of Christ which includes all baptized Christians.²⁴⁷ The communal concept of baptism is not lost but viewed and understood in the spiritual sense of the community of believers, that is the baptized are born into new community. For dying and being raised with Jesus which happens at baptism, means joining the body of Christ, which is made up of all who believe in Him.²⁴⁸ Circumcision in Maasai has only external character, the circumcised are accepted as adult in the Maasai community. Baptism has both an external as the baptized are considered as Christians and a spiritual component, i.e. salvation. It means that the baptism ritual offers a wider concept of community with specific qualities than that offered in a physical Maasai circumcision ritual.

In both baptism and circumcision rituals water is used, the Maasai in their ritual of circumcision use water as a symbol of purification of sins, to wash the sinful body and be clean in order to start a new life. The Maasai elders lead prayers during purification of the

²⁴⁷ Mtaita 1995, 197.

²⁴⁸ Mtaita 1995, 197.

initiates, without their prayers this water of purification is nonsense to the initiate who is waiting for circumcision. In Christian baptism as well, it is not water as such with power to wash away sins but the word of God. In Dr. Martin Luther's small catechism, it is written,

How can water bring about such a great thing? Water does not, but it is the word of God with and through the water, and our faith which trusts in the word of God in the water. For without the word of God that water is nothing, but water, and there is no baptism. But when it linked with the word God, it is a baptism that is gracious water of life and a bath of new birth in the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹

Christians believe that water without the word of God is nonsense. In baptism the old Adam's dies and a new Christian is born. Through baptism the Maasai Christians are blessed with the goodness of God. In Maasai male circumcision water is useless without the elders' prayers, and in baptism water is nothing without the word of God and prayers.

During Maasai circumcision ritual there are prayers lead by the elders, in every stage i.e. before, during and after circumcision the elders must pray for the initiate, asking Enkai to lead him in every stage of his life, to have abundant blessings through his life time here on earth. As usual Christians are the people of prayer, during baptism the pastor, evangelist, and other church leaders have to pray and give blessings to the baptized Christians. As we discussed above, these leaders have also to lead prayers for the Christian boys who are awaiting circumcision.

During the time of Maasai male circumcision, the initiates used black clothes which signify a new stage of life. In baptism and confirmation the initiates wear white clothes, which also signify a born again Christian, i.e. holiness of those baptized or confirmed. The Maasai Christians may decide themselves to which colour of clothes they will use during circumcision, baptism, or confirmation, because wearing of these clothes are not connected with any faith.

²⁴⁹ McGrath 2012, 162.

In Christian baptism, especially in the Lutheran church, nobody will be baptized without a faithful sponsor. The same applies to Maasai male circumcision rituals, where also a faithfully sponsor is needed. The sponsor in both rituals is to bear witness for the proper rite; he is the one who assists in the whole life of the initiate²⁵⁰. The sponsor in both rites is the one who gives a new name to the child. The sponsor stands instead of the parents in both rites. In infant baptism the parents and the sponsor responded to the minister instead of the child. Also during Maasai male circumcision, the parents and the sponsor are the ones who respond to the prayers from the elders, who give the blessings before, during and after circumcision.²⁵¹

During seclusion the initiate has received the important teachings concerning the Maasai way of living, the elders and other people in the society can visit the initiate and teach him. This is the same as during the preparation of confirmation, the pastors and evangelist have to teach their students about the Bible, ten commandments, petitions of the Lord's Prayer, church, Christian faith and their everyday life after confirmation, as the ELCT course book of confirmation, the baptized children are helped to identify themselves with the life and mission of the adult Christian community²⁵². Klos say that, "confirmation is a pastoral and education ministry of the church that is designed to help baptized children to take vows of loyalty to Christ and his church that their parents took for them during baptism"²⁵³. The teachings given during circumcision should be taught during confirmation classes. The traditional elders should be invited sometimes by the pastor to visit these classes and present elders teachings to teach because not all teachings are good.

By concluding this part the local Maasai church can add to male circumcision, if it finds it suitable, the Christian rituals in order to affirm her spiritual heritage. This is important because Christians do not only live in their own traditional culture but also in the

²⁵⁰ Interviewed with Rev. Joshua Laiser, 23.08.2012, Masama.

²⁵¹ Interviewed with Rev Emmanuel Laiser, 10.08 2012, Irkaswa.

²⁵² Tembea na Kristo 2001, 138.

²⁵³ Klos 1968, 7.

Christian tradition. All Christians live in two traditions, the cultural and the Christian.²⁵⁴ Christian rituals, such as baptism and confirmation, do not only provide converts with ways to express their new faith, Christian rituals also symbolize their ties to the historical and ecumenical church. Therefore, during the Maasai male circumcision ritual, these Christian rituals should be associated whenever possible, especially during confirmation. The church leaders can help this to the initiates in order to strengthen them and show the grace of God in this ceremony.

²⁵⁴ Hiebert 1991, 189.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In this research, I have discussed the practice of Maasai male circumcision ritual, in a thesis divided into six chapters. Maasai male circumcision is a very important ritual through the whole wide tribe. The Maasai are the people who look at their culture very actively. Christianity is trying to get a place in Maasai society, but because missionaries, who came to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus, did not know the culture of this tribe, it became very difficult for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to enter the Maasai society. In this thesis I explored how to do mission among the Maasai society by considering this important ritual, which is like an identity marker for the Maasai people.

Chapter one was an introductory chapter, it was dealing with the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, collection of data ,data analysis, sampling, scope and limitation of the study, literature review and thesis layout.

Chapter two, dealt with the historical background of the Maasai people who are within the context of the study. It became clear that the Maasai is a large society which is found in East and Central Africa. Formerly they were found only in East Africa but because the society is moving with their animals searching for water and grass we can find the Maasai now in Central Africa where there is enough water and grass. We also saw their life, social structure, economic activities and their religious life.

Chapter three was the main chapter of the study because it deals with the whole process of practicing male circumcision among the Maasai. In this chapter we saw that the practice of Maasai male circumcision is divided into three stages, these are before circumcision, during circumcision and after circumcision. The first stage which is before circumcision is the preparation of circumcision whereby the boys who are already qualified by their age (10-15 years) went to the *oloiboni*, the divine man to ask permission for circumcision. Remember that some of these boys had waited for seven years. After they received permission from *oloiboni*, they went back home for the preparation to go to *engipaata*. This is a stage is whereby they are going for purification for their childhood sins. After *engipaata*, each boy went to his home father so that his

father could perform all the ritual before he circumcised his boy/s. Here the killing of animals takes place for the father of the initiate and also the killing of animals for the initiate, who is waiting for circumcision. The second stage is the day of circumcision whereby the boy who was awaiting circumcision is circumcised, but before he was circumcised the other boys of his age who are already circumcised, sing the abuse songs to the initiate so that the boy can overcome pain. This is done because Maasai male circumcision is practiced without pain killer. Also in the morning before circumcision the boy is taken to the river or into the bush where there is water so that he can wash his body. This is another purification in which all bad omens, curse, and sins from his family are wash away. During the time of circumcision all men are allowed to come and watched if the boy can overcome the pain during this operation. If the boy did not overcome the pain he will not qualify to be called a *moran*. Those who overcome pain are qualified to be strong *morans* in Maasai society. They have to be taught about how they can live as an adult Maasai man, how to respect elders and young people, how to kill a lion, how to take care of their livestock and the whole community. The last stage in chapter three are the days after circumcision, which is called seclusion. The boys go around in the villages singing and showing proudly that they are now *moran*. This time they wear black clothes, ostrich feathers, fingerings, and their faces are smeared with white chalk. After seclusion, the boys start to wear red clothes as an identity of a full Maasai soldier with a spear, shield, knife and other protecting things.

Chapter four was dealing with how the Maasai male circumcision became an obstacle for the growth of the church in Maasai society. Here we defined the term church growth, and described the hindrance of Maasai male circumcision for the growth of the church in the ELCT Northern Diocese. I explained the misunderstanding between Christianity and the Maasai male circumcision ritual. And from the above, I discovered that the Maasai male circumcision becomes an obstacle for conversion of non Christians, and lastly, the Maasai male circumcision is a source of syncretism and also a source of division in the church in Maasai society.

Chapter five, dealt with how Maasai male circumcision can be done with Christian boys without interfering with Christian faith. The chapter was on contextualization. We defined the term contextualization. This was the core of the chapter trying to explore which practices are good and can be practiced by Christians before, during and after circumcision, and which procedure are not to be practiced.

By concluding, right now the church should consider focusing its attention on Maasai male circumcision as a big problem. The congregation has people of all ages, children, youth, and adult members. It is difficult for the church to have active members without touching the male circumcision ritual they undergo these days.

Maasai male circumcision is the most important social event in the whole life of the Maasai man. This research is showing how important the Maasai male circumcision is, so the church should realize that some problems of the Christians could be lessened if Maasai male circumcision was well understood by Church members. A better understanding of the issue, could as well bring a better practice of Maasai male circumcision of one's heart. I agree that Maasai male circumcision as an operation done without pain killer has no effect in terms of Christian faith. What should the church do to reconcile the Maasai Christians and Maasai non Christians? In my thesis I consider the following points.

Firstly, Maasai male circumcision should not be discouraged. Trying to stop it is obviously going to lead the Maasai Christians into a dangerous situation. Discouraging Maasai male circumcision will put real Maasai in a meaningless status of life. Circumcision is an identity marker of the tribe. I advice that the discouraging should be done neither directly nor indirectly for it will spoil the Maasai community at large. Furthermore, those who are not yet Christians will definitively stop coming into the church fearing that Christianity does not accept Maasai male circumcision at all. In fact, this is my great fear that the church tries to do so. This is one way of threatening their acceptance of Jesus Christ and also their coming to the church.

But the church as the instrument of God is instructed to teach, preach, and lead the members in the kingdom of heaven. The church must not allow Maasai male circumcision to be done to Christians in the way it used to be. The present tradition of practicing Maasai male circumcision, as we have seen, is not fit for Christians as sons of light. By the traditional way I mean practicing all the rituals before, during and after circumcision, wearing outfits, restrictions during seclusion, taboos and abstinences.

The practice of Maasai male circumcision itself with some other procedures which are not contrary with Christian faith, as shown and discussed in chapter five of this research, should not be eliminated. The Christian faith is the light of the world, just as Christians themselves; the Christian faith must enlighten our traditions and costumes. The Christians light comes from their master himself, Jesus. “The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world and the world was made through him...” (Jn. 1:9-10). Because of their master, Christians are light of the world as well, “You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill can not be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to the entire house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven” (Mt. 5:14-16).

The practice of Maasai male circumcision, therefore, must be a different one for all Maasai Christians. For the Maasai it shows that the cutting of the flesh is not only an important event in initiation but more so all the rituals done before, during and after circumcision for the father and the boy to be circumcised. The whole process apart from the operation itself matters very much. For example, if a Maasai boy is circumcised in the hospital he will be greatly insulted by the whole society. Firstly, because the traditional operation is done without pain killer by a specialist who is known to the whole society, secondly, because if done in a hospital he will not have the style of circumcision which the Maasai must have, and thirdly he did not perform any rituals for circumcision as a traditional Maasai. So if the practice of Maasai male circumcision was just done any way, then any boy who goes to the doctors in the hospital for the operation, will be fully

respected and accepted as an adult. But it is not the same as the requirements applied above.

The church should therefore see to that the rituals in Maasai male circumcision which are contrary to Christian faith should be eliminated by the parents of the initiates and the initiate himself who is a Christian.

Secondly, the church has to prepare short and long programs to deal with the matter of conflicts and chaos between her members and the traditionalists concerning the practice of Maasai male circumcision. The church needs to prepare and conduct seminars, open Bible studies, open air meetings and serious consultations which relate to this topic of Maasai male circumcision. The church also needs to provide a proper training, knowledge and education to all of her members, especially the church leaders and all Christians in Maasai society. This is to strengthen their faith to be capable to overcome or to resist all the challenges concerning Maasai male circumcision and their faith in Jesus Christ.

These special programs and training would aim to avoid the rise of syncretism in the church. The prohibition of participating in anything related to the traditional diviner, *oloiboni*, singing the abuse songs and other practices which are against Christian's faith should be considered as we saw in chapter five on contextualization. Church leaders who studied in theology and have Bible knowledge should play a part in helping to contact these seminars and Bible trainings centers for the whole church. Through seminars and teachings they will be helped to distinguish what to do and not to do. This is because for example the veneration of *oloiboni*, abuse songs, and other circumcision practice which are contrary to Christian's faith are against the Bible and the first commandment. Through these seminars and training the church should avoid and forbid her members to engage in such procedures.

Thirdly, a special liturgy is needed on how to practice Maasai male circumcision in a Christian context. The liturgy must be based on Christian norms to replace the old

unchristian rituals. Such liturgy should be conducted and managed by the church leaders, which are Bishops, pastors, evangelists, instead of traditional leaders. The traditional leaders within this context should get involved on how Christians should undergo Maasai male circumcision in a new liturgy which the church leaders should introduce to the traditional leaders. This will help the church and Maasai culture to avoid and reduce clashes and conflicts which can arise in this society.

From the above explanation, the church needs to make some modifications in some procedures on how to practice Maasai male circumcision in a Christian's context, for instance in their new liturgy abuse songs should be replaced by Christian's songs, the slaughtering of animals should remain as food eaten by all people and not relating to any person as the father of the initiate or initiate himself. In the liturgy the prayers and teachings should be lead by church leaders. Also, during the operation, the boy himself can decide whether to go to the hospital for pain killers or without pain killers because it has no effect to Christian faith as I stated above.

The main reason why the church has a liturgy to use during Maasai male circumcision is because this practice is part of their human life; it is the culture of their tribe. The Maasai cannot totally forsake their culture after they become Christians, so it is possible to transform the procedures on how to practice this ritual. Maasai are afraid to ignore their culture thinking that they may lose their identity.

Fourthly, re-admission of the backsliders is another response of the church in the Maasai society. The church should be very careful in re-admitting those Christians who are participating in Maasai male circumcision rituals that are contrary to the Christian faith. This is because there is a danger for the Christians to take it as a style and fashion. I also strictly recommend that there must be some principle on how to re-admit those Christians who practice Maasai male circumcision rituals that are contrary to Christian faith and ethics. Most of them practiced the traditional circumcision knowingly just because they were sure they would be re-admitted to church membership.

Lastly, by concluding my thesis I have to say that, the work of the pastors, evangelists, church elders and other church leaders who have been entrusted with powers to bind and loosen (Mt.16:19, 18:18), is not to fight for and rejoice at the death of Maasai male circumcision ritual. Their work is to seek ways and means, in the light of the Gospel, how they can be fulfilled and uplifted with Christianity and Christ's saving work. This is the cultural mission of the church, namely that the church has to speak to people in the way they are and give answers to the meaning of life by answering their questions. In short, the mission of the church to make the Maasai people more human and more free to be better Christians in the church in Maasai context. They become more human and more free in confrontation with Jesus Christ (Lk. 4:16-22). And when a person is more human he is able to relate to the humanity his fellow men, and he is more divine therefore, nearer to God.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWED INFORMANTS

NO	NAME	SEX	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE	DATE
1.	Emmanuel Laiser	Male	43	Pastor	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
2.	Yoshua Laiser	Male	40	Pastor	Masama	23.08.2012
3.	Kashuma Lendulo	Male	45	Bussinesman	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
4.	Kumbau Saning'o	Male	38	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	21.07.2012
5	Lenkai Mali	Male	85	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	21.07.2012
6.	Lomayian Mollel	Male	44	Evangelist	Kitenden	24.07.2012
7.	Lomunyak Megiroo	Male	73	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
8.	Loserian Oltwati	Male	58	Businessman	Kitenden	24.07.2012
9.	Luka Saigura	Male	78	Pastoralist & Farmer	Olmolomg	25.07.2012
10.	Mayasek Oltwati	Male	67	Farmer & Businessman	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
11.	Medoti Loibanguti	Male	53	Farmer&Businessman	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
12.	Mekuretu Lobikieki	Male	39	Farmer & pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
13.	Melami Syara	Male	68	Evangelist	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
14.	Nguyaa Oltwati	Male	35	Businessman &farmer	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
15.	Lee Olduka	Male	56	Divisional Executive officer	Olmolong	25.07.2012
16.	Olaigwanwani Lokeru	Male	69	Farmer &Pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
17.	Ole Mbao	Male	58	Farmer & Pastoralist	Irkaswa	17.07.2012
18	Ole Saning'o	Male	73	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
19.	Ole Twanga	Male	98	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	17.07.2012
20	Ole Moinget	Male	33	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
21.	Ole Nailugo	Male	71	Patoralist	Kitenden	24.07.2012
22.	Ole Naronyo	Male	67	Pastoralist	Kitenden	24.07.2012
23.	Ole Sarika	Male	84	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	12.08.2012
24.	Ole Sipira	Male	52	Farmer & pastoralist	Irkaswa	13.08.2012
25.	Ole Mshao	Male	31	Teacher	Mkao	04.08.2012
26.	Ole Sikorei	Male	62	Farmer	Irkaswa	12.07.2012

27.	Obed Mollel	Male	47	Evangelist	Olmolong	08.08.2012
28.	Rev. Maimu	Male	35	Pastor	Olmolong	08.08.2012
29.	Ruth Saningo	Female	32	Teacher	Mkao	04.08.2012
30.	Nankokoo	Female	48	Nurse	Olmolong	25.07.2012
31.	Samuel Mollel	Male	49	Evangelist	Irkaswa	12.07.2012
32.	Yona Samuel	Male	54	Farmer & Pastoralist	Irkaswa	21.07.2012
33.	Yusuf Mamasita	Male	35	Evangelist	Irkaswa	18.8.2012
34.	Simanga	Male	51	Farmer	Olmolong	25.07.2012
35.	Daniel Kinana	Male	40	Evangelist	Irkaswa	27.07.2012
36.	Loitore Lepayion	Male	43	Farmer	Imurtot	23.07.2012
37.	Melau Simanga	Male	49	Farmer	Imurtot	23.07.2012
36.	Leyian Lendulo	Male	45	Pastoralist	Irkaswa	13.07.2012
37.	Syaiti Mbao	Male	54	Farmer	Irkaswa	13.07.2012
38.	Goodluck Melami	Male	25	Student	Irkaswa	29.07.2012
39.	Q	Male	38	Pastor	Siha	22.08.2012
40.	Zakayo Lukumay	Male	33	Student	Irkaswa	29.07.2012

Appendix 2

<http://www.predators-tz.or/maasai/htm>, 26.08.2012.

<http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/local-news/>, 04.03.2013.

<http://www.queenlema.blogspot.no/2012/01/html>, 12.04.2013.

My observation, 10.08.2012, *Olmelili*

My Observation, 25.08.2012, *Ngaritati*.

Discussion with school boys, 21.07.2012, Enduimet secondary school

Discussion with circumcised boys, 26.07.2012 Longido secondary school.

Discussion with pastors 29.07.2012. Moshi.

Interview with Christians, both lay and clergy, 25.07.2012, Imurtot Parish.

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Maasai Elders Questions

- What is Maasai circumcision
- What is the background of Maasai male circumcision? How long?
- What are the reasons of Maasai circumcision?
- What happen if a boy is not circumcised?
- What are the rituals performed before circumcision?
- What are the rituals performed after circumcision?
- How the rituals are performed? Who is responsible? Why?
- Can God play a part during the time before and after circumcision?
- Can a Christian practice circumcision the same way as a non-Christian? How?
- What is your view about circumcision?
- What are the differences between the past and present concerning this topic?

2. Church elders Questions

- What is your view on Maasai male circumcision as a church elder?
- What do you say about the performance of male circumcision among the Maasai?
- What do you think about the role circumcision rituals plays in Maasai society?
- Can Maasai circumcision be practiced by the Christians?
- Do we need a new way to practice?
- Do Maasai circumcision face any challenges?
- What are the challenges?
- What do you think should be the solution?
- What are the differences between the past and the present concerning this topic?
- Are male circumcision and confirmation having any similarities? What are these similarities?

3. Pastors/ ministers questions.

- What is your view on Maasai circumcision?
- Is Maasai circumcision similar to that found in the Bible? Any differences?
- What is your approach in assisting your members on this practice?
- Do you believe that your members still practice Maasai circumcision? Why?
- What do you think the church ought to do concerning this topic?
- How is circumcision viewed in the today's Maasai society? (among Christian and non Christian)
- What are the reasons for conflicts between Christians and non Christians related to circumcision?
- Are there any alternatives on how to practice circumcision?
- Are there any church rituals which have he same features as Maasai male circumcision?

4. Initiates who are circumcised (Ilmorran)

- What motives demand you to be circumcised?
- Did you go to the hospital or are you circumcised at home?
- Can you narrate to me the activities that you went through from the beginning of the circumcision year up to the time you were circumcised?
- Narrate to me the activities that happened on the day of circumcision?
- Tell me what the elders tell you about circumcision?
- How did you feel before and immediately after the operation?
- What do you plan to do now that you are a circumcised person?

Appendix 4

A Maasai initiation rites riots claim life, 31, January 2012.²⁵⁵

By [In2EastAfrica Reporter](#)



Arusha Regional Police Commander, Mr Tobias Andengeny

Clashes over traditional initiation rites which involve male circumcision among the Maasai tribe have left one dead and five others seriously injured in Arumeru district, [Arusha](#) region.

The clashes erupted on Sunday when a group of irate Maasai youths (Morani) conducted a door-to-door search for males who have become of age but are yet to be circumcised. Tribal initiation among the Maasai is normally regarded as a stage where a boy is to be taught manhood and it is considered necessary for the individual to be viewed as a full member of the tribe.

²⁵⁵ <http://www.dailynews.co.tz/index.php/local-news/>, 04.03.2013.

Arusha Regional Police Commander, Mr Thobias Andengenyne, confirmed that there have been serious violence over initiation rites that led to the death of Mr George Sengeu (25) and five others have been seriously injured. The RPC said the Maasai youths' intention was to make sure that all boys who have come of age are not only circumcised but undergo the excruciatingly painful rituals of traditional initiation ceremonies.

“What we have come to learn is that these Morani are accusing others of angering their ‘gods’ by ignoring traditions and sending males to be circumcised in hospitals which is less painful, thus, regarded as less manly,” police have said. Some of those injured have been identified as Mr Saiboko Melau, Alphas Samwel and Geoffrey Said, the latter being a student of Enyoita Secondary School.

Other injured persons' identities are yet to be established as investigations are ongoing. Police have arrested six suspects in connection with the riots. Meanwhile, a woman identified as Ms Christina Mponzi (35) was found dead after being strangled by unknown people in Arusha municipality over the weekend.

Before her death and until last weekend, the deceased was employed as a bar attendant at Cocktail Pub which is located at Mianzini at Kaloleni Ward, in the municipality. According to the police, the deceased's neck was broken when her body was discovered naked in a pile of garbage at a dump site in Kaloleni area.

“Her neck was broken, body was bruised and there was clotted blood from her nose. We believe she was attacked and killed on Saturday but the body was found on Sunday,” RPC Andengenyne said. The late Ms Mponzi had reported for work on the day of her death and left for home later that evening. Police are investigating the matter.

By MARC NKWAME, [Tanzania Daily News](#)

Appendix 5. A report on newspaper about the church (T.A.G) which was burned by the Maasai Moran in Arusha

Monday, January 2, 2012

MORANI WA KIMASAI WAVUNJA NA KUHARIBU KANISA, FAMILIA TANO ZAKIMBIA MAKAZI YAO KWA KOSA LA KUFANYA TOHARA KISASA, NA KUSALI.²⁵⁶

Katika hali isiyokuwa ya kawaida Vijana wa kundi la Kimasai wajulikano kama ‘Morani’ wameamia kanisa la T.AG. oljoro Jerusalem na kuvunja kanisa hilo kwa madai kuwa sala pamoja na vitendo pamoja na Imani ambazo wanazo baadhi ya waumini wa kanisa hilo zina haribu Mila na Desturi ya kabila hilo la wamasai.

Hali hiyo ilitokea wiki iliyopita ambapo morani hao walivamia kanisa hilo na kuharibu sanjari na kuwatafuta baadhi ya waumini wa kanisa kwa malengo ya kuwatembeza mitaani uchi pamoja na kuwatoza faini ya pesa na faini ya Ngombe dume kwa kosa la kuharibu Mila na Desturi ya Kimasai.

Akiongea kijijini hapa msimamizi wa Makanisa ya T.A.G katika maeneo hayo Mchungaji Simion Vomo alisema kuwa kutokana na imani za morani hao, kanisa limelazimika kuchukua hatua kali na za kisheria juu ya Vurugu ambazo zinafanywa na watu hao

Mchungaji Vomo alieleza kuwa Morani hao wamekuwa wakifanya hivyo kwa kuhofia kuwa baadhi ya waumini ambao wanajua madhara ya kuabudu na kukumbatia mila ambazo zinamchafua Mungu hivyo wanaamua kuwafuata watumishi na kisha kuwatembeza uchi mitaani

Alisema kuwa mpaka sasa familia kama tano zimelazimika kukimbia kijijini hapo kwa kuhofia usalama wa maisha yao na familia zao kwa kuwa Morani hao wameshatangaza vita dhidi yao ya kuwatembeza mitaani wakiwa uchi kama fundisho kwa baadhi ya watu ambao watakaondelea na sala sanjari na kufanya tohara kwa njia za kisasa zaidi.

“tunayoongea sasa ndugu mwandishi ni kwamba mpaka sasa familia kama tano zimekimbia makazi yao ya kudumu kwa kuwa wanahofu ya hawa morani na kisa kikubwa ni imani zao katika kuomba , kukataa hii mila ya kufanya tohara kwa njia za kienyeji sana, na kukataa kuabudu Mila za kimasai” alieleza mchungaji Vomo.

Pia alisema kuwa mara baada ya kanisa kuona hali kama hiyo walilazimika kutumia njia na busara za kisasa zaidi za kuweza kuwaelimisha Morani hao, lakini morani hao walionekana kukiuka makubaliano hayo na ndipo walipovamia kanisa hilo pamoja na kumkamata muumini mmoja ambaye alirejea kijijini hapo mara baada ya kuwepo kwa muafaka

²⁵⁶ <http://www.queenlema.blogspot.no/2012/01/html>, 12.04.2013

Alibainisha kuwa Morani hao walifanikiwa kuvunja mlango kwa muumini huyo ambaye yeye anatuhumiwa kwa kosa la kufanya ibada na kukiuka mila hizo za kimasai majira ya usiku wa saa sita ambapo ilikuwa ni December 30 na kumtembeza umbali mrefu ambapo alitembea kwa masaa kama sita jambo ambalo si sahihi hata mbele za Mungu.

“fikiria hali ya usiku ilivyokuwa alafu unamtembeza mtu akiwa amevaa gunia kisa ni imani yake ambayo inatoka katika biblia kisha unadai fedha na Ngombe kweli hii ni halali tutahakikisha kuwa tunapambana na hili mpaka tukomeshe hili tatizo’alisema mchungaji Vomo.

Katika hatua nyingine msimamizi wa makanisa hayo alisema kuwa ni lazima sheria ichukue mkondo wake ili kukomesha hali kama hiyo ambayo kwa sasa imeonekana kukua sana ndani ya mkoa wa Arusha kwa kuwa baadhi ya Masai wanataka Tohara kwa njia ya Kienyeji sanjari na kupinga makanisa yenye kukataa imani hiyo.

Awali Familia ambazo zimekimbia kutokana na kutafutwa na Morani hao zilisema kuwa kamwe hawataweza kukubaliana na wanachokitaka na kudai Morani hao kwa kuwa Biblia haijaonesha sehemu za kuabudu mila na desuri kama zao.

“hata kitokee nini sisi hatubadilishi msimamo wetu na badala yake tutazidi kumtangaza yesu kuwa mshindi wetu na pia kila kinachofanyika kimbilio letu ni Biblia na wala sio maagano, Mila, na Desturi”zilisema Familia hizo.

Nao Morani ambao walizunguka Kanisa hilo December 31 walisema kuwa ili mambo yaende vema wakati wakisubiri upatanishi baina ya familia hizo tano na kanisa, wanataka Kanisa hilo la T.A.G Oljoro Jerusalem Lifungwe hali ambayo Msimamizi wa Makanisa hayo alikataa na kusema kuwa ibada na taratibu zake itaendelea kawaida na kamwe hawatasitisha kwa kosa la Mila.

Nae Kaimu Kamanda wa polisi kwa mkoa wa Arusha Bw Akili Mpwapwa alisema kuwa bado wanaendelea na uchunguzi kuhusiana na tukio hilo ambapo watakaohusika kufanya fujo, kuchukua mali za watu au kuharibu kama walivyo fanya watafikishwa mahakamani kwani hayo ni makosa ya jinai.

MWISHO

CHANZO CHA HABARI NA QUEEN LEMA

ARUSHA

0758907891.

Appendix 6



Fig.1. the young boy awaiting for circumcision



Fig.1. Maasai young boys after circumcision, this is seclusion time



Fig.3. Physical appearance of the Maasai morans (warriors)



Fig.4. Maasai elder giving blessing to the Moran



Fig 4. Maasai *morans* searching for a lion in the bush.