

# Origin, Spread And Impact Of Islam On Nandi Traditional Religion And Culture: A Case Of Nandi County, Kenya

1Abraham Kiprotich Murgor and 2Bernard Kipsang Rop

1 Mount Kenya University (MKU)

2 Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)

## Abstract

*In recent times, Islamic religion has been expanding rapidly at the global, regional and local levels. The presence of this religion in Nandi County and its evidence of growth raise the need to comprehend, with comparative ease, its origin, spread and impact on Nandi traditional religion and culture from 1850 to 2012, which has not lately been the subject of scholarly research. The main objective of this research-related work was to investigate the origin, impact and spread of Islam in Nandi County; apart from analyzing other factors that contributed to the acceptance and/or rejection of the religion by the Nandi people, which further enhanced its subsequent spread. Cross-cultural and Islamization theories were applied in collecting data and bridging the gap in knowledge by utilizing both qualitative design and survey data collection methods to arrive at conclusive findings. It was revealed that the spread of Islamic religion in Nandi County involved various factors such as socio-cultural, economic, religious and doctrinal, among others. Quality information was delineated on proselytism in a cross-cultural context and promotion of inter-faith dialogue which government policy-makers, other stakeholders, students, researchers and professionals should find both stimulating and useful. This data is vital in addressing the developmental agenda for Nandi County; particularly in areas related to recently launched competency-based curriculum education, historical and cultural heritage, as well as indigenous religion.*

**Keywords:** *Islam, Nandi, traditional and cultural religion, doctrinal proselytism, competency-based education.*

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

The study endeavored to cover the Nandi people of Kenya, their socio-cultural and religious values particularly those associated with the Muslims of Eastern Africa. However, as far as the Nandi people are concerned, it is difficult to give an exact figure of their population because they are scattered all over Kenya; few of them even live in Tanzania and Uganda. Although the Nandi, as an ethnic group, are not located in one geographical place, their culture and especially the religious rites are practiced universally. This study focused on the Nandi as a community, with particular reference to the sub-districts that make up the Nandi County; namely, Tindiret, Nandi East, Nandi North, Nandi Central and Nandi South.

The name “Nandi” originated from a Swahili word “mnandi” - meaning *kormoran*, because of their voraciousness. Initially the Nandi were called by a nickname “*chepng’al*,” meaning people who talk a lot. This was the name used by their fellow *Kalenjin* community comprising of the following sub-clusters the *Keiyo*, *Kipsigis*, *Marakwet*, *Pokot*, *Sabaot*, *Terik*, and *Tugen*, among others. Before British colonization, the Nandi were sedentary cattle-herders, sometimes also practicing agriculture. John Ludwig Kraft was the first to mention the name “Nandi” in writing in 1854 while H.M. Stanley first put it on the map in 1878.<sup>1</sup>

The Nandi people, who share affinities in matters of tradition, language and culture, are among the darkest skinned of the Sub-Saharan people, and bear only inferable physical semblance of the more African looking segment of the racially mixed Arabic speaking population of Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, no claim of the Egyptian origin seems more preposterous, until one looks at the drawings and carvings of the ancient Egyptians, depicting their own general physical appearance. Indeed, some of the Nandi sounding names are similar to some Pharaohs of ancient Egypt; such as *Tutankhamum*, *Amasis*, *Chephren*, *Cheops*, *Psamtek*, *Psamis* and *Isis*. Similarly, the Egyptian Coptics address God as “*paiyoot*,” which in Nandi means a respectable old man. Nevertheless, the link between the Nandi and Egyptians is still ludicrous and continues to remain a puzzle.<sup>3</sup> The Arabs, Islam and the Arabic culture came to Egypt at around 640 AD, immediately after the founding of Islam. This was spurred on by missionary zeal that was planted by Mohammed himself.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed history of the Nandi; see Myrtle S. Langley, *The Nandi of Kenya: Life Crisis Rituals in a Period of Change* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1979), pp.3-5.

<sup>2</sup>

Kipkoech araap Sambu, *The Kalenjin Peoples Egypt Origin Legend Revisited: Was Isis Asiis?* (London: Longhorn Publishers, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

The Cushitic hypothesis has been taken to explain not only language groups, but also cultural features found in East Africa.<sup>4</sup> Matson and Sutton<sup>5</sup> contend that the Cushitic speakers were agriculturalists as well as cattle keepers. Sutton goes further to suggest that Caucasoid, who came from Ethiopia, as did Murdock and Ehret<sup>6</sup>, accept the culture attributed to these people. A number of authors' writings attribute some of the features to people who were supposed to have come from the North; that is Egypt. If the *Kalenjin* ethnic group originated from Egypt as their history suggests, then the Nandi traditional religion, their language and culture ought to have some semblance of the corresponding ancient Egyptian culture, which in turn had been largely influenced by Islam.

### 1.1.1 The Islamic Religion and Its Spread in Kenya

Like Christianity and Buddhism, Islam is a major religion across the globe. It is estimated that about half of humanity professes one of these three faiths. As of the year 2009, Islam was considered the second largest of these faiths – with an estimated 1.2 Billion adherents all over the world, followed by Christianity with 2 Billion. Islam is a fast growing religion, and it has been projected that by the year 2050 Muslims will constitute 25 percent of the world's population.<sup>7</sup>

By the year 2000, Muslims were estimated at 5.4 million in Kenya. This figure constituted about 20 percent of the country's population. Islam is mostly practiced in the North-Eastern (90-99 percent of the population) and the Coast provinces (80-85 percent).<sup>8</sup> Some Muslims are also present in Kenya's urban centers such as Nairobi, Nakuru, Kakamega, Mumias and Kisumu. The spread of Islam into the interior of Kenya in the colonial period was mainly facilitated by Muslim traders.<sup>9</sup> This was mainly through the instrumentality of the long-distance caravan trade from the coast, following the suppression of the slave trade in the early decades of the Nineteenth Century. The establishment of urban centres in the early years of colonial rule enabled many such itinerant Muslim preachers to move into Nairobi. They later settled at Mumias in Western Kenya; consequently settling and entrenching themselves in

---

<sup>4</sup> A.T. Matson, *Nandi resistance to British rule 1890-1906*, East African Publishing House (Nairobi, 1972), p.1. From, *His Africa: its People and Culture, History*.

<sup>5</sup> A.T. Matson, and Sutton, J.G., 'Role of forts in Safeguarding the Uganda Road', *UJ*, 29 (1965), pp. 163-184.

<sup>6</sup> T. Towett, 'Traditional History of the Kipsigis', MS. 1957, KNA; Murdock and Ehret, *op. cit.*, p. 176-179.

<sup>7</sup> D. Barrett, G. Kurian, and T. Johnson, eds. *World Christian Encyclopedia*- vol. 1. (New York, 2001). Retrieved from [www.bible.ca/global-religion-statistics-world-christian-encyclopedia.htm](http://www.bible.ca/global-religion-statistics-world-christian-encyclopedia.htm) on 25th September 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Republic of Kenya*, (Moscow, 1991), p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> Arge Oded, *Islam and Politics in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1998), p. 2. Retrieved August 10, 2007 from [www.book.islam.kenya.com.htm](http://www.book.islam.kenya.com.htm).

some parts of the Rift Valley that included Naivasha, Kericho, Eldoret and Kapsabet in Nandi. This Islamic expansion continued from the period after the First World War.<sup>10</sup>

As to what constitutes religion, one can agree with Posnansky that there is no universally accepted definition.<sup>11</sup> For this study purpose, it will suffice to adopt the definition given by A.C. Coulson where religion is conceived as simply man's response to his environment.<sup>12</sup> The response is both individual and social. Thus, religion has a dual character. Various writers on the subject have emphasized one aspect or the other of this duality. A.N. White had for example argued that:

Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things. Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness – thus religion is solitariness and if you are never solitary, you are never religious.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Coulson and others refer to religion as the “social attitude towards the non-human environment.” It is in this sense that one can begin to conceptualize the Nandi Indigenous religion. The historical forces acting upon it were similar to those that affected the religion of the Padhola as depicted by Professor B.A Ogot.<sup>14</sup> These include migration and settlement, physical and human environment as already pointed, and internal and external factors. These diverse factors produced diversity in social setup. In addition, and as F.W Smith has said, a “diversity in theology may follow upon diversity in social structure.”

The intellectual aspect of this theology involved an entity one may call God, but who in Nandi was known by various names as will be seen in the subsequent discussion. The author shall not go into what constitutes God except, but shall quote the view of one of the most famous Christian theologians concerning this issues; a view that serve as a definition of God.<sup>15</sup> In his commentary on the book of Daniel, Martin Luther in 1556 gave this as his conception of God: “A God is simply that where upon the human heart rests with trust, faith and hope. If the resting is right, then God is right; if the resting is wrong, then God too is illusory”.<sup>16</sup>

When the Nandi left *Misiri* (Egypt) they adopted the name *Isis* for their Deity (spelt and pronounced as *Asiis* or *Asiista* – the sun), while in the southernmost branch, the Barabaig of Tanzania, it is referred as *Aset*. As earlier mentioned, that particular Deity in the Egyptian

---

<sup>10</sup>Mohammed Bakari and Saad S. Yahya, *Islam in Kenya: Proceedings of the National Seminar on Contemporary Islam in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> See in Kimambo and Ranger, *The Historical Study of African Religion*, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> A. C. Coulson, *Science and Christian Belief*. p. 105.

<sup>13</sup> See, Mwanzi, *A History of the Kipsigis*, p.12.

<sup>14</sup> See Kimambo and Ranger, *op. cit.* p. 122.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, In *African Ideas of God*, Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> Also quoted and commented upon by Coulson *Op. cit.* p. 53.

context represented the Motherly qualities of Deity who, nevertheless, was still an excellent father, creator, among other names. It is therefore legitimate to compare *Asiis* to ancient Egyptian so-called gods and goddesses individually and collectively because she encompasses all of their attributes just as Isis of Egypt encompassed all the attributes of the other so-called gods and goddesses.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.1.2 The Nature and Works of God (Asis) among the Nandi

The God of the Nandi was known by various names, three of which were very common, ‘*Asis, chebo Kipkoiyo*’ (the giver of blessings), ‘*Asis chepkelyen Sogol*’ (‘*Asis* of the nine feet’ – the symbol derived from the spreading rays of the sun at sunrise and sun set, the nine being figurative) and ‘*Asis Cheptalel*’ (The white lady). The derivation of the latter name is ambiguous. One account attributes its derivation to the whiteness of the sun at mid-day; another has it that it is the name of a deified legendary Nandi girl of noble character who was carried off into the heavens. It is the name for God used by the Roman Catholic Mission in Nandi.<sup>18</sup>

The Nandi maintain the notion of God as the Supreme Being. They consider God to be omniscient, that is, to know all things, to be simultaneously everywhere (Omnipresent), and to be Almighty (*Kiptaiyat* - Omnipotent). It is these and other eternal attributes discussed below that distinguish God from His creation and make Him not only the genesis but also the sustainer of all things.

The relationship between the deity and the sun is best explained by a statement, which Orchardson attributed to a Kipsigis old man, who equated the sun as God (*Cheptal*). *Cheptalel* is used interchangeably with *Asis*, who is personified as the sun; *Asiista* is the symbol of *Asis*, *Cheptalel* and *Chepkelyen sogol*. This conception of God portrays a sky-centered cosmology, a phenomenon common to most religious systems. This is as Plato explained:

A sage advised that no moralized men, they must be made afraid. Let them invent gods who could see and hear all things, cognizant not only of human actions, but of men’s innermost thoughts and purposes. They were accordingly connected with the source of the most terrifying and the most beneficial phenomena, the sky, the home of thunder and lightning, of shining sun and fertilizing rain, seat of divine powers helpful and hurtful to humanity.<sup>19</sup>

*Asiista* is the far-off driving force behind everything, including the “balance of nature” between him and the living and the spirits of the dead (*oiik*). *Oiik* were considered members of the tribe, who mediate between man and God, and punish the living in order to prevent them from upsetting the balance of nature by their sins. However, the Spirits are generally friendly to the living, and come to visit them, both to see how they are faring and to get their share of

---

<sup>17</sup> Kipkoech araap Sambu, *The Kalenjin Peoples’s Egypt Origin Legend Revisited: Was Isis Asiis? A Study in Comparative Religion*, Longhorn Publishers, 2007.p. 2

<sup>18</sup> G. S. Snell, *Nandi Customary Law*, Kenya Literature Bureau, 1954. p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted and commented upon by Henry A. Mwanzi, *A History of the Kipsigis*, Op. cit. p. 117.

food. There are no public acts of worship of *oïik*, but people offer milk and beer to the spirits when they come to their huts at night, travelling in the bodies of snakes, moles or rats. Snakes and rodents found in the huts at night must therefore not be killed. A post-harvest ceremony called *kipsundet* was held, which may be described vaguely as a harvest festival, with the objective of beseeching God to promote the well-being of people and cattle.<sup>20</sup>

The Nandi believe in one God “*Asis*” the creator and giver of all things. He has no father, mother or companion of any kind. He is considered a Supreme Being and referred to also as *Cheponomuni* because the being thus described cannot be perceived with ordinary mortal eyes. His work is done in solitude. He loves or hates people according to their behaviour. The creator lives in the sky, but has temporary homes on earth, situated on mountains, where he may rest during his visits. The visits are made with a view to his carrying out a kind of “general inspection” and to bring blessings and punishments to people.<sup>21</sup> He was taken to be a distant being and takes but little interest in the daily occupations of individuals.

Nevertheless, *Asis* was invariably called upon during crises and turning points of people’s lives. At the birth, initiation, marriage and death of every Nandi, communication is established with *Asis* on the person’s behalf. The family group always obtains the assistance from *orgoiyot*. No individual may directly supplicate the Almighty. The father is the key personality to approach *Asiis*. There are occasions in each man’s life, apart from the four main crises, when he/she requires spiritual assistance, for instance when one broke a taboo, it was usually attributed to some ill luck to such an infraction. The man’s purification or absolution is achieved by means of the medicine man (*Orgoiyot*), who work by establishing contact with such ancestral spirits as may be thought to be involved.

In the Nandi ordinary way of everyday life, there are no organized prayers or religious ceremonies such as morning and evening “prayers”; so far as people and things go well and prosper, it is taken for granted that God is pleased with the general behaviour of the people and the welfare of the country. In this happy state, there is no need for prayers. It is only when humans are in real need that they must approach him; without fear of disturbing him and incurring his wrath. Nevertheless, the Nandi offer prayers for protection and guidance whenever people are gathered to discuss public affairs, to decide a case, or at public dances.<sup>22</sup>

Traditional religion is still a strong force in the minds and hearts of the Nandi people. While there is belief in *Asis* as Supreme Being, the active part of Nandi religion’s heritage is the realm of ancestors (*Oïik*). The spirit world is believed to be underground and *oïik* live exactly the same way as the living – owning cattle, sheep goats and cultivating land. It is from this background that the institution of *Orgoiyot* (plural *orgoiik*) played a prominent role both in religious as well as societal affairs of the people. Apart from being sort of paramount chiefs, the *ogroiik* were also spiritual leaders of the community.

---

<sup>20</sup> A.C. Hollis, *The Nandi, their Language and folklore*, Oxford. (1909). p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Geofry Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London: S.P.C.K. 1968 – p. 142.

The sacred nature of the office of *Orgoiyot* among the Nandi is an ancient institution, which was centred upon the person of the *Orgoiyot* and regarded in a mystical way. It is a phenomenon accepted on the grounds of the nature of the office, and its origin is unknown. According to legends, the Nandi had no *orgoiik*, but it is told that one day the warriors found a small boy in the plains while they were looking after cattle. They took the child home and adopted him into the Nandi Community. As the child grew, he began to prophesy and perform miracles. Eventually he became the first leader of the Nandi people. Whatever the truth of the story, the institution of *Orgoiyot* came to play a significant mystical role in the Nandi community. It is believed that when a baby boy is born to the *Orgoiyot* family, he comes with either grass or blood in his hand. If he came with blood, he would become *Orgoiyot*.<sup>23</sup>

In cultic activities of the people, the *Orgoiyot* is usually the head of the ritual leaders. He is a priest-ruler. The sacred character of a Nandi *Orgoiyot* was, besides, attested to in a number of oral traditions. His name is not casually mentioned. In religious matters, the *Orgoiyot* was the people's priest. He linked the people to the living dead and the ancestors.

### Illust 1: Graphic presentation of a typical Kapkoros (Worship site) of the Nandi

The **Illustration 1**: Above shows how the *Orgoiyot* used to perform his duties in cleansing the sins of the Nandi people. A "sacrifice" was needed for the cleansing and is defined as the offering up of something precious for a cause or a reason. Making atonement is satisfying someone or something for an offense committed.<sup>24</sup> The shedding of blood was a substitutionary act. There was no remission of sins without the pouring of blood in among the Nandi. The Day of Atonement, also known as cleansing day, was the most solemn holy day of all the Nandi feasts and festivals, occurring any time the *Orgoiyot* calls for, particularly when a sinner comes and requesting. On that day, the *Orgoiyot* was to perform elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people.<sup>25</sup>

---

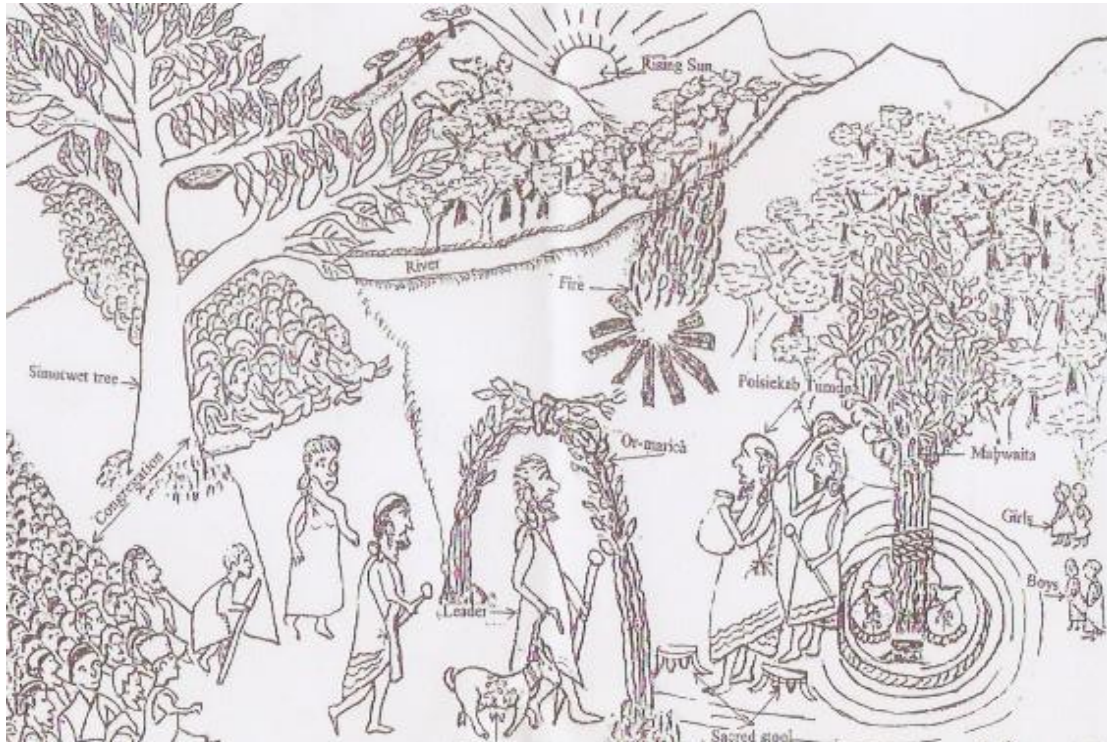
<sup>23</sup> Mwanzi, *In Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya*, p.20.

<sup>24</sup> Ol. Araap Chepguor, 24 November 2008. Maateket.

<sup>25</sup> Ol. John Araap Tuwei, 24 November 2008. Kapsisywo.

In the *Kapkoros* place of worship there were items which were a must to be there and used in the site, some of them were beside a tree called *Simatwet* this was a tree considered secret, the tree when cut contains water like milk. Milk according to the Nandi was very important and mostly used for sacrificial work. The clean he goat was also required. Fire was lit ten and the arrangement of the firewood was in a certain order as was prescribed by the *Orgoiyot*. This service was to done just before the sunset or early in the morning.<sup>26</sup> The following stages were considered.

Stage  
The



congregation was invited to witness the ceremony. The people invited were to be clean, in that, each should be sinless. Only those who were married were invited. The night before the ceremony the couple was not aloud to have sex and they were to come very early in the morning and sit quietly waiting for the function just before the sunrise on the very day of the function.

**Stage 2:** The two people standing over there, was an honorable family, who were chosen to escort the victim to the *Kapkoros*.

**Stage 3:** The man there with the goat was the victim or the offender of the sin. He is standing in the gate (*ormorich*) to the alter (*Kapkoros*)

**Stage 4:** There after the gate, are the two leaders called *Orgoik*, who were responsible in cleansing using the sacrifice in the alter.

<sup>26</sup> Ol. Araap Kirwa, 24 November 2008. Chepterwai.



**Stage 5:** The holy place, the cycle of lines was seen, and in the middle is two pots and the stool. The two pots were containing blood of the goat already killed in a very bad way to show that sin was a bad thing. Some of the blood was sprinkled and some pored in the place. The offender was to sit in the four leg stool in the middle of the alter.

### 1.1.3 The impact of colonialism and spread of Muslims in Nandi County

The rise and increase in the number of Muslims and their religion (Islam) in the interior of the Nandi County was related to the British Colonialism.<sup>27</sup> Although colonialism may not have directly played a major role in determining the spread of Islam in Nandi Sub-districts, it created enabling circumstances that exposed the Nandi to Islam. The arrival of Europeans facilitated early contact between the Nandi and Muslims. The first entrants into Nandi were the explorers, missionaries, scientists, farmers and agents of commerce and government administrators who came as travellers following the caravan routes into the interior.<sup>28</sup> As diverse as they were in their interests, these travellers, no matter how much experience they had or how widely travelled in the African journeys they had made, always-recruited Muslims as their porters, guides and guards to accompany them. These Muslims knew the interior very well for they had caravan experience. Although very few of them were known by name, their contribution cannot be ignored, for without them, possibly the European subjugation would have taken longer than it did. Biographies and other related notes made by these early Europeans acknowledged the role of the Swahili (Muslims) that accompanied them from the coastal region of Kenya.

Gregory, an explorer who left Mombasa on 23 March 1893 to explore the Rift Valley, had an impressive list of Swahili guides. He had the chance to pass through Nandi land. The prominent Swahili adventurers on the list were Omari and Fundi, who always replied *inshallah* after every act. Many places that Gregory visited are currently reputed to have Swahili names.<sup>29</sup> In the process of colonization, British officers used the Swahili to quell the Nandi. John Ainsworth and Francis Hall used to send Swahili soldiers on punitive campaigns. Therefore, by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Muslim presence was evident among the Nandi.

Most Muslims, especially those from the coast, were members of Kikuyu and Kamba communities who rendered services to the colonial administration during its first establishment in Nandi. They became the agents of Islamic faith.<sup>30</sup> They served the British as administrative officers, domestic servants, clerks and headmen of the African groups who continued their role after they settled in the interior.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Gavin, R. J 1970, Sayyid Said in Tarikh Vol. 1 No1, edited by J.B. Webster, London: Longmans, together with Van Zwanenberg, V.R.M 1975a (and Anneking) *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda 1800 – 1970* (London: Macmillan press Ltd, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> Ol. Mzee Sala Magut, 21 November 2008. Kabiyeet.

<sup>29</sup>PC/NZA/3/32/4 Railway survey 1892 – 95.Ag. Secretary to Administrator Mombasa 15-7-1892.

<sup>30</sup> Ol. Mzee Too Abdi, June, 15, 2008, Kipkaren.

<sup>31</sup>Jackson , F ( sir ) *Early days in East Africa London Dawsons of pall mall* (London: 1930), pp 31 – 33

The Railway industry became a further agent of Islamic expansion into the Nandi, particularly around Muhoroni (along the way to Kisumu from Nandi). The area in between, known as Kibigori, became the first inlet of the Muslims to Kaptumo in Nandi. As the railway construction work advanced in 1896, the Nandi and Terik also joined the Kikuyu and Kamba in jungle clearing and earthworks between Mombwa and Muhoroni.<sup>32</sup> This provided a chance for the Muslims to interact with the Nandi.

Thus, the railway not only contributed significantly to the expansion of Islam into Nandi, but it also created opportunities for contact among them, culminating in the Islamization of the latter. This process assumed consolidation with the formal establishment of a colonial administration in Nandi. In the process of establishing the first colonial rule center in Kipture (Kapsabet), the British government enlisted the Swahili (Muslims) as porters, askaris, guides, cooks, house-help, *nyaparas*, scribes, artisans, interpreter, tax-collectors court clerks and administration clerks.

#### 1.1.4 Study Area

##### 1.1.4.1 Location

The present study was carried out among Nandi in the Nandi County of Kenya. Nandi County is located in the Western side bordering Kakamega-Vihiga Counties in western Kenya. It borders Uasin Gishu to the north and Nyando to the south (See Map. 1 of Kenya showing the Nandi County<sup>33</sup>)

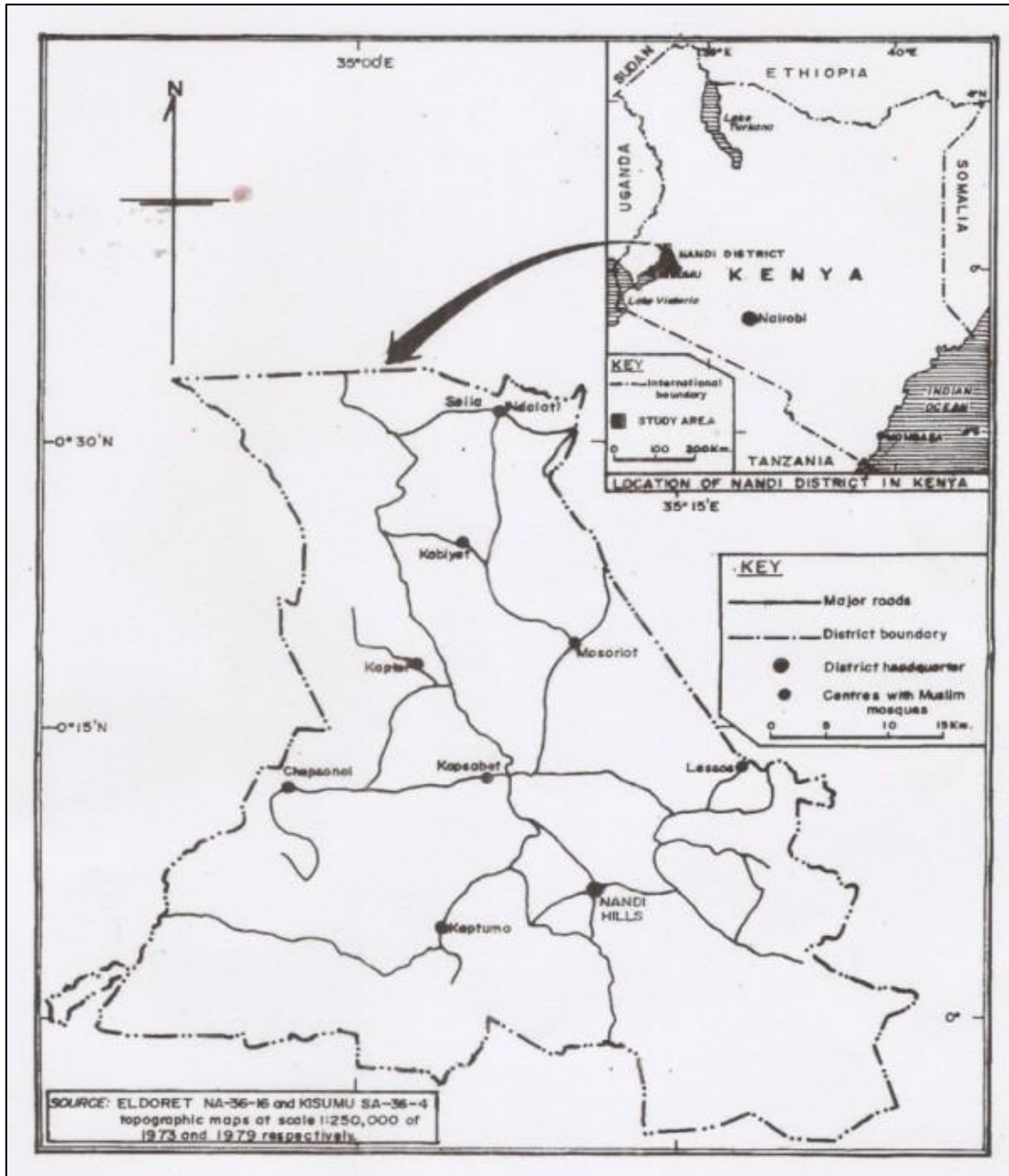
---

<sup>32</sup>Pc/Coast/1/1/20 Uganda Railway 1895 – 1897. Chief Engineer Uganda Railway to C.H. Cranford Esq. Ag. Commissioner & Consul General E.A Protectorate Mombasa 21-12-1896.

<sup>33</sup> **Source:** Kenya Administrative Boundaries Map 1:1,000,000.



The following map (Map 2) shows the areas within Nandi County where Mosques are located and spread all over the areas shown



**Map 2: Map showing Nandi County Location of Mosques**

(Adapted by Samuel A. Ojode – Chief Technologist, Department of Geography, Egerton University)

#### 1.1.4.2 The Size

According to the present map, Nandi is approximately 5,000 Sq. Km. at the advent of British rule, the Nandi tribal area (known as *emet*) was divided into seven geographical locations comprising of *Aldai*, *Kapwareng*, *Chesumei*, *Mosop*, *Chemase Kamasia*, and *Emkwen*. The present Nandi County has been sub-divided into the following political constituencies:

*Aldai, Mosop, Tinderet*, and the newly created *Emkwen* constituency, hived from the old locations.

#### 1.1.4.3 The Population

The Nandi are part of Kenya's forty two (42) ethnic groups. According to the 2009 Population Census, the Nandi people numbered 752,965 in total consisting of 376,488 Male and 376,477 Female persons.<sup>34</sup> Currently, they live mostly in the Nandi North, South, Central, East, and Tinderet Districts. They have also settled in the Uasin Gishu,<sup>35</sup> Trans Nzoia and Laikipia Districts, and there are some in other towns of Kenya. Hence the Nandi people contribute significantly to national development.

#### 1.1.4.4 Nandi People

The *Nandi* are a people of medium height and slightly built in physique. In movement, they are agile and in character and temperament, they are independent, frank, truthful and ready to acknowledge mistakes, yet proud and independent. They are inclined to conservatism and are generally resistant to change.

The Nandi are related to other sub-clusters of the *Kalenjin* community, namely: *Keiyo, Kipsigis, Marakwet, Pokot, Sabaot, Terik, and Tugen*. Before the British colonization, the Nandi were sedentary cattle-herders, sometimes also practicing agriculture. Their settlements were more or less evenly distributed rather than being grouped into villages. The statistical majority of Nandi are nominally Christian, but many still follow traditional beliefs and practices while others are Muslims. Nandi is a cultural melting pot too; owing to the ethnic diversity of the inhabitants and the over 753,000 residents enjoy what is no doubt an eye-catching mix of culture, economic and socio-political menu. Nandi is home to such other groups as the *Okiek, Luhya, Luo, Kikuyu, Kipsigis* and *Terik* – all living in harmony. To the Nandi, there is no distinction between religion, culture, politics, economy and social life; all these aspects are seen as part of religious activities; every bit of which is seen as a form of worship. It is, therefore, difficult to distinguish these aspects from other traditions, especially Christianity and Islam.

Historically, the Nandi are known for having resisted the British colonial invasion and occupation in 1895 to 1906, although the *Kalenjin* community was widely referred as “the Nandi-Speaking Peoples” during this colonial period. In addition, most of the famous pioneer athletes<sup>36</sup> are drawn from among the Nandi people.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The historical processes involved in the history and spread of Islam into the interior of Kenya in the Nineteenth Century, through the colonial period and to date, as well as its impact, have not been the subject of special scholarly research in the case of the Nandi. The study aimed at assessing the influence that Islam has had on the Nandi belief systems and analyzing

---

<sup>34</sup>Republic of Kenya, *Report of the Kenya's Districts Census Report* (Nairobi, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>35</sup>See, eg. Abraham K. arap Lagat, “The Historical Process of Nandi Movement into Uasin Gishu District of the Kenya Highlands: 1906-1963”. University of Nairobi, Department of History: M.A. Thesis, 1995.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. “Kenya's World-Beating Athletes.” In: *Kenya: Land of Opportunity* (Nairobi, 1991), pp. 281-287.

factors that accommodated or reject this religion among the people. The study further evaluated the Nandi cultural influences that the Nandi people imparted to Islam, and the challenges that each community has had in religious development.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of the study was to trace the history of Islam in Nandi from its first arrival in the Nineteenth Century to the present. The specific objectives were as follows:

- a) To trace the origins of the first Muslims in Nandi and their role as agents of Islam;
- b) To find out the methods employed to win the first converts;
- c) To analyze the factors that contributed to the acceptance or rejection of the Islamic faith by the Nandi people;
- d) To establish the problems that has affected the Nandi Muslims from the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

### 1.4 Research Premises

In the process of research, the study was guided by the following research premises:

- a) That colonialism and its administration facilitated the spread of Islam into Nandi;
- b) That the similarity between Nandi and Islamic cultures made Islam acceptable to the Nandi people;
- c) That the Islamic practices of brotherhood and solidarity fostered conversion and rapid acceptance by the Nandi;
- d) That in the face of the current phenomena of globalization and Islamic revival, some Nandi Muslims face challenges affecting their freedom of expression of their faith.

### 1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

#### 1.5.1 Scope of the Study

Geographically, this study focused on Nandi County. Though Focusing primarily on the history of Islam among the Nandi, the study has incorporated an analysis of the interaction of Islam with the indigenous African religion and Christianity. These religions had developed independently, but as a result of social interaction and political influence, they have both become entrenched and have remained in harmony in the history of the Nandi people. The period of study encompassed the Nineteenth Century to the present. This chronological limit was determined based on a preliminary reading into the literature of the subject.

#### 1.5.2 Limitations to the Study

The limitations in this study included the scarcity of literature directly linked to the indigenous belief system of the Nandi people. The study ideally should have covered the entire Nandi populace, including those in Trans-Nzoia, Laikipia and Uasin-Gishu; however, due to the massive area of the areas occupied by them, it only concentrated in Nandi County. Some roads that led to the Muslim centres were almost impassable, particularly during the rainy seasons thus creating delays in transportation. The researcher endeavoured to arrange for local means of transport and consequently had to use relatively expensive taxis.

### 1.6 Justification of the Study

This research is timely because to date little research has been done by local historians on Islam. Though several case studies have been carried out at Mumius, Kisumu and Nairobi,

no comprehensive work on the spread of Islam in Kenya exists. The case studies reveal the complexity of explaining the growth of Islam in Kenya, and the diversity of the cultural impact and heritage of Islam among the peoples of Kenya. These studies also show that research on the spread of Islam into Kenya's interior can be productive and rewarding.

It is clear that in order to complete our knowledge about the history of Islam in Kenya, further micro-studies are required. This study began as one such micro-study, with the express aim of looking at the history of Islam in Nandi, an aspect of social and cultural history of Kenya not researched or written about before.

It is hoped that this study will enrich knowledge and thereby contribute the historical background of the Nandi religious belief system, and that it will present new knowledge in the field of Nandi studies within the context of the historiography of Kenya. The study further adds to academic knowledge in the disciplines of Religion, Theology and History. In particular, the issues addressed have a significant bearing on the historical study of African religion, comparative religion, evangelism and the history of Islamic missions in Nandi. In addition, the results obtained from the study would enhance and promote ecumenism that is, a process that encourages dialogue and mutual understanding among the two major world religions (Islam and Christianity). It also calls for respect and co-existence with other religions of the world. Finally, Government policy-makers and other stakeholders could utilize the findings adduced from this study to address the development agenda for Nandi society particularly in areas of education, transport and health, among others, which are essential to the success of any religion in the society.

## 1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

### 1.7.1 Theoretical Framework

In this sub-section, the author explores the nature of theory and provides an overview of resources for the study of history and conversion to Islam. Theory is valuable insofar as it illuminates different aspects of a phenomenon. Among the theories that have been advanced and which have been employed in this study in analyzing the indigenous belief system of the Nandi and Muslim were:

The functionalist theory of religion, which was formulated by Emile Durkheim and popularized by Radcliffe Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. According to this theory, the unity of society determines the function of religion in that society. There are standardized cultural forms, which function positively to sustain this unity – including cultural institutions, economics, kinship, law, political structure and religion. This standardized cultural elements fulfil a vital function, and without them society suffers.<sup>37</sup>

Diffusionism is another theory that has been utilized in cultural anthropology to explain the spread of “cultural items” such as religions, ideas, styles and technologies between individuals within a single culture or from one culture to another. The theory refers to the borrowing of cultural elements by one society from another. This is in contrast to the independent invention of the cultural elements within the host society. According to this

---

<sup>37</sup>Geoffrey Parrinder, *The World's Living Religions* (London, 1977), p.18.

theory, most of the content of modern cultures would appear to have been gained through diffusion.

Another theoretical orientation considered in this thesis is globalization, which is defined as the spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness, and organization of social life. Globalization as a theory emerged as the result of real world concerns with the dramatic transformations of globalization as well as a reaction against the earlier perspective of modernization theory. Globalization can be analyzed culturally, economically, and politically. Across each of these foci, theorists are divided over whether globalization results in homogenization or heterogenization. Some cultural theorists see globalization as producing homogeneity as a consequence of cultural imperialism. Others see it as producing distinctive local forms. Among economic theorists, some assert that globalization produces homogeneity as a result of the spread of the market economy with the aid of international organizations such as the IMF. Others focus on the heterogeneity of local markets and the existence of flexible specialization (glocalization). Some political/ institutional perspectives focus on the growth of a single model of governance around the world. Others assert that globalization has resulted in intense nationalist retrenchment.

Post-colonialism (postcolonial theory, post-colonial theory) is also taken into consideration in the attempt to explain the spread of Islam among the Nandi. Post-colonialism is a post-modern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism. Post-colonialism comprises a set of theories found within the areas of philosophy, film, political science, human geography, sociology, feminism, religious and theological studies, and literature. The ultimate goal of post-colonialism is combating the residual effects of colonialism on cultures. It is not simply concerned with salvaging past worlds, but learning how the world can move beyond this period together, towards a place of mutual respect. Post-colonialist thinkers recognize that many of the assumptions which underlie the "logic" of colonialism are still active forces today. Exposing and deconstructing the racist, imperialist nature of these assumptions will remove their power of persuasion and coercion. Recognizing that they are not simply airy substances but have widespread material consequences for the nature and scale of global inequality makes this project all the more urgent.

A key goal of post-colonial theorists is clearing space for multiple voices. This is especially true of those voices that have been previously silenced by dominant ideologies - subalterns. It is widely recognized within the discourse that this space must first be cleared within academia. Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, provides a clear picture of the ways social scientists, specifically Orientalists, can disregard the views of those they actually study – preferring instead to rely on the intellectual superiority of themselves and their peers.

Cross-cultural and Islamization theories were also examined to illuminate this study, especially given that almost all religious historians of Islam in Africa acknowledge the importance of trade, and the role of Muslim traders in spreading Islam. However, this may not fully account for why some peoples accept Islam more readily than others do.

All communities embracing new religion are affected or influenced by the new religion in a number of ways, and in this regard the Nandi are no exception. The socio-cultural influence of Islam among the Nandi is well examined through *Bungers* islamization theory and the “*change and continuity*” concept advanced by Bascom and Herskovits (1959:2-6) the



latters' concept states that whenever new influences impinge on any society, some of the pre-existing customs and beliefs are discarded, modified or retained. Hence, change and continuity are paramount to culture because culture is dynamic. Thus, the interaction between the Nandi indigenous religion and Islam resulted in some aspects of the indigenous religion being discarded, modified or retained.

For the purpose of this study, the study adopted the five participation theoretical frameworks discussed above because these theories in one way or another tend to complement each other, providing concrete conceptual frameworks on the understanding of the interaction between community religions and the growth of a religion. This is an appropriate approach to the conceptualization and understanding of the aspects and determinants of the spread of Islam as seen in our discussion. The above review shows that, where one theory is lacking, the other theory supplies the lack. In the following conceptual framework, only the relevant variables and determinants of Islamization are discussed, briefly analysed and the direction of relationship outlined.

### 1.7.2 Conceptual Framework

In the absence of clear theoretical guidelines, decision was also made to approach this study from a conceptual phenomenological point of view. It should be noted, "A concept does not need to be discussed to be understood". When several interrelated concepts are used in a new way, however, the conceptual framework "must explain the relationship among these concepts".<sup>38</sup>

In conceptualizing this study of religion,<sup>39</sup> four different approaches were utilized. The first, the functional approach, has already been evaluated and found wanting. The second, the personality approach, focused on the individual and his or her personal experience of religion. This approach proved inadequate for interpreting the history of religion at the level of the Nandi community. On the other hand, the normative approach addressed abstract questions about truth and ultimate reality. Although it apparently suits the theologian's concerns, it was not relevant to this study. The approach of the historical perspective of religion<sup>40</sup> has served as the preferred conceptual framework for the present study. This was applicable in respect to the coming and development of Islam in Nandi society. Almost all historians of Islam in Africa acknowledge the importance of trade, and the role of Muslim traders in spreading Islam, but there is less agreement on why some people accept Islam more readily than they accept others. Similarly, the historical study of African religion approach was used in reconstructing the indigenous Nandi religious system and the syncretism or symbiosis that marked its interaction with both Islam and Christianity. This approach was formulated in a series of academic conferences held successively in Dar es Salaam, Lusaka and Limuru in 1979. The significant studies published out of the proceedings of these conferences were utilized as the conceptual framework for the purposes of this study.<sup>41</sup> The approach was particularly relevant for the

---

<sup>38</sup>Christopher L. Heffner, *Research Methods for Education, Psychology, and the Social Sciences* (London, 2004).

<sup>39</sup>See: *Major World Religions*. Centre for Extension Studies, Union Biblical Seminary (Pune, 1982).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

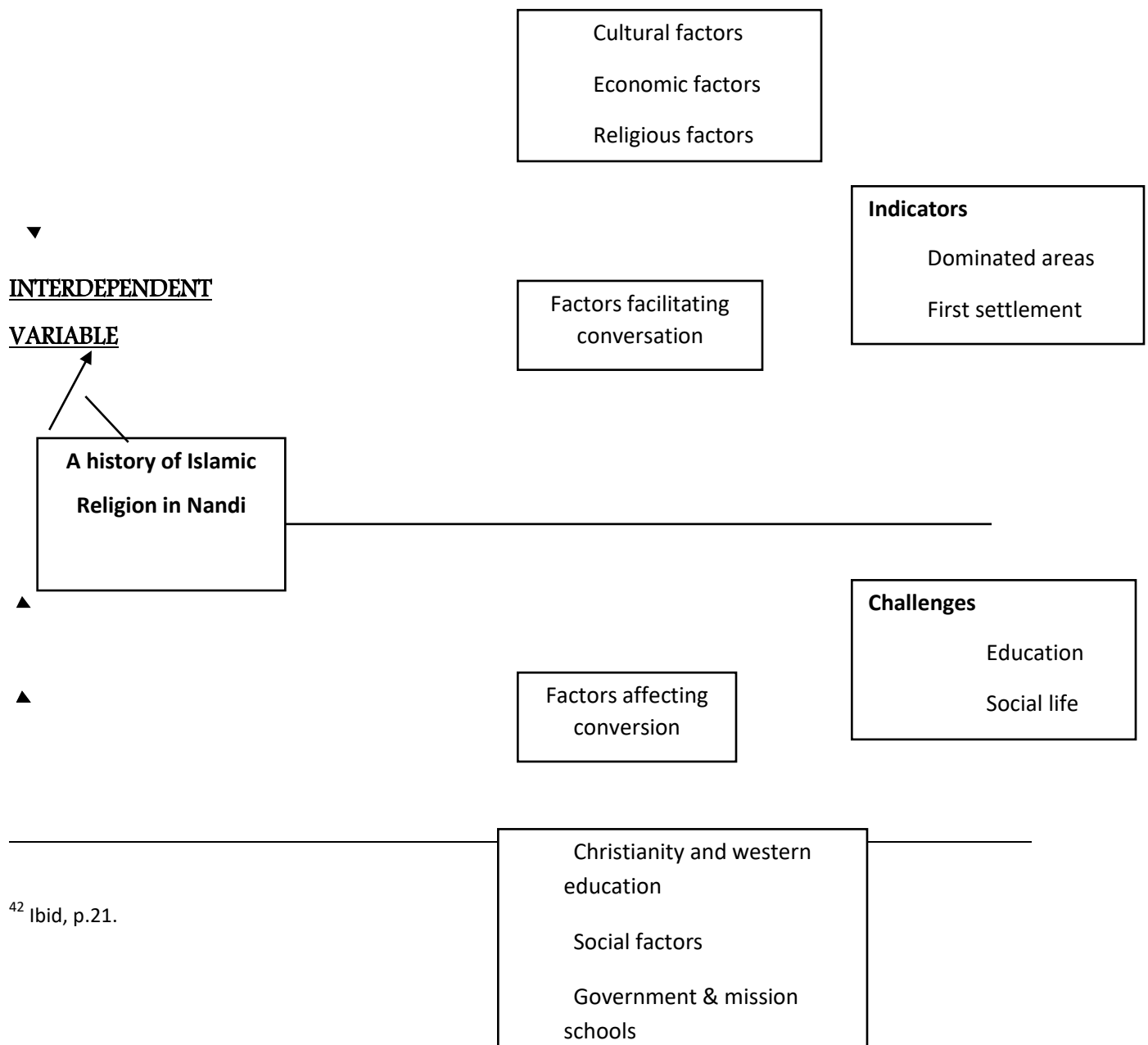
<sup>41</sup>T.O. Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, eds, *The Historical Study of African Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972).

Twentieth Century, which is “a rich, perhaps the richest, field for historical inquiry into African religion, with all sorts of topics at hand for inquiry”.<sup>42</sup>

The following conceptual framework will guide this study. The dependent variables were the factors for and not for the conversion of Islam while the independent variable was the Islamic religion.

**Illust 2: A combination of factors Influencing Islamic growth and Development in the Nandi County**

**DEPENDENT VARIABLES**



<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.21.

As highlighted and discussed in this chapter, the following chapter two discusses the applicable and relevant literature review of Islamization.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

The literature review focuses on some books dealing with Islamic studies as well as other general studies about Islam in Kenya. However, studies dealing with the spread of Islam into the interior of Kenya were few and therefore inadequate for a full understanding of the subject, whereas the books dealing with Islamic studies were too general and lacked religious and cultural conquest. The review of available literature has been divided into six areas namely: Works specifically on the Nandi culture and Religion, Works specifically on the Islamic culture and Religion, Islam in Africa and East Africa, Nandi ethnic Group and their culture, the coming of Christian missionaries and their influence to Nandi Indigenous religion and Islam, Major World Religions in relation to African Traditional Religion, and the spread of Islam in Africa and to the interior of Kenya.

### 2.1 The Nandi culture and Religion

Specific ethnographic studies on the Nandi date back to A.C. Hollis's *The Nandi: their Language and Folklore*, which was researched and written between 1905 and 1908 and published in 1909. Hollis gave an exposition of the religious beliefs of the Nandi, and likened the *Orgoiyot* to the Maasai counterpart – the *Laibon*.<sup>43</sup> Hollis had lived among the Nandi people from 1890. He closely associated with the Nandi and in many aspects became a member of the tribe. The book is written with insight and understanding that could only proceed from a long association, sympathy and impeccable knowledge of the language. It gives

---

<sup>43</sup> A.C. Hollis, *The Nandi: Their Language and Folklore* (London, 1969), pp. 40-42.

a first-hand account of the Nandi way of life as described by an eye witness to the ceremonies, many of which he took part in.

The book is only a portion of a larger manuscript on ethnographic description meant to assist colonial administrators to understand the Nandi tradition and institutions. It has sixteen chapters covering practically all aspects of the Nandi culture. Of these, only one chapter is dedicated to Nandi religious beliefs. But even then, some cultural aspects considered non-religious are included in the short chapter. It is evident from this work that Hollis was not able to distinguish between religious and cultural norms and/or customs of the Nandi. Moreover, religious beliefs are not organized in an orderly and logical manner. In several instances, major religious topics are handled in a shallow approach, in a way to suggest that Hollis was not specifically interested in the Nandi religious tradition per-se.

The book however provides immense insight into Nandi life, customs and ways of thought before the communal organization was disrupted by the change brought about by British Administration. Indeed, it is a source of comparison and confirmation of religious customs that have emerged and those that have persisted to date. This study has attempted to organize in a systematic and logical manner and in-depth the Nandi religious phenomenon.

*The Kalenjin Heritage* (1995)<sup>44</sup> by Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish is the latest book on Nandi culture. In the tradition of the Nandi culture like the predecessors, Fish and Fish have only devoted one chapter to the Nandi Religion even though the Nandi religion is disguised in the other chapters that cover ceremonies and customs.

Although their three hundred and seventy six page work presents unmatched information on the Nandi, they do no value the work for its own sake. According to Fish and Fish, the value of their work lies in its ability to assist people to understand Christianity. They write:

It is to be understood that this study has not been made to encourage anyone to return to traditional religious practices. Rather, this may help everyone to understand that not everything in the traditional religion and culture was evil. We have come across some cultural practices, as we have with religious practices, which we and others can make use of as redemptive analogies or parallels in Christian ministry. In fact, we as Christians can learn from values of the past.

Because of this, Fish and Fish are biased towards the explication of some customs and ceremonies. They, for example, picked out only those elements in Nandi Religion which have an analogy in Christianity. In this study, the Nandi religious phenomenon is presented as it were and as objectively as possible.

Another study that has shed light on Nandi religion is Huntingford's *The Nandi of Kenya*, which was published in 1953.<sup>45</sup>In an earlier work of 1939 analogous to Huntingford's, J.G.

---

<sup>44</sup> Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *The Kalenjin Heritage* (Kericho, Kenya- African Gospel Church, 1995), XIX.

<sup>45</sup>G.W.B Huntingford, *The Nandi of Kenya* (London, 1953.), p. 37.

Peristiany wrote about “Religion and Magic” among the Kipsigis who are considered cousins of the Nandi. He discussed the relationship of the Nandi with the Divinity, the Spirits, and “the evil powers of the magician”. He further sought to draw a distinction between religion and magic; and he listed the *Laibon* and “the Orgoiyot witch-doctors” squarely under “Magic”.<sup>46</sup> The study found that there was more than magic in religious beliefs of the Nandi.

Matson has also written seminal works focused on the period of the Nandi resistance to British colonial invasion and occupation in the year’s C1895-1906.<sup>47</sup> In his studies, Matson has concentrated on the military aspect of the British conquest of the Nandi. From Matson’s study, it is difficult to obtain a life-like portrait of the *Orgoiyot*, Koitalel arap Samoei, who led the Nandi resistance or of any of his relatives. Matson similarly pays little attention to the particularities of the Nandi belief system and the relationship of the *Orgoiyot* to it.<sup>48</sup> Even in his survey of Nandi history for the colonial period, in which he writes copiously about Christian activities, Matson hardly mentions Islam, which was developing parallel to Christianity. More recently, however, D.M. Anderson has published a study in which the intervention of the *Talai* clan and the *Orgoiyot* in Nandi religious and other affairs has been characterized as a form of prophecy<sup>49</sup> thus going beyond what Matson had termed as ‘magic’ among the Nandi.

There are several other studies on the history of the Nandi. Two of them have been mentioned but not reviewed here since they deal with Nandi life outside the study area as defined. One is Luise White’s monograph on town life in colonial Nairobi in which Nandi women are depicted as engaging in such lumpen-proletarian misdeeds, prostitution, despite professing Islam.<sup>50</sup> The other study is Abraham Kibet Arap Lagat’s Master of Arts (History) Thesis submitted to the University of Nairobi in 1995. A perusal of the text reveals the author’s pre-eminent concern with land and related issues in the colonial situation to the exclusion of religious history.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in his contribution to the collection of essays titled *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History*,<sup>52</sup> David M. Anderson characterizes the *orgoiik* as belonging in the writing of Kenya’s modern history as heroic prophets.

---

<sup>46</sup>J.G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis* (Chapter XI), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964.cf. I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis* (Nairobi, 1961).

<sup>47</sup> A.T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule* (Nairobi, 1972). See also P.K. Arap Magut. “The Rise and Fall of the Nandi *Orgoiyot*, c 1890- 1957.” In B.G. McIntosh, ed, *Ngano: Studies in Traditional and Modern East African History* (Nairobi, 1969), pp. 90-112.

<sup>48</sup> “Reflections on the Growth of Political Consciousness in Nandi.” In

B.A. Ogot. ed. *Hadith 4: Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya* (Nairobi, 1972).

<sup>49</sup> D.M. Anderson, “Visions of the Vanquished: Prophets and Colonialism in Kenya Western Highlands,” In: David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson eds. *Revealing Prophets* (London, etc., 1995); cf. Douglas H. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>50</sup> Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago and London, 1990), passim.

<sup>51</sup> Abraham K. Lagat, “The Historical Process of Nandi Movement into Uasin Gishu District of the Kenya Highlands: 1906-1963”. University of Nairobi, Department of History: M.A. Thesis (1995).

<sup>52</sup> D.M. Anderson, *op. cit.*

*The Kalenjin Peoples's Egypt Origin Legend Revisited: Was Isis Asiis? A Study in Comparative Religion*, (2007),<sup>53</sup> by Kipkoech araap Sambu is a recent book dealing with the origin of the Nandi people. According to Sambu, the Nandi people are believed to have left Misiri with the name *Isis*, spelt and pronounced *Asiis* in their case. Others call her *Asiista* (the sun) while the southernmost branch, the *Barabaig* of Tanzania, call Her *Aset*. As has been said, that particular Deity in the Egyptian context represented the Motherly qualities of Deity who, nevertheless, was still an excellent father, creator, and others, under other names. It is therefore legitimate to compare *Asiis* to all ancient Egyptian's so-called gods and goddesses individually and collectively, because she encompasses all of their attributes just as *Isis* of Egypt encompassed all the attributes of the other so-called gods and goddesses. This added life in this study in that by knowing the origin of the people it is possible to gain insight into their religion.

According to A.J. Toynbee in his book *A Study of History*<sup>54</sup>, that environment plays a key role in the shaping of a people's way of life. He further contends that civilization owes its genesis to interaction between biological and environmental factors. On the other hand, P.A. Means puts it that if "environment is not the total causation in culture shaping; it is beyond doubts the most conspicuous single factor."<sup>55</sup> These remarks find ready application in the occasion depicted by Kipkoech araap Sambu. It shows clear interaction between human actors and physical environment. Resulting from this was the concept of *Asis*. It is also to be noted that the power of the curse arose together with the power of divinity, and both served the emergent society.

According to G.W.B. Huntingford in his book *The Nandi of Kenya*<sup>56</sup>, etymologically the term *orgoiyot* is made up of two words: *or* "which means road, path way or route and "*Koi*" which is confusing for it can mean long, or it could also be a word used when going to negotiate for a bride. Though a precise meaning is difficult to be ascertained, the latter is most probable. It could, also, be taken literally of *Orgoiyot* is complex and best be understood in the context of beliefs and customs of the Nandi people and other related peoples. He noted that *Orgoiik* played a pivotal role in the society.

According to him *Nandi* had a structure in which the actual fighting units (*siritiet* pl. *siritoiik*) drew men from a number of parishes. The number of men in one *siritiet* varied from 50-100. Each had a leader led by a commander called *Kiptaiyat* (pl. *Kiptaiinik*), two senior *Kiptaiinik* in each *pororiet* (clan council). In Nandi Hierarchy *Kiptaiyat* was below the *Orgoiyot*. It was the *Orgoiyot* who blessed *Kiptaiyat*. The office of *Kiptaiyat* is of less significance than that of *Orgoiyot*. The latter played no religious role nor would other

---

<sup>53</sup> Kipkoech araap Sambu, *The Kalenjin Peoples's Egypt Origin Legend Revisited: Was Isis Asiis? A Study in Comparative Religion*, Longhorn Publishers, 2007.p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> See A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* abridged by D.C. Somervell, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> P.A. Means, *Ancient Civilization of the Anders*, pp. 25-26. Quoted and commented upon by Henry A. Mwanzi, *A History of the Kipsigis*, p. 234.

<sup>56</sup>G.W.B .Huntingford, *The Nandi Kenya: Tribal Control in a Pastoral Society*, p, 35.

significant use of the term *Orgoiyot*, in Huntingford's view, be a paradigmatic expression of *kiptaiyat* in Nandi context. The concept reveals new ways of looking at the Christian mysteries. The institution of *Orgoiyot* is often referred to as that of ritual experts or diviners. Perhaps this was a misunderstanding on the part of foreigners. Ng'eny argues in his book *Ngano*<sup>57</sup> that "The role of *Orgoiyot* in Nandi Society was one of diviner, foreteller of the future, interpreter of dreams and omens. He also averted ill-luck". Between the *Orgoiyot* and others whose function and role was purely destructive, respectable tradition maintains that only persons of the *Talai* lineage<sup>58</sup> could automatically belong to the *Orgoiyot* family. The one to rule must be a son an *Orgoiyot*; either his son or brother could succeed.

M.S. Leagley, in the book *The Nandi of Kenya: Life crisis rituals in a period of change*<sup>59</sup>, has posited that the sacred nature of the office of *Orgoiyot* among the Nandi, is an ancient institution. This institution is centred upon the person of the *Orgoiyot* regarded in a mystical way; it is a phenomenon accepted on the grounds of the nature of the office. No one knows the origin of this institution. According to legends, the Nandi originally had no *Orgoiik*. This changed one day when warriors found a small boy in the plains while they were tending their cattle. They took the child home and adopted him into the Nandi Community. As the child grew, he began to prophesy and perform miracles. Eventually he became the first leader of the Nandi people. Whatever the truth of the story, the institution of *Orgoiyot* played a leading mystical role in the lives of the Nandi people.

Mwanzi, in his book, *The Kipsigis* from the topic "In Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya"<sup>60</sup> added more information on how the *Orgoiyot* can be identified by saying that when a baby boy is born in the *Orgoiyot* family, the child disappears when he is coming back, he comes with either grass or blood. When the child comes back with blood in his hand, then he has been anointed to become *Orgoiyot*.

Mwanzi further notes that there is a religious tradition regarding the origin of the *Orgoiyot*. Though the myth has variations, certain issues are important as far as religious and cultural aspects are concerned, withdrawing from nature is important as a preparation for a new task. There are parallels in the Bible such as the story of Moses. The story shows that he arose in a time of crisis. Through magical powers he asserted and maintained authority in a supernatural way. He was never approached with weapons. The mystic veneration and once given to him filled a need. During war he was an invincible warrior. In cultic activities of the people, the *Orgoiyot* is usually the head of the ritual leaders. He is a priest-ruler. The sacred character of a Nandi *Orgoiyot* was, besides, attested to in a number of oral traditions. His name is not mentioned. In religious matters, the *Orgoiyot* was the people's priest. He linked the living dead with the ancestors.

Mwanzi added many details about the *Kipsigis* and *Kavirondo* communities including the Nandi and plotted the northern caravan track which Thompson followed in

---

<sup>57</sup> S, K Arap N'eny, in *Ngano*, p.109.

<sup>58</sup> The Nandi have many clans with different totems. The Talai clan's totem is the lion.

<sup>59</sup> See M.S.Leagley, *The Nandi of Kenya: Life crisis rituals in a period of change*, p.7.

<sup>60</sup> Mwanzi, *In Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya*, p.20.

1883. He did not mention the *Nandi* district or people in the text of his book but introduced the name of his map to denote a mountain range running from North to South in approximating the correct position of Nandi, hampered only by the fact that he followed Wakefield in placing it much too far south.

The above accounts show that the caravan trade in Eastern Uganda was centred on two principal routes; the Northern through *Njemps* and *Kamasai Elgeiyo*, Uasin Gishu and North *Nandi* to *Mumias* and the southern from *Naivasha* over Mau and through *Sotik*, *Lumbwa*, *Sendeges* and *Kitotos* to the turning station at *Mumias*. It was a common practice for caravans to do a round trip by going up on the Southern *Mumias* apparently, the only place in Eastern Uganda where caravan leaders played a significant part in local affairs. They used *Mumias* village as the headquarters for raids into surrounding Districts such as Nandi and helped the Wanga against their traditional enemies. All this information through Mwanzi was of great help in the thesis in developing the background of the Nandi people as well as the history of their culture.

## 2.2 The Islamic culture and Religion

The text *what Islam stands for*, written by Abul Ala Maudoods (1976)<sup>61</sup>, has a lot of details on who Muhammad was, and he distinguishes Him (Muhammad) from other prophets found in other religions of the world. In this same book, the beliefs of Islam, especially the belief in one God ALLA, was elaborated to show the difference from other religions' gods.

Islam is much more than a formal religion: it is an integral way of life. This is according to John L. Esposito who said, in *The Straight Path*, (1988)<sup>62</sup> that, Islam is in many ways a more determining factor in the experience of its followers than any other world religion. The Muslim ("One who submits") lives face to face with God at all times and will introduce no separation between his life and his religion, his politics and his faith. Thus, with its strong emphasis on the brotherhood of men cooperating to fulfil the will of God, Islam has become one of the most influential religions in the world today.

Due to a wide demand for a correspondence course in Islam, a modest effort was made whereby this book entitle *Introduction to Islam* came about through Dr. Hamidulla, I<sup>63</sup>. The book gives a general idea of Islam, its history and culture and its handling of the diverse aspects and problems of life. This book has been useful to the study especially in the topic of "Daily life of a Muslim". It explains the daily life of a Muslim from birth to old age. This text was found to be useful since it explores how the spread of Islam is packaged and transmitted simply by the daily life of a person committed to the regulations of modesty and morality. This became an attractive side of Muslim associated culture to the Nandi.

---

<sup>61</sup> Abul Ala Maudoods, *what Islam stands for*, Islamic Foundation, *mfangano* from General printers, (California, 1976), 47.

<sup>62</sup> John L. Esposito, *ISLAM, The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1988, pp. 3-4

<sup>63</sup> I. Hamidulla, *Introduction to Islam*, Islamic Foundation, (London, 1978), 218.



Polygamy in the global community is common, normal and accepted. According to the *Ethnographic Atlas Codebook*<sup>64</sup> derived from George P. Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* recorded the marital composition of 1231 societies, from 1960-1980. Of these societies, 186 societies were monogamous while 1041 were polygynous. According to Joseph Ginat, the author of 'Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society,' a third of the world's population belongs to a community that allows it.<sup>65</sup>The Nandi also practice it.

The *Catholic Encyclopaedia*<sup>66</sup> notes that Islam did not introduce polygamy but among all Eastern nations of antiquity, polygamy was a recognized institution. Among the Hindus, polygamy prevailed from the earliest times. There was, as among the ancient Babylonians, Assyrians, and Persians, no restriction as to the number of wives a man might have. The Encyclopaedia further notes that, although Greece and Rome were not polygamous societies, concubinage was a norm.

Thus, the Washington Times of 13 Dec. 2000<sup>67</sup>. By Cheryl Wetzstein on the topic "Traditionalists Fear Same-Sex Unions Legitimize Polygamy," Islam regulated polygamy by limiting the number of wives and bringing responsibility to its practice. In fact, according to him, polygamy is more common than monogamy. According to Cheryl, the primary purpose of marriage in Islam is regulating sexuality within marriage as well as creating an atmosphere for the continuity and extension of the family. This is in sharp contrast to growing trends on marriage in the West. He says, in recent decades, there are more alternatives to marriage than ever before. Cohabitation - living together outside of marriage - has greatly increased among young, never-married adults, as well as the divorced. More American women are having children outside of marriage, ignoring the traditionally sanctioned sequence of marriage followed by childbearing.

He further noted that, marriage and polygamy in Islam is a matter of mutual consent. No one can force a woman to marry a married man. Islam simply permits polygamy; it neither forces nor requires it. Besides, a woman may stipulate that her husband must not marry any other woman as a second wife in her prenuptial contract. The point that is often misunderstood in the West is that women in other cultures - especially African and Islamic - do not necessarily look at polygamy as a sign of women's degradation. Consequently, to equate polygamy with degrading women is an ethnocentric judgment of other societies.

An article by Jumah al-Kholy titled "Multiple Marriages in Islam & Its Wisdom"<sup>68</sup>, published in the *Journal of the Islamic University of Medina*, vol. 46, 222-231, posits that even

---

<sup>64</sup>See on the website, (<http://eclectic.ss.uci.edu/~drwhite/worldcul/Codebook4EthnoAtlas.pdf>).

<sup>65</sup>Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Globally, Polygamy Is Commonplace," The Salt Lake Tribune 20 Sep. 1998.

<sup>66</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia: (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09693a.htm>)

<sup>67</sup>Cheryl Wetzstein, "Traditionalists Fear Same-Sex Unions Legitimize Polygamy," The Washington Times 13 Dec. 2000.sss

<sup>68</sup>Dr. Jumah al-Kholy, '*Ta'addud al-Zawjaat wa Hikmatuhu fil Islam*,' (Multiple Marriages In Islam & It's Wisdom), *Journal of the Islamic University of Medina*, vol. 46, 222-231.

though Islam does expressly permit polygamy, its actual practice is quite rare in many Muslim societies. Indeed, some researchers estimate no more than 2% of the married males practice polygamy. Since polygamy is tied with a lot more responsibility, most Muslim men feel they cannot afford the expense of maintaining more than one family. In addition, even those who are financially capable of looking after additional families are often reluctant owing to the psychological burden of handling more than one wife.

### 2.3 Major World Religions and the African Traditional Religion

*African Traditional religion: A Definition* (1973)<sup>69</sup> by E. Bolaji Idowu is a popular book on the study of African Religion. Idowu is a thorough scholar backed with many years of experience in teaching and research into African Religion. In this book, Idowu discusses the study of Religion, the study of African Traditional Religion and concludes with some observations on the prospects of African Traditional Religion. Idowu focuses on several issues on African Religion in this work.

To begin with, Idowu is concerned that the world outside Africa has not recognized that African Traditional Religion is a religion. Secondly, he laments the fact that African Traditional Religion has been misunderstood and misinterpreted resulting in wrong descriptive terminologies. Finally, he observes that African Christians are finding the prefabricated theology imported into Africa inadequate.

This book is hence an attempt to answer some of the problems that face the study of Nandi Religion. Idowu argues that a serious study of African Traditional Religion is necessary for African Scholars to discover the values ingrained in their heritage. It is only then that a theology that bears the original thinking and meditation of an African will emerge.

The book is therefore relevant to this study, due to its background information which establishes the fact that African Religion is a religion indeed. It points out the erroneous terminologies labeled on African Religion and suggests the significant of African religion to theology.

*A guide to Religions* (1975)<sup>70</sup> by David Brown is a textbook intended for use in Christian schools of theology on studies of world religions. The book is one of a series of sponsored and subsidized works by the Theology Education Fund of the world council of churches. This was in response to a request to a request for text books to be used in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In this work, the Dinka, the Ga and the Maori Religions and Shamanism in Korea are classified together under “Traditional Religion. The author has defined traditional religions as “religions in which the priest and elders teach their beliefs and practices orally by word of mouth. They are associated with communities which follow traditional rather than modern ways of life.

---

<sup>69</sup>Fr. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. (London. SCM press, 1973), 79

<sup>70</sup>David Brown, *A guide to Religions* (1975)

E.B. Idowu (1973),<sup>71</sup> suggests that to argue that African Religion is “primitive”, polytheistic and its concept of god remote as wachi states elsewhere is an attitude of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, western scholarship which is subjective and prejudicial<sup>13</sup>. The implications here are that primitive religions are polytheistic in character and hence not part of the major world religions like Islam which are monoistic. This, in other words does not support Nandi indigenous religion as part of the religions. That according to me does not support this study.

*God's and men* (1972),<sup>72</sup> by B.W. Sherrath and D.J. Hawkin is a small book but very valuable book on religion. The work present's a complex diversification of ideas and practices impartially and in a straight forward manner. Its uniqueness is the contribution and the end of every chapter, of the profession of faith by a representative devotee of each religion. This has added an element of life to the work.

Finally, *A History of the world's Religions* (1990),<sup>73</sup> by David S. Noss and John B. Noss is a recent book which has dealt in great details on the eleven conventional religions of the world. Apart from these are the authors' of pre-historic and political cultures". It is here that the religion of the Bavenda people of South Africa is discussed in hardy three out of the 654 pages.

The Bavenda religion is portrayed as animistic, fetish, shamanism, witchcraft, the cult of the dead and spiritism. What they describe as the supreme spirit, Raluvhimba is discussing in one short paragraph as was done in man's religions by John Noss discussed above. In this study, attempt is made to explain that the term “pre-historic” and Traditional cultures” in reference to African Religion are unfair and derogatory. Similarly, the use of words such as animist, fetish, shaman, witchcraft and spirits in references to the entire religion is a bias approach to the study of a religion. One needs to understand the original meanings of some of these words to know how obnoxious they are in reference to African religion.

Finally, it needs to be mentioned here that there are a number of standard works on the general survey of traditional religion throughout Africa: I may mention some scholars who have undertake this task. They are B.B Idowu, J.S. Mbiti, J.B. Danguach, Christian Gaba, P.A. Dopanu, J.N Mugambi, Okot P' Bitek, O. Imasogie, E.G Parrinder, Newell Booth JR., Benjamin Ray and R.J. Gehman.

The majority of the works of the above scholars have a descriptive approach. Many of them are also analytical and interpretative lying bares the erroneous, biased and prejudicial approach and wrong assessment and classification of early writers. Since the approach and intention of these scholars are almost the same, I shall review only the works that have studied African Religion in broad terms. In my opinion, they are representative of this category. I shall also review specific works in the study of the Nandi people, which is core to this study.

---

<sup>71</sup> Fr. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. (London. SCM press, 1973), 79.

<sup>72</sup> B. W Sherrath and D.J. Hawkin, *Gods and men* (Glasgow, William's Collins & Co. 1969), 39.

<sup>73</sup> Noss, David S. and John B. Noss : *A history of the world's Religious*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1990.

Okot P' Bitek in, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1970),<sup>74</sup> has zealously argued for the recognition of African Religion. He complains that “Western scholarships have never been genuinely interested in African religion per-se” and that they have divided the population of the world into “one their own civilized, and the rest primitive”. He has condemned the use of terms such as barbarian, savage, primitive and tribe, in reference to African societies. For this reason, P'Bitek was engrossed in a bitter quarrel with social anthropologists. He was also critical of African philosophers and theologians whom he attacks for Hellenizing and Christianity African Religion.

P' Bitek is convinced that African Religion can stand on its own and that one should not be embarrassed about it. He therefore, felt that African scholars should “endeavour to present the institutions of African peoples as they are.

J.S. Mbiti has written several books. In these works, Mbiti has made an effort to promote the positive investigation of African Religion. His work *African Religion and Philosophy* (1969),<sup>75</sup> is now considered classic by Scholars of religions in the studies of African Religion, African philosophy and Theology. This work has added a new dimension has added a new dimension to the understanding of the history, thinking and life of Africa. The work is a systematic study of the attitudes of mind and beliefs which have evolved in the many societies in Africa.

Like other similar writers who give a survey of African Religion, Mbiti has attempted to demonstrate to the world that Africans possess religions consciousness and that African Religion is a living faith of the majority of the Africans. Mbiti's conviction in all his works is that even with the influence of modern life, African Religion will survive,

The belief in God will linger on in towns and villages even if acts of worship will increasingly become difficult, irregular and cultists, instead of being public, corporate and spontaneous.

Mbiti has, however, received much criticism from scholars of Religion for his generalization. He is criticized for treating African peoples as one of their thinking and reasoning, forgetting that there are over 800 ethnic groups, each of which has its own religious systems. This study differs in that it concentrates on the religion of one community, the Nandi.

#### 2.4 Previous Workers on Islam in Africa

Trimmingham<sup>76</sup> has written several works dealing with Islam in Africa and particularly East Africa. The most important of these in relation to this study were *The Influence of Islam upon Africa* and *Islam in East Africa*. In the former, he portrays Islam as a religious culture, as he begins with an account of Islam's historical penetration into Africa. Although the book, does not mention the specific area of this study, it is important in the way it deals with the

---

<sup>74</sup> Okot P'Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1989), 119.

<sup>75</sup> Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (1969).

<sup>76</sup> J. S. Trimmingham, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*, (Longman, London, 1980).

phenomenon of change. Trimmingham demonstrates that the distinctions between these cultural zones are due more to differences in African culture than to Islam. He observes that Islam flourished where there was some basis of urban culture, together with trading relations, which ultimately stemmed from the city.

The recent book by Quraishy<sup>77</sup>, *Text Book of Islam*, Book 1, which has been written specifically to meet the demands of the Islamic Religious Education (I. R. E.) syllabus in secondary schools, has been useful in this research. The author, apart from providing a good historical background of the Islamic faith, has gone further to mention the first Muslims responsible for the spreading of Islam in the interior of Kenya. This guided the study in first knowing some of the early Muslim settlers and the impact in Nandi.

## 2.5 Spread of Islam in Africa to the interior of Kenya (Nandi-Mumias)

Bowker has tried to explain the rapid spread of Islam among Africans. One reason he advances is that, Islam makes converts because its social demands are not too different from those common in African societies. Secondly, Islam's legalistic precepts provide a comprehensive basis for every social action. Furthermore, Islam offers social security and mutual support to its adherents in diverse areas of everyday life. Hence Islamic doctrines are easily comprehensible to Africans. Bowker's insights should assist in illuminating the reasons for the acceptance of Islam by the Nandi society.<sup>78</sup>

Abdullah's research on Mumias in his dissertation "Some Aspects of Coastal and Islamic Influence in Mumias from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century", looks at the first Muslims to enter the area. The first Muslims were the Arab-Swahili traders who had gone to Mumias purposely for trade, out of which the spreading of faith came consequently. Most important in the work is the struggle for dominance between Christianity and Islam during the colonial period. Mumias became an important centre in the interior and played a role in the spread of Islam in the adjacent areas. Islam in Mumias serves this study with an insight into the history of Islam in western Kenya and beyond.

Sperling's Thesis "The Growth of Islam among the Mijikenda of the Kenya Coast, 1826-1933" is the most extensive and precise work on Islam related to a particular group of people in Kenya. He traces the background of Islam first at the coast and how it spread among the various people of Mijikenda. He notes in detail the process of conversions and the influence of Islam among the same people. The role of the elders of the society and the creation of Islamic institutions in these areas are also well explained.

As to what constitutes religion, one can agree with Posnansky that there is no universally accepted definition.<sup>79</sup> For this study purpose, it has sufficed to adopt the definition given by A.C. Coulson where religion is conceived as simply man's response to his

---

<sup>77</sup> M.A. Quraishy, *Text Book of Islam*, Book 1, The Islamic Foundation, (Nairobi, 1981).

<sup>78</sup> John Bowker, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions* (London, 1997), *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> See in Kimambo and Ranger, *The Historical Study of African Religion*, p. 29.

environment.<sup>80</sup>The response is both individual and social. Thus, religion has a dual character. Various writers on the subject have emphasized one aspect or the other of this duality. A.N. White head for example argues that:

Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things. Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness – Thus religion is solitariness and if you are never solitary, you are never religious.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, Coulson among others, refers to religion as the “Social attitude towards the non-human environment” To see one of these two points without at the same time seeing the other, is to fail to understand religion fully. It is in this sense that one can understand the Nandi Indigenous religion. The historical forces acting upon it were similar to those that affected the religion of the Padhola as depicted by Professor B.A Ogot.<sup>82</sup> These include migration and settlement, physical and human environment as already pointed, and internal and external factors. These diverse factors produced diversity in social setup. In addition, and as F.W Smith has said, a “Diversity in theology may follow upon diversity in social structure.

Scholars like Trimmingharm (1964),<sup>83</sup> Maingi (1987),<sup>84</sup> Kabiri (1990),<sup>85</sup> (1995), Gimonde (1993),<sup>86</sup> and Nzibo (1995)<sup>87</sup> argue that the spread of Islam into the interior of E.A mainly depended on Muslim traders. However, from the primary and secondary sources, it was established that the main agent of the spread of Islam among the Nandi were Muslim traders from Mumias. The Muslim traders, major aim in Nandi land was trade in ivory and slaves. The traders were therefore not directly involved in the spread of Islam among the Nandi.

---

<sup>80</sup> A. C. Coulson, *Science and Christian Belief*. p. 105.

<sup>81</sup> See, Mwanzi, *A History of the Kipsigis*, p.12.

<sup>82</sup> See Kimambo and Ranger, op. cit. p. 122.

<sup>83</sup> Trimmingam, J.B., *Islam in East Africa*, (London: Oxford University press , 1964), p. 78.

<sup>84</sup> Maingi A.N (1987) “The diversity factor in the History of Islam in Nairobi 1900 –1963” M.A. Thesis University of Nairobi.

<sup>85</sup> “Kabiri, N., (1990) “Islam and colonialism in Kenya: A cask study of the Kenya African Muslims in Nairobi C. 1939”.M.A. Thesis, KQ.

<sup>86</sup> “Gimode, A.E (1990), “Culture and History: The Religious Experience of the Avalogoli C. 1850 – 1945” M.A. Thesis . K.U.

<sup>87</sup> Nzibo , AY, Islamization in the interior of Kenya A General overviews in Bakari and Yahya eds. *Islam in Kenya: proceedings of the National Seminar on contemporary Islam in Kenya* , (Mombasa: Mewa publications, 1995) pp. 120- 161.

Islam was seen as a more simpler faith to convert or adhere to than Christianity in a comparative basis as it was noted by Kabiri.<sup>88</sup> It appeared that the two religions were competing for converts among the Kenyan up country people. This was seen in 1909, when officials in the colonial administration warned their colleagues that Islam was a serious rival to the spread of Christianity.<sup>89</sup> The archival data reveals that the acceptability of Islam by the interior people was seen as banking on the fact that it did not ask one to deny the self as opposed to the Christianity.<sup>90</sup> Therefore this rendered Islam more acceptable more attractive than Christianity. It is apparent cultural appealed that made Islam van Grumbauri cited in Alpers<sup>91</sup> to state that Islam allows the potential converts to carry over with them much of traditional way of life. For him this accounts for Islamism's amazing cross – cultural absorptiveness. The flexibility of both the indigenous religion and Islam facilitated the adoption of Islam by the Nandi.

## 2.6 Missionaries and their influence in Nandi and among Islam

The works of Christian missions in Nandi have constituted a running theme in this study. In this regard, S.K arap Ngeny explored the activities of the Friends Africa Industrial Mission which commenced work in Nandi in 1902- 1904 after opening a station at Kaimosi among the Abaluyia. Ngeny writes that it was in 1909 that the Church Missionary Society (CMS) sent two missionary couples to establish stations at Kaptumo and Chebisaas. According to him, the stations never expanded because the Nandi became suspicious and reluctant to receive missionary teachings.<sup>92</sup>

Ngeny further supplies information on other missions that operated in Nandi in the early decades of the twentieth century. He informs that in 1929, the Seventh Day Adventists (S.D.A.) opened a station at Kaigat where they faced opposition because of prohibition of tobacco, alcohol and the consumption of flesh from domestic animals, and opposition to female circumcision.

According to Ngeny, the missionaries of the American International Pentecostal Assemblies - who arrived in 1937 and established a station at Chepkumia preached against polygamy, traditional male and female initiation, and the accompanying rites and rituals. They were thus unable to convert many Nandi. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Mission at

---

<sup>88</sup>Kabiri, N (1995, "An evolution of an African Muslim Demography in Kenya" In Bakari and yahya(eds) *Islam in Kenya proceedings of the National senior of contemporary Islam in Kenya*, (Mombasa: Mewa publications, 1995), P. 189.

<sup>89</sup>DC/KBU/3/4 Dagoretti Political Record Book 1908 – 1912.

<sup>90</sup> PC/ COAST 1/1/20. – Uganda Railway 1895 –1897 chief engineer Uganda Railway to C.H. (Van ford Esg. Ag commissioner and Secretary General East African protectorate Mombasa, 21 – 12 – 1896.

<sup>91</sup> Alpers, E.A 1969 "The coast and the Development of Caravan trade" in A History of Tanzania edited by I.N. Kimambo and A.J Temu 35 – 56 (Nairobi: E.A PH), p 49.

<sup>92</sup>S.K. arap Ng'eny, "Nandi Resistance to the Establishment of British Administration, 1893-1906." In B.A. Ogot (ed.) *Hadith 2* (Nairobi, 1970), pp. 104 –121.

Chepterit made converts within a short time after 1938. This was largely because the Catholics were more accommodative of Nandi culture and traditions in comparison to other Christian churches.

The core subject of this work is the study of the spread of Islam in Nandi, which expanded rapidly in the twentieth century. This phenomenon, according to Barrett's view, was that the community life based on *Shariah* favoured such a development.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, as Parrinder further asserted, there was a facilitative similarity of Islam's prescriptions on personal and family life with polygamy, which was common in Africa and accepted under customary law. In Parrinder's summation, marriage of four wives as permitted in the Quran was one of the main attractions of Islam for Africans. This position should apply *a fortiori* in explaining the acceptance of Islam by the Nandi.<sup>94</sup>

## 2.7 Comparative religions and culture

Badru D Kateregge and David W. Slenk, on their book *Islam and Christianity*, (1980)<sup>95</sup>, were written to show how Muslims do their evangelism vis a vis Christianity. They said, Muslim witness in worship is profound, and that in them, right worship is a prominent Muslim cancer of whom many Christians who have Muslim friends are impressed by the sincerity and devotion of Muslim worship especially the Muslim discipline in prayer, fasting or misgiving was impressive while in Christians, their witness, invites all their true worshippers of God to move beyond the mystery of the forms of worship into an actual encounter with God, a personal fellowship relationship with the one, whom both forms and practices of worship are the same.

On the *journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (1985)<sup>96</sup>, Mazrui Alli a well known historian in the African culture wrote an article entitle "Religion and political culture in Africa", in this article, he showed how Christian were negative over medicine and healing practices by viewed those practices as being based on magic and not on science. According to Mazrui, these judgments were based on a misunderstanding of African Traditional Religion views on disease and healing. Indeed, like "western" medicine, African Traditional Religion healing was based on close observation of the patient and his or her disease and on the use of remedies-medicines-that have a track record for successfully treating a particular ailment. However, Muslims agree with the medicine and healing practices of the Indigenous religions.

Thus, Mazrui comments that during the past thirty years, Western trained doctors have gained a greater appreciation for African healing techniques and practices. Indeed, throughout Africa it is now fairly common to have Western trained doctors working with traditional healers in the treatment of patients. In addition to treating specific illnesses, African Traditional

---

<sup>93</sup>David B. Barrett, et al, eds., *Kenyan Churches Handbook* (Kisumu, 1973), p. 297.

<sup>94</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions* (London, 1976), p. 216.

<sup>95</sup> Badru D Kateregge and David W. Slenk, *Islam and Christianity*, Daystar press, Ibadan, Nigeria: 1980.

<sup>96</sup> Mazrui A.A., "Religion and political culture in Africa," *journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (Nairobi: 1985), pp, 817-839.



healers-herbalists and diviners- also practice preventative medicine. Patients may come to the healer seeking protection from misfortune. Or a person undertaking a long journey may want a remedy that will provide safety on her trip. Another patient may want a remedy that will provide wisdom and clarity in making an important decision. In understanding how Muslims and Christians response to the African religion and culture, Alli Mazrui has contributed allot to this thesis to shade greater light.

According to Jane T. Stoddard in her book *The Case Against Spiritualism*, (1919)<sup>97</sup>, The living dead in the Nandi Indigenous Religion (NIR) become Islamic intercessors' between man and God. Christianity was unable to accept this idea, mainly among the Protestants. According to the Protestants it was termed as Spiritism: the theory that mediumistic phenomena are caused by spirits of the dead. The word spiritualism was not found in the Bible, but there was a general accord that spiritualism is based upon the belief in the natural immortality of man, and that the spirit, which left the fleshly body at death, can and does return to communicate with the living through "the medium" and "the control." The Christians believe that "the living knows that they will die; but the dead know not anything" and that "the breath goeth forth, he returned to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Also in the dead, "their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun."<sup>98</sup>With this position of Christians, it was difficult to convert Nandi from their indigenous religion than the Muslims who were flexible and accepting the ancestors believes over the living.

M.A. Quraishy, in his *textbook of Islam*, (1981)<sup>99</sup> where he did a lot in bringing the Islamic students understand the foundation of the Islamic faith that the formula "*La ilah illa Allah, Muhammad rasul Allah*" (there is no god save Allah and Mohammad is His Prophet) is the most concentrated profession of faith of the Islamic belief in one God. It is called the *shahada*. For the Muslims, God (Allah) is the one and only the deity. They say right from Quran and Mohammed preaching to this day, Muslims worship only one Supreme Being who is the creator of heaven and earth.

Quraishy discussed in length on the nature of God in Islam, in his exposition he explained that, it is not enough that people believe that "God is One", but they must actualize this belief by proper conduct. In short he said, in the Islamic concept of God, which is completely based on Divine Revelation, there is no ambiguity in divinity - God is God and man is man and that this is not in among the Christians. The Muslims beliefs Christians to be worshipping three gods, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Doctrine of Trinity).This tought contributes to this thesis in that the Indigenous religion especially the Nandi they worshipped one Deity – Asiis<sup>100</sup> and according to B.D. Kateregga & D. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity:A Muslim and Christian in*

---

<sup>97</sup>Jane T. Stoddard, *The Case Against Spiritualism*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1919, p. 128.

<sup>98</sup> See on the Bible (NIV): Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:4 and Ecclesiastes 9:6.

<sup>99</sup> M.A. Quraishy, *Textbook of Islam*, Book 1, *The Islamic Foundation*, (Nairobi, 1981), p, 28.

<sup>100</sup> Ol, Hassan Ngeny, 28 July, 2008, Kaptumo.

*Dialogue*.(1980)<sup>101</sup>, on their case studies, it was noticed that only a small number of Muslims accept Christian monotheism. Muslims say that Christianity had a true monotheism in the past but with the dogmas of the Trinity and the incarnation, it has deviated from what was preached by Jesus Himself. Christianity, according to Islam is essentially the form of the unique religion, eternal and immutable, which God willed to be valid for the children of Israel at a particular moment in history. Jesus preached it, but little by little his disciples moved away from his message and God sent Muhammad to remedy the situation.

*Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, (1982)<sup>102</sup> by Pancholi, N., is a very recent and modern book of comparative religions it was useful for this research in that it gave a clear comparison of the major world religions mainly on the side of the Deity. He said though other religions seem to be worshipping many gods but they worship a true God. Hindu religion for example, is often believed that they worship 330 million “gods” but to a Hindu, the millions of “gods” are really the manifestation of the many aspects of one truth Brahman, “God”. From this context, the indigenous religion has been misunderstood to be worshipping objects such as trees, stones, mountains, sun, moon and stars. According to the Nandi one among the indigenous religion those were also manifestations of *Asiis* the Deity the only true God.

*Religious ethics in Africa*, (1998)<sup>103</sup>, by Peter Kasenene, has been also a helpful book in understanding how the major world religions value their ethics in the society. The book was so much concerned with Alcoholism. Kasenene P. refers Alcoholism as a serious health and social problem in Africa, which raises a concern in various circles in the society. In this book, Alcoholism means addiction to alcohol and loss of control over one's drinking habits and that, it is a mental and physical illness with complex social and psychological dimensions which originate from excessive and continuous consumption of alcohol. Islam's holistic approach to health and well-being means that anything that is harmful or mostly harmful, is forbidden. Therefore, Islam takes an uncompromising stand towards alcohol and forbids its consumption in either small or large quantities. Alcohol is undoubtedly harmful and adversely affects the mind and the body. It clouds the mind, causes disease, wastes money, and destroys individuals, families, and communities.

Likewise, the Christian church followed the same route that was used by Muslims, only the indigenous religion never prohibits so much, like in the case of the Nandi, Alcohol is in various forms. It is often served and consumed moderately at social functions. These forms of drinking are not harmful to health or society. In fact, it is perhaps correct to say that the majority of adults in Nandi society take alcoholic beverage without becoming alcoholic. Nandi religion accepts alcohol consumption because it plays a very important part in religious life. In almost every important occasion beer or wine is served; ceremonies, festivities, marriage

---

<sup>101</sup> B.D. Kateregga & D. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and Christian in Dialogue*. (Nairobi: Uzima Press. 1980), p. 78.

<sup>102</sup> N. Pancholi, *Comparative Religions: a Modern Textbook*, 1982, (West Street, Dorset, UK.: Blandford Press), P. 25.

<sup>103</sup> Peter Kasenene, *Religious ethics in Africa*, Fountain publications, 1998. pp 25-34.

negotiations, land contrast, wedding parties, or social visits are all occasions for drinking. Alcohol is a symbol of friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability in the community. From time to time wine or beer is used to pour libation for the ancestors or to give them a drink. On those occasions when wine or beer is served to ancestors, it is left in the shrine overnight and the following day the family drinks what the ancestors have “left over”. Although alcohol consumption is accepted and alcohol is served on many functions, drunkenness is discouraged and condemned. A person is expected to drink moderately and at the right time with the right type of people. All children preferably uncircumcised were not allowed to drink alcohol. Responsibly current youth misuse alcohol for it has become commercialized. Any youth can freely misuse his hard earned money to over indulge in alcoholic drinks.<sup>104</sup>

The following chapter on methodology described how we obtain, analyze and interpret the data used in this study. It focuses on the research and procedures used in analyzing data, and further discusses major challenges faced in the field during data collection.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ol, Luka Kebenei, 15 July, 2008, Chepkober.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to obtain, analyze and interpret the data used in this present study. It focuses on the research design, validity and reliability, population and sampling, methods of data collection, ethical considerations, and procedures used in analyzing data, as well as discusses major challenges faced in the field.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study was a qualitative research involving the search and use of participants' live experiences to depict the scenarios surrounding the spread of Islam in Nandi. This study opted for a qualitative research design because literature suggests that qualitative research is recommended when one seeks to analyze the way humans behave, as well as their culture and attitudes. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to study the variables under consideration because the study sought to explore how Islam was presented to the Nandi people and how the Nandi, in turn, reacted to this religion. The human response to religion is part of human behavior; it is a psychological phenomenon and is best studied qualitatively.

By using qualitative approaches, such as interviews, the researcher was able to obtain detailed information on the phenomenon under consideration. Thus, the use of a qualitative design permitted the researcher to probe into the respondents' behaviors, feelings, attitudes, influences of religion, and influences of culture. It allowed the respondents to provide descriptions and accounts of the processes of social interaction in natural settings, which was appropriate since the study sought to focus on describing processes rather than outcomes.

#### 3.2 Validity of the study

The purpose of any researcher is to produce a good research paper, and this work is not an exception. Every effort was made to ensure the validity of the data for the purposes of this study. In this research, the fundamental rule of thumb was that all the information collected be accurate. To this end, information about history of Islamic religion and its impact needed could only be accurate if obtained from appropriate respondents using appropriate tools. This concept of accuracy is what is usually referred as validity, which is usually taken to refer to the extent to which a procedure or an instrument (tool) used in the research is accurate, correct, true, meaningful and right. Pre-testing of the interview schedule was done in order to obtain information that was then used to determine, at face value, whether the tool would gather valid information. Face validity was used to gauge the tool. A panel of four Muslims competent in the Islamic doctrine and history in the field was used to assess the relevance of the content used in the interview schedule. Each of the members of the panel individually examined the schedule and provided feedback to the researcher. Their feedback was used to make improvements to the schedule in order to better the tool.

#### 3.3 Population and Sampling Procedure

##### 3.3.1 Target Population

As per the 2009 Population Census, the people of Nandi County, which was the study area, numbered 752,965.<sup>105</sup> As such, it was impossible to study the whole of the population,

---

<sup>105</sup>Republic of Kenya, *Report of the Kenya's Districts Census Report* (Nairobi, 1999), p. 67.

the researcher therefore, had to identify and define an experimentally accessible population out of the target population. The accessible population of this study was arrived at by taking into consideration different strata (groups) in the population that would best provide the data required to answer the research questions. Thus, the present study dealt with subgroups in the population which comprised three groups; namely, followers of Nandi indigenous religion, Christians and the Muslims.

### 3.3.2 Sampling and sample size

Even given the accessible population, it was still impossible to interview all the Nandi in the three groups in the study area, and so, the study opted for a smaller number – a sample. This was based on the premise that it was possible to reach an accurate conclusion by examining only a small part of the group. This assessment of only a small group is commonly used in natural sciences as well as social sciences.

Sampling was important to determine the participants that would best represent the population; a sample that was least biased so as to allow for an accurate generalization of results. A sample of respondents/ interviewees was therefore obtained from the accessible population. In this study the respondents were from Nandi traditional religion, Christian and Muslim leaders or teachers. To arrive at this, purposive sampling was used because it offered the researcher the opportunity to select samples based on a purpose. In this case the researcher chose to use Nandi religion adherents, Christian and Muslim leaders or teachers in Nandi since they would be able to provide the information required to meet the objectives of this study.

Non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study. These were considered appropriate given the purely qualitative orientation of the study. Both snowball sampling and purposive sampling were used to arrive at an appropriate sample for this study. Purposive sampling was used to determine the age range of the participants. In this study, which was more or less historical, elderly and experienced respondents of over (60) sixty years with sound mind formed the age target that was purposively sampled to get the necessary data for this study. These people were drawn, purposively, from the three religions – Nandi Indigenous Religion, Christianity and Islam. The interviewees thus comprised the indigenous religious specialists, Christian leaders and Muslim leaders from the study area. The religious leaders consisted of cultural and religious specialists such as traditional priests and religious elders. The Muslim respondents were purposively selected from around major mosques because the Muslims living around the Mosques were assumed to have a thorough and reliable history, which enhanced the validity of the data used in the study.

Snowball sampling was utilized to actually identify the respondents since it proved to be the most suitable method to reach people who shared similar characteristics. Thus, a few respondents who had the requisite characteristics (for instance those who practised Islam) were selected for the initial part of the research and as they participated in the study, they in turn directed the researcher to others who had information on the subject. The process was repeated until the researcher had obtained the desired number of respondents. This meant that the sample size grew larger as those identified named others. These respondents were used to represent the larger population, even though it was difficult to know the extent to which the sample was truly representative of the larger population. This is one limitation of the snowball sampling. Nevertheless, snowballing remained the most efficient way of identifying

respondents relevant to the study under investigation given the vastness of the study area and the nature of the variables under consideration.

The researcher purposely chose (4) four respondents from each of the (8) eight mosques in the study area. Among the thirty two (32) chosen, eight were religious leaders (Imams) and eight were the pioneers of their respective Mosques. From the Christian community (8) eight respondents were purposively selected to aid in the comparison of conversion techniques in the two religions thus providing insight into factors that motivated Christians to change their faith into the Islamic faith. Thereafter, (15) fifteen Nandi elders, mainly religious specialists, and government leaders were again purposively selected and/or chosen as respondents to the study. Thus, a total of (55) fifty five respondents were sampled.

### 3.4 Instruments of data Collection

It was necessary for this study to develop research instruments with which to collect the relevant information. The study sought to make use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from practising Muslims, Christians, adherents of Nandi religion, and other participants by means of interviews while secondary data were taken from historical documents. The following instruments were used to obtain this information.

#### 3.4.1 Interview Schedule

An interview is an oral administration of a questionnaire or an interview schedule. This was considered best for this study because it encourages face to face encounters between the researcher and the informants and furthermore helps the researcher to obtain rich, detailed and accurate information. However, the researcher needed to obtain the maximum co-operation from the respondents. The majority of respondents were interviewed singly, but whenever possible focused group discussions were also used. Interviews enabled the researcher to probe where respondent when an answer was not clear. This was done after asking for their acceptance and subsequently requesting others for their pictures to

However, tape recordings proved the best to the researcher since the researcher would play back the questions and responses and study them more thoroughly at a later time. This also helped to speed up the interviews because there was no writing involved and the flow of questioning was not interrupted.

#### 3.4.2 Documentation and the Historical Method

Research into secondary sources – including reference materials, books, scholarly journals, theses, dissertations, conference papers, newspapers, periodicals and magazines – were obtained from various sources and libraries across the country and over the internet. Together with secondary sources was collection from the holdings of the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNA). This was mostly public or official records of the colonial period and the years after independence. District and provincial records in Nandi and neighbouring areas were referred to in order to glean information on the various events that had taken place and which had had a bearing on the spread of Islam in Nandi. In addition, an effort was made to trace any extant contemporary accounts. Similarly, pertinent private collections belonging to individuals as well as religious organizations were combed to provide a view from within.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

What makes the social sciences unique from the natural sciences is that the subject matter of the social sciences is people – living, sentient beings with feelings and thoughts of their own. Because the objects of this study were humans, the researcher had a special obligation to safeguard their rights and dignity.

In this study, it was understood that the informants needed to be told something about the study. It was their right to know: a) who was sponsoring the study, b) what area is being investigated, c) how much of their time it would take, d) whether the results would remain confidential so that their answers could not be traced back to them, and finally e) how the results would be used. All this information was availed to the informants prior to their participation.

However, several problems arose in providing this information. Some of the Muslim informants tended to shun the investigator on the assumption that the government has him to do some investigations on them. This is because much had been said about the Muslims in relation to terrorism, and they were therefore reluctant to give information. However, since this was well known, they were informed in advance about the said study in the university and its objective, and this made them respond positively.

A high level of privacy was maintained in interviewing individuals and when consulting the third party. During the interviews, the investigator also endeavoured to avoid asking embarrassing and threatening questions such as asking a woman asked about her relationship with the husband, may not want to answer but feel that she must because she agreed to be interviewed.

There were some topics that Muslims preferred not to discuss openly with strangers. To counter this challenge, a research assistant of Islamic faith, who was well known to the faithful, was hired. To avoid possible risk to the community or individuals that could arise out of the study findings, for instance, being branded anti-government, the researcher took time to delay the thesis or to write generally about the issues until the information was discussed with the Muslim community of leaders to see what points they would view as controversial. It was also ensured that the community got a copy of the reports as soon as possible.

Making unrealistic promises to the informants was avoided, and they were treated in ways that neither raised their expectations nor lowered their dignity because it was known that doing this might lead to people's refusal to cooperate in any future research. While presentation of drinks or other gifts to community leaders was sometimes necessary to get permission to proceed, the researcher tried his best to minimize this and presented himself as a pastor coming from a poor background as well as a self-sponsored student. In this study, it was imperative that the public image of scholarship be upheld, and to this end the researcher tried his best to be courteous, truthful, honest, obedient and faithful.

In this study therefore, proper conduct was maintained as the data were garnered from the different sources. The researcher secured informed consent, ensured honesty and accuracy in the responses solicited, and assured the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

For the purpose of data reduction or condensation, two methods were employed. One is criticism – that examined and evaluated the data gathered critically. The other was the rationalistic method. This entails the systematic and logical analysis of the data to avoid making erroneous conclusions.

The researcher chose to use interviews because literacy was not necessary, so the sample was much less limited than for questionnaires. The advantage of this was that the researcher was able to ensure that questions were understood and answered in full and in a consistent manner. In this way, he was able to use supplementary questions to get more additional information and to understand what an answer means and to ensure that the respondent was not “making it all up”.

A large corpus of information was obtained from the huge data collections, interviews and discussions from the respondents coupled with those collected from the Kenya National Archives. Given the qualitative nature of the data obtained, the researcher soon realized that analyzing and interpreting data, called for patience, tolerance, disciplined study, creative insight and careful attention to the study objectives. Thus, the process of organizing information obtained and then manipulating it required the researcher to manage and meticulously interpret accordingly.

The researcher used content analysis to organize the data into patterns which enabled one to read field notes and interviews and thus polish them for presentation as pure description in the research report before putting them in categories and basic descriptive units.

From the data analysis, the researcher described the major characteristics of indigenous Nandi religion before in comparison with those of Christianity and Islam. The development of Islam in Nandi County from the late Nineteenth Century to the present, while focusing on the Islam’s interaction with Christianity and the indigenous belief system, was also analysed. The findings were also examined to establish threads in the leadership aspect of the Islamic faith in Nandi as well as impact on their lifestyles. Finally, the researcher examined the interpreted data to assess the extent, if any, to which contemporary issues affecting Islam worldwide have influenced Nandi indigenous Muslims.

### 3.7 Challenges faced in the field study period

To minimize challenges in the field, several precautions were taken such as:

1. The engagement of a research assistant who must have been chosen from the area of study; where they were well known to the respondents. This made easy the respondents to familiarize and give the needed information without wasting time.
2. The researcher visited in advance the key people such as District Officers and Chiefs in their respective areas and gave them a copy of the authorization letter from the ministry of Higher Education. He also attended local meetings (*Barazas*) where he took the opportunity to explain to the authorities and the people what the study was all about.
3. Since the majority of respondents were illiterate, the interview schedule was written in both English and Nandi languages.



## CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings about the Muslims' spread in Nandi County as well as the agents and factors that facilitated and hindered the penetration of Islam among the Nandi. It uncovers the Nandi indigenous religion and its interaction with Islam. This is based on the premise that both Muslim agents and indigenous beliefs and practices played a role in enhancing the spread of Islam in the Nandi land.

It is important to stress here that, Islamization as a whole, whether in the initial stage of conversion, or later stages of consideration, depended entirely on the personal contacts between the Muslims with the non-Muslims. Therefore, the agents and factors that facilitated the penetration of Islam among the people determine the “contact situation” between Islam and the Nandi indigenous religion.

### 4.1 The History of Muslims and Its Impact in Nandi

According to Kiplagat<sup>106</sup>, who was among the first secretaries to the British (*wasungu*) Administration Colonialist, the Arab Traders of various backgrounds became the first Muslims to visit Nandi. He further noted that this group played a major role in converting indigenous Kenyans (not only Nandi) but also a big part of the Sub-Saharan Africa into Islam. He accepted the fact that during the Kenya-Uganda Railway line construction, the Arabs were not new or strange to the natives. There had been an attempt by Arab Slave Traders long before the arrival of the British to convert the Nandi into Muslims, in the late 1870s; when the Nandi political and military supremacy was at its peak after the decline of the *Maasai* power in the region.

Mzee Kipserem<sup>107</sup> also concurred with Mr Kiplagat, that during the same period some Arabs who were riding horses met the young Nandi warriors (*Moran*) at a place called *Kabutie*, who later took them to their *Orgoiyot* – their spiritual and political leader of the time. The *Orgoiyot* lived at a place called *Kamatargui*, near Kapsabe, just across *Amai* River (stream) towards Baraton University. The Arabs gave the leader, some gifts, which included clothes, mirrors and tobacco containers before requesting the *Orgoiyot* to settle in the area. Therefore, the *Orgoiyot* allowed them to build tents and settle in the proximity of his premises, the current location of Kapsabet Boys' High School and ACK St. Paul's Theological College – Kapsabet, so that he could be monitoring them and their activities. The Arabs who used to hunt using strange weapons (guns) around their homestead began attracting the young Nandi men who used to graze their livestock around their tents. The visitors (Arabs), also gave them delicious sweets, later began offending the young warriors by sexually defiling their girls, and to make it worse, they also cut the warriors' pigtails. This incident was reported to the *Orgoiyot* who called their leaders and warned them not to offend the community through those heinous acts, but they instead continued despite the caution.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> OI, Kiplagat Karan Chemokotion, 9 August 2008.

<sup>107</sup> OI, Mzee Kipserem Sogon, 13 August 2008.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

This encounter of age-set group with the Arab traders was associated with the period when the age generation called “*Sawe*” was warriors in the 1880s. The *sawe* sub-set (*marmar*) was commemorated from this major event in the Nandi tribal history when the Arabs were fought and defeated by the warriors at *Kipsobo*; and were subsequently expelled from Nandi District. The sub-set name *marmar* originated from the word “*marmar*,” which denotes ornamented dress of many colours. During this time the Nandi women began artwork by using beads and cowry shells, stolen from the Arabs to bedeck their leather garments.<sup>109</sup>

The *Nandi* first came into contact with the Arab Caravans (*foreigners*) when they came to Nandi to trade (barter) using ivory items from the coastal part of Kenya, thus introducing a new *Nandi* economic factor, which had never been entered by *Kavirondo* traders (*Kariba* and *Wanyamwezi* traders). Apart from these sporadic trading operations, the study area experience a hiatus of this activities with other tribes for centuries, and it was not until 1899 that the first African-sponsored Caravans entered *Nandi*, after the Pax Britannica establishment made it safe for the *Baganda* chiefs to send trading parties through eastern Uganda up to the coast.<sup>110</sup>

The Arabs had a difficult time to penetrate the ferocious Nandi people areas unlike the other neighbouring tribes with whom they traded easily. They could only approach Nandi from the northeastern *Uasin Gishu* route, although it took them a long time before reaching the principal *Nandi* settlements, overlooking the *Nyando* Valley in *Kavirondo*, where there was abundant food. This trek of the barter traders was confirmed by the Paramount Chief *Arap Kirwa* of *Chepterwai*, who noted that the Arabs entered Nandi from *Mumias* and *Kibos* River to the west and south, respectively.<sup>111</sup> The Caravans seldom entered and camped in Nandi, but preferred to exchange trading goods for ivory at places near the Nandi South Escarpment (East Kabras and Kakamega)<sup>112</sup> in the late 1850s, during the “*sawe*” epoch. This *Nandi* trading business of bartering beads, clothes and ornaments for ivory, sheep and goats was greatly established at *Kimatke* which is located between *Kibigori* and *Chemelil*, *Kipsoboi* on the south escarpment overlooking Chemase, and at *Kobujoi* in the *Chesumei* forest. The business flourished and firmly got established at the escarpment in *Kipsoboi*, as alleged by Bot Cheplaitich from Tinderet.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4.2 The first place Muslims Settled in Nandi

The rise of Muslim settlement in *Nandi* as Chesingaga noted was directly related to *Kipture* centre. From center *Kaptumo* was established as a military base. Mr. Hassan Ngeny

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> A.T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule 1890 – 1906*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), p.39-85.

<sup>111</sup> OI, Paramount Chief Arap Kurgat, 6 Feb.,2008 Kaptel.

<sup>112</sup> A.T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule 1890 – 1906*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972), p.39-85.

<sup>113</sup> OI, Bot cheplaitich, 8 Feb. 2008, Tinderet.

noted that the present day site of *Kaptumo* used to be a trading centre also for the Arab traders. This caravan route passed through *Kaptumo* where the *Wanubis* camped as they worked for the British Army. The caravans' route used to get goods from the local markets; mainly from *Kibigori* -but these traders did influence the rise of *Kaptumo* as narrated by Mrs. *Bot Surtan Jamaa* - the only remaining *Mnubi* in *Kaptumo*.<sup>114</sup> The people indirectly responsible for the establishment of *Kaptumo* were then rebellious Nandi people. In an effort to punish them, Colonel Meinertzhagen in 1902 sent a punitive expedition from *Kipture* to *Kaptumo*. In consultation with the local elders of the Nandi region, the British established an administrative centre at *Kaptumo*, which also acted as a marshalling yard. This area later became a good place from which to carry out future military operations. Its location afforded a central place from which expeditions were executed. After the settlement, *Kakiboch* and *Kamelilo* Nandi areas became the first places to be attacked from *Kaptumo* base.<sup>115</sup>

The colonization of Nandi began soon after the death of *Koitalel Arap Somoei*. The elders of Nandi visited the new station that had been erected (*Kaptumo*) and submitted to the administration of the British and as well promised to construct the *Kapsabet* road. Thus ending frequent harassment of travelers.<sup>116</sup>

After construction of the road from *Kaptumo* to *Kapsabet* was completed, the nucleus for the present town took shape. Then *Kapsabet* town gradually grew into an administrative and commercial centre soon after the offices from *Kipture* were moved. The station had a good supply of water, which came from the *Amai* River where the camp of the British was first located.<sup>117</sup>

By 1907, Nandi had begun to assume the character of a colonial administrative centre in the region. At the beginning of that year, the population consisted of an Assistant District Commissioner and 47 armed *Wanubi* police. In the first six months of that year, two prisons guardrooms, an office and an officer's house were built. Four Indian shops and butchery were also constructed. The butchery was owned to a Somali called *Gulled* who used to serve the new *Nubi* Community.<sup>118</sup> A few European settlers were among residents, as officers, apart from the military and administrative officers.

After the pacification of the coast, the British had enlisted Coastal people as *askaris* in their drive to bring the interior under their control. As a result, most the early soldiers and porters were recruited from the Swahili population of the coast. In addition, the British enlisted *Somali* and *Nubian* people, who together with the *Swahili* were to dominate the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.) up to the beginning of World War I. On retirement or discharge, many of these

---

<sup>114</sup> Ol, *Bot Surtan Jamaa*, February 21 2008. *Kaptumo*.

<sup>115</sup> KNA/PC/NYA/1/1/1 Provincial Record Book, Kenya Province, 1901 – 1924.

<sup>116</sup> Ol. Hassan Ngeny, 20 January 2008. *Kaptumo*.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>118</sup> Ol. Hassan Ngeny, 25 April 2008, *Kaptumo*

soldiers and porters settled in the interior and started a new life.<sup>119</sup> The British colonial administration enlisted the assistance of the Muslims as interpreters and scribes, as they were the only literate natives with some experience in administration and a working relation with the peoples of the interior.<sup>120</sup> This was accepted and commended strongly by Mr. *Sala Magut* who said through this means our forefathers accepted the Islamic faith in search of Job opportunities to out way the dominance of the people from the coast.<sup>121</sup>

The first settlement of Muslim at Nandi occurred at the end of 1906 in Kaptumo and Kapsabet. This consisted of *Nubi* and Swahili soldiers employed by Meinertzhagen to guard the new station of Kaptumo and other individual Swahili traders and Somali, who were wandering in Nandi region in search of goods.<sup>122</sup> They settled in Kaptumo first because of their security and later scattered themselves along areas adjacent to the station; first to Kapsabet in a place that was situated at the Ministry of works' office where Jamia Mosque of Kapsabet is presently built, then to Nandi- Hills and other small centers like Tilalwo Kabiyet, Chepsonoi, among others.<sup>123</sup>

The two groups, soldiers and traders, formed the first Muslim settlers in Nandi. They worked together in constructing the first structure of Mosques in both Kaptumo and Kapsabet. They built in the traditional Nandi way of constructing houses, which had no partition, though later they used tins for roofing and improved the partition to accommodate genders. The Mosques before did not needed a partition, because women did not feature in the prayers.<sup>124</sup>

This was a clear reflection of the mind of Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Commissioner and Consul-General at the coast, who held a high opinion of Muslims, having served in Cairo, although his proposal came only a year after British and Indian forces had crushed a coastal rebellion led by *Mbaruk bin Rashid*. He stated with reference to the Muslims, "They are the only element with comprehension of politics, justice or government,"<sup>125</sup> This background saw many Swahili enlisted in the service of Europeans. These workers, together with traders, fortune seekers and visitors, migrated up-country into the newly established areas where they set up new homes. Janet Bujra summarizes this movement thus:

Each of the early settlers obviously had his own individual motives for leaving home. Some had left after family quarrels, as a result of economic difficulties at home due to

---

<sup>119</sup> A.Y Nzibo, "The Swahili-Speaking Community of Nairobi, Kenya, 1895 – 1963," Department of History, University of Nairobi, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Sala Magut 20 April 2008, Kabiyet

<sup>122</sup> Col. R. Meinertzhagen, Kenya Diary 1902 – 1906, Oliver and Boyd, London, 1957, p.10.

<sup>123</sup> Alli Arap Chumo. 20 April 2008, Kabiyet

<sup>124</sup> OI, Hasan Ngeny, 25 April 2008, Kaptumo.

<sup>125</sup> Q.W. Furley and T. Watson, *A History of Education in East Africa*, (New York: Nok Publisher, 1978), p. 73.

land shortage, famine, drought or epidemics, whilst others had been forcibly recruited into the service of the British or had left in the pursuance of trading opportunities...all were caught up in the network of the expanding colonial system...a system from which they were able to profit, albeit at a discount.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.3 Muslim Dominated Areas in Nandi

This study involved an examination of the penetration of Islam among the Nandi. The methods of analysis adopted entailed an investigation of the agents and factors that led to the penetration of Islam among the Nandi, the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the people, and factors, which have facilitated the persistence of Islam among the Nandi, were examined. In the analysis of these factors, an attempt was made to highlight the role played by Arab Muslims as the major agents of Islamic expansion among the Nandi. The impact of Islam on the Nandi especially in the socio-religious and cultural realms was examined. The role-played by the Da'wah and the interrelationship between faith and practice, among others, by the Nandi Muslims in enhancing the persistence of Islam among them was emphasized. As a result, certain conclusions were drawn.

These dominated areas were chosen after the survey was done by the researcher. The findings showed that these centers were dominated by Islamic religion. Most of these centers were located along or near the roads; afterwards, they grew as trading centers such as Kapsabet, Kaptumo, Tilalwo, Kipkaren, Chepsonoi, Kabiyet, and Kamobo, where we could easily get relevant information from inhabitants about the history of how Nandis were converted from other religions to Islam (Plate 1, a Kaptumo mosque)

#### Plate 1: The Modern Mosque of Kaptumo

For a long time, the Nandi people were conservative in terms of accepting leadership in the mosque even after being converted to Islam. However, Kaptumo center became so instrumental in spreading the Islamic faith all over the entire Nandi.

---

<sup>126</sup> A.Y. Nzibo, op.cit., p.22, Quote from Bujra, J. M., "Pumwani": The Politics of Property. A study of an Urban Renewal Scheme in Nairobi, Kenya, " Report on project sponsored by Social Science Research Council, 1973.



#### 4.4 Factors That Facilitate d conversi on of the Nandis to Islam

There were a number of practices in Nandi society which could in some respect be said to conform to some aspects of Islamic culture and which might have facilitated conversion to Islam. Among these are polygamous marriage and circumcision. These practices have been accepted as Islamic in many African Muslim societies, such as the Buganda Muslims and others. The practices fall among those that have been popularly held to facilitate the spread of Islam in Africa. Where these practices occur in African traditions, it is assumed that Islam will be definitely be at home. This may or may not be true to the rest of Africa, but among the Nandi it is the case.<sup>127</sup>

Islam's approach to non-Muslims made many people consider it as an indigenous religion, thus spreading throughout the entire Nandi County areas and facilitated the Nandis conversion to Islam. This was cited by a good number of respondents such as Ali arap Chumo and Bot Surtan Jamaa,<sup>128</sup> Polygamy was a common aspect of life. This was so mainly because the Nandis believed that many children were a source of wealth and security to a family. And given that Christians were not allowing polygamy, Islamic was the best place to be. Islamic religion according to them proved to be practicing the best polygamy since instructions were given from the holy Quran which demanded justice to wives in terms of companionship, provisions, considerations and such controllable aspects of life. Equity was a prerequisite to polygamy in Islam.

The holy Quran in surah 4:3 states:

---

<sup>127</sup> OI, Arap Tuwei, 11 July, 2008, Kapsisiwo.

<sup>128</sup> OI, Bakari Juma and Aisha Muhammad, 10 May, 2008, Chepsonoi.

If you fear that shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, three, or four; but if fear that your right shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then only one or (captive) that your right hands possessions that will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice.<sup>129</sup>

Among the Nandi, the number of wives was not limited provided one has the ability and means of maintaining them. Polygamy among the Nandi is practiced in order to get heirs who are supposed to be boys for protection and as a source of wealth.

Therefore, polygamy enabled Nandi men to embrace Islam while maintaining their wives whichever the number, initially, but today it is restricted to a maximum of four. Sala Magut expressed this in words: "Since Islam does not prohibit polygamy we felt it is the right religion."<sup>130</sup> One of the *wazee* (Elders) in Kipkaren Selia, Abdi Too, was among the first converts to join Islam, because he wanted to have many wives to be accommodated by his wealth which he inherited from his parents. Many women also embraced this new religion.

The Islamic religion in Nandi demanded that for one to become a Muslim, one had to undergo circumcision. Although the Nandi were religious as well as a social and political community, circumcision was an obligation for every member in the society. J.Tuwei was quoted as saying that the "Nandi attitude towards circumcision was embedded in Nandi culture and traditions, which had more relevance to Islam or the Muslim practice of circumcision". The Nandi gave circumcision a special recognition as the key ceremony of initiation. During this period, a person underwent a physical, emotional and psychological changes, which took him from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood. This is a revolutionary change for the concerned individual.<sup>131</sup> During initiation, the initiates were instructed in tribal lore.

Quite often marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims was cited as a factor facilitating conversion. Mwanaidi Chebor accepted the fact and further acknowledges that nearly all Muslims in Nandi are related in one way or another.<sup>132</sup> According to Muslims, one cannot marry any other person of a different faith until one was converted into the religion. Mrs. Issa<sup>133</sup> opined that the Nandi women were tempted, and some were even converted to Islam, because they envied those who had been married to the hard working Muslim men, who

---

<sup>129</sup> Surah 4:3.

<sup>130</sup> Ol, Sala Magut, 15 May, 2008, Kapsabet.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Mwanaidi Chebor, 18, May 2008. Mosoriot.

<sup>133</sup> Ol, Issa, personal communication

courteously treated them well, as well as giving them gifts of ornaments and clothes after marriage.

Besides the Nandi women getting married to Muslim men, the Nubi Muslim women in Kaptumo similarly influenced the Nandi women to embrace Islam. The Arabs and Nubi teachers in Kaptumo division also married Nandi women, thus increasing the Muslim population in Kaptumo and hence Nandi County as a whole. Therefore, marriage of Nandi women by Muslim men and vice versa facilitated conversion to Islam among the Nandi. The only difference between Nandi indigenous marriage and Islamic marriage is in the wedding ceremony, which is emphasized, in Islamic faith. Dowry in Islam is given to the bride herself. It entails what the bride herself demands. This is unlike the Nandi indigenous practice of giving dowry to the father or family of the bride. Even though there was such disadvantage, the parents of the bride would later get more gifts.

#### 4.5 Socio-Economic Factors

In the study, a number of factors contributed to the spread of Islam to Nandi and other peripheral parts of Nandi. These factors ranged from cultural, socio-economic, socio-religious and doctrinal. There were also factors which work against the spread of Islam in Nandi, and those were Christianity and Western Education, Social Factors, Public or Government schools, Nandi Attitudes towards the Swahili and Nandi Muslim Converts. Economic benefits attracted some Nandi to the Islamic faith. It was observed by Sheikh Ayub<sup>134</sup> that the most evident contribution of Islam to the whole society was in the Butchery business. This became the official prerogative of Muslims and they came to dominate the butchery business. Even to date, all meat for public consumption has to be slaughtered by Muslims (Examples in Kapsabet). Besides running of butcheries, Mr. Chamu<sup>135</sup> of Sironoi of Nandi said Muslims also owned shops and hence was the first to introduce the art of shop keeping in Nandi land. There were also non-Muslims and Muslims Indians who owned shops (Plate 2). They therefore employed the Nandis as assistants from their Muslim Employers. Most of the workers from those shops later became Muslims, because they were attracted by the way Muslims operated and earned their living. The Nandi opted to be closer even to the point of being related in the faith in order to succeed in their business life.

These economic benefits made many Nandi embrace the Islamic faith. To date, most slaughter houses, supermarkets, hotels, retail shops and butcheries in the study area are run by Muslims. This was because of the adoption of work ethics. Rural work ethics is directly linked to development of any people in the society. People with very strong work ethics, that is, a well organized society whose beliefs, values, norms and attitudes are work-oriented coupled with hard working are likely to experience more development in nearly all spheres of life than those whose work ethics are not strong like the Nandi. It is a fact that every person has his or her own culture and work ethics but this varies from one society or community to another.

---

<sup>134</sup> OI, Sheikh Ayub, 3 Feb. 2008, Chepsonoi.

<sup>135</sup> OI, Chamu Joseph, 11 March 2008, Sironoi.



It was after the establishment of the colonial administration in 1906 that permanent Muslim settlement in Nandi occurred. Colonial officers employed Muslims as askaris, cooks, porters, interpreters and gun-bearers. These Muslim servants were settled at Kapsabet. Muslim traders afterwards joined the first Muslim settlers. The traders found a ready market among the white settlers for Ivory and rhino horns and therefore an interdependent relationship was formed. The construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway did not, however, play a direct role in the rise of the Muslim community in Nandi. By the Time the railway reached Muhoroni in 1908, the Muslim community was over one decade old. Kibigori continued to attract many Muslim traders; a permanent Muslim settlement was never created there, though many Muslims took Nandi wives from Kaptumo. The traders would only collect goods at Kibigori and take them to Kaptumo, where the colonialists had erected an administrative centre and there were Swahili settlements.



Studies that have been done although few, show that work ethics and development have a direct and positive relationships. Islam possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation as it borrows heavily from the east as well as from the European culture. Islam still has the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition.

**Plate 2: The first Muslim shop in Kaptumo.**

## CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary

According to the findings, the Arab Traders of various backgrounds became the first Muslims to visit Nandi and this group played a major role in converting indigenous Africans (not only Nandis) but a big part of the Sub-Saharan Africa into Islam. Also during the Kenya-Uganda Railway line construction, the constructors who were largely Arabs, Kamba and Kikuyus already converted to Islamic faith and working together with the new recruits, Nandi, while constructing the line from Nakuru towards Kisumu converted most of them to Islam.

The British enlisted Coastal people as *askaris* from the *Somali* and *Nubian* group, who together with the *Swahili* were recruited in the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.) when the World War I began, although they were similarly used in fighting thus enabling the colonization of the the interior under their control? On retirement or discharge, many of these soldiers and porters settled in the interior and started a new life. The British Administration further employed the Muslims as interpreters and scribes, as they were the only literate natives with some experience in administration and a working relation with the peoples of the interior. The respondents Muslims concurred that through that means their ancestors accepted the Islamic faith in search of job opportunities to out-way the dominance of the people from the coast.

As per the findings, Kaptumo was the first centre where the traced of Muslims was found and the Nandi men who first embraced Islam through the *askaris* from the Arabs, *Somali* and *Nubian* people were Mzee Omar Kipserem Arap Sugut and Mzee Ahmed Malakwen Arap Sisiwa, both belonged to the *Maina* age-set of the Nandi. Kapsabet Town became the second center Muslims settled after *Kaptumo-Kapsabet* road was completed. The new town gradually grew into an administrative and commercial centre whereby the dominants were Arab traders and support staff of the colonial administration who were mainly Muslims. Hence the most dominated Muslim areas were towns like Chepsonoi, Kabiyeet, Kipsamoite, Selia, Ndaptabwa and Nandi Hills.

There are challenges also that Muslims in Nandi stilt face which are globally instigated by the current global challenges over the Muslims world which also affect the Muslims in Nandi. Such challenges include Education Life, Social life, Economic Life, Youth and Women Funds, Human Rights violations, Issue of Identity Cards and Passports, Foreign Donations and Philanthropic Organizations, Office of the Chief Kadhi and the attacks over Terrorism. The New Constitution has endeavoured to addressed some and this will greatly enhance peaceful settlement of Muslims in the Nadi Districts, now the Nandi County.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The study of the spread of Islam in the Nandi region has brought to highlight a number of issues about the nature of the spread of the Muslim faith in Kenya. Muslims first found their way to Nandi through the avenue of colonialism and trade in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The relations between the Muslim traders and the Nandi, initially amicable, deteriorated over time because the former ignored some Nandi rituals. At times conflict between the groups resulted in bloodshed. The Muslim traders did not establish permanent settlement for they were only seasonal visitors, and trading contacts did not lead to conversions in the Nandi community.

Conversion to Islam took various forms, mostly based on individual contacts between Nandi and Muslims in Kapsabet town. Social relations, trade, employment of Nandi by Muslims and intermarriage were among the important activities, which fostered contacts between Muslims and Nandi. Some Nandi were also exposed to the Muslim faith when they traveled to the coast and Nairobi. Some of them later came back as professed Muslims and thus came to form part of the Nandi Muslim community.

Immigrant Muslims in Nandi failed to attract many Nandi followers, for they lacked institutions like those set up by the Christian missions. Again, the Christians were located in the rural areas where the majority of the Nandi people were. The fact that Muslims were confined to one urban centre limited their contacts and made them less well known in the rural areas. Traders visited rural areas, but such visits declined as years elapsed. Thus, the impact of Islam in the rural areas was minimal.

The penetration of Islam among the Nandi was further examined in the study because when the religion reached Nandiland, some of its cultural aspects received resistance from the Nandi. At the same time, Christianity coupled with western education came immediately after Islam and offered strong competition to Islam. The Nandi were therefore torn between Islam and Christianity. This made the apparent success of Islam fail, while Christianity flourished due to its benefits to the converts. Despite this, few Nandi embraced Islam and continue to practice up to today. The continued persistence of the Islamic faith upheld by a minimal population among the Nandi community, located at the centre of vigorous competing faith such as Christianity and indigenous religion, prompted the researcher to investigate the penetration and persistence of the faith among the Nandi to date. As already stated in Chapter one, Nandi District that was the study area has a total population of about one million people. Out of this, there are about 100,000 Muslims and the remaining figure is shared amongst Christians and Indigenous religionists.

It has been demonstrated in the study that the major agent of Islamic expansion among the Nandi were Arab Muslim administrators of the British and Railway workers from Kibigori and Mumias and Muhoroni. Though the general claim by earlier scholars states that Muslim traders are the major agents of Islamic expansion in the interior of Africa, the research work revealed that the major agent of Islam expansion among the Nandi were Arab traders Muslim administrators from Mumias.

The simple style of presentation of Islam to the Nandi is by similarities between some Nandi indigenous beliefs and practices and those of Islam explain the mode with which the Nandi embraced Islam. The research findings revealed that Islam looked attractive to the Nandi initially and was therefore embraced by some families because of some parallels between its culture and the indigenous culture. The two cultures observed customs like circumcision and polygamous marriage. In addition to these similarities, some aspects of Islam like Muslim feasts and life in the umma made Islam not only appealing but also calling for further propagation by the local people.

The research work has thus demonstrated that the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Nandi is reflected in the Islamic manner of dressing, greetings and Kiswahili language. The Islamic influence is also felt in other aspects of life like the Islamic monotheistic doctrine, rites of passage and the communal living in Majengo estates. At the same time, it has been shown in this study that conflict and harmony were experienced in the merging of Islam and Nandi indigenous religion. This is expressed in the socio-cultural influence of Islam on the Nandi, where Change and continuity in the beliefs and practices involved were realized. Due to the absorptive nature of the religions, there was the process of indigenizing Islam and Islamizing indigenous cultural practices with the dawn of Islam among the Nandi by mixing indigenous beliefs and practices and those of Islam.

Though other factors hindering the spread and persistence of Islam among the Nandi have been stated, this religion has nevertheless taken sufficient root in the community to enrich the Nandi religious experience and has contributed towards making a new culture among the people. The researcher adduced evidence to the effect that Da'wah, interrelationship between faith and practice, the Muslim library, madrassa schools and the Islamic court are some of the main factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Nandi to date.

The legacy of Islam in the study area by 2000 is reflected in the existence of 25 Mosques and 30 madrassa schools. The legacy is further evidenced by the institutionalization of the Friday prayers, observing Ramadan, and generally striving to combine faith and practice in all aspects of life. The persistence of Islam among the Nandi therefore demonstrates that the contact- situation” between Islam and the Nandi indigenous religion was one of the “penetration” and not “conquest”.

Obviously, some aspects of Nandi indigenous religious have die out, through modern education, other world Religious interaction and partly because of the people's movement to live in the cities. But we need to remember that Nandi Indigenous religion is complex, and even if certain aspects of it die out, other aspects will survive and many of them will be changed or transformed to meet the needs of the changing times. Indigenous religion embodies a whole world-view, inherited from many generations past. It cannot all collapse in a short time. It has produced Nandi peoples, as they were when they entered the twentieth century, together with their cultures, language, occupations, aspirations and problems. Some of the problems it tried to solve or understand still remain human problems, especially those concerned with birth, marriage, death, the hereafter, suffering, sickness, and so on. It will, therefore continue to have something to say on these issues of human life, even if other religions such as Christianity and Islam, and scientific ways of thought, has come upon Nandi people.

Therefore, the Nandi indigenous religion does not seek to compete with the other religions or with science; it only wants to cooperate in the search for a better understanding of the world in which humankind lives, and in working for the welfare of all people. It cannot be said that Nandi Religion supersedes others. It is simply the religious systems, which Nandi is developed in response to their life's situations. Up to a point, it gave them satisfactory answers to their problems, quenched their religious thirst, and helped them to find an integrated and meaningful interpretation and understanding of the universe. However, these problems are not static, and the need for understanding the universe is not static. Man is forever expanding

his horizon of knowledge and understanding.<sup>136</sup> Nandi Religion has contributed to that ever-expanding horizon. No doubt, it will continue to contribute something but without even pretending to supply all the answers for all people at all times. In a way thus, it has its own limitations; and it would be completely wrong to stretch Nandi Religion beyond those limitations.

### 5.3 Recommendations for Further Study

In the course of the study, new insights emerged which the study could not address all of them. Hence, further research could be directed on the following areas:

1. Factors underlying the predominance of Islamic faith among the Kipsigis peoples yet the two sub-ethnic groups live in the same region and share related historical and cultural structures.
2. The integration of formal education into the already existing Madrassa institutions in Nandi County.
3. Islam and Christianity as agents of change in areas of politics, health and other infrotruactive.
4. Although some works are available on the Nandi, there are other areas on which research could be carried out for example:
  - a) The influence of Nandi Religion upon contemporary missionary churches.
  - b) The religious power and mysteries that surround the Orgoiik people to this day

---

## REFERENCES

- Adkins, Mary. ed. *Kipsigis Grammar Lessons (1985 Revision)*. Nakuru: WGM, 1985.
- Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Meanings of the Illustrious Quran – without Arabic text*. New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Reprint 1992.
- Ali, M.N., *Islam: A Christian Perspective*. London: Paternoster Press, 1983.
- Alpers, Edward A., “Towards a History of the Expansion of Islam in East Africa.” In: eds. T.O. Ranger and Isaria Kimambo, *The Historical Study of African Religion*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972.
- Anderson, Sir Norman, *The World’s Religions*.4, <sup>th</sup> ed. 1975.

---

<sup>136</sup> Ol, Rev. Basi, 23 April, 2009, Kaptel.

- Anderson, D.M. "Visions of the Vanquished: Prophets and Colonialism in Kenya Western Highlands," In: David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson eds. *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History*. London, etc: James Currey, etc., 1995.
- Atmore, A. E. "Chapter 1. Africa on the Eve of Partition," In: R Oliver and G.N. Sanderson, eds. *The Cambridge History of Africa: Vol.6 – from 1870 to 1905 Cambridge, etc.:* Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Barrett, A.D. et al, *Kenyan Churches Handbook*. Kisumu: Evangelical Publishing House, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_ ed. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World AD 1900 – 2000*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press of East and Central Africa, 1982.
- Baur, J., *The Catholic Church in Kenya*. Nairobi: St Paul Publications, 1990.
- Baxter, P.T.W., "Acceptance and Rejection of Islam among the Boran of the Northern Frontier District of Kenya." In I.M. Lewis (ed.): *Islam in Tropical Africa*. London: O.U.P., 1966.
- Blakely, Thomas D., et al. *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*. London: James Currey. 1994.
- Bowker, J., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of World Religions*. London: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Brown, D.A., *A Guide to Religions*. Great Britain: Bath Press, 2001.
- Bryson, S.M, *Light in Darkness: the Story of the Nandi Bible*. London: Jackman, 1959.
- Bukuit Ne Tilil (The Holy Bible in Kalenjin)*. Nairobi: The Bible Society of Kenya, 1969.
- Chebet, S. and Dietz, T, *Climbing the Cliff: a History of the Keiyo*. Kijabe: Kijabe Printing Press, 2000.
- Chesaina, C., *Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*. Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1991.
- The Davy Koech Foundation. *Minutes/Report on Workshop on the Historical Perspective of the Kalenjin Ethnic Community with an Illustrative Reference to the Kipsigis Sub-Ethnic Community*. The Tea Hotel, Kericho: February 1994.
- Dayton, E.R and Fraser, D.A., *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization*. Grand Rapids: William B. Berdmans, 1980.
- Ehret, Christopher, *The Civilizations of Africa: a History to 1800*. Oxford: James Currey, 2002.
- El Fasi,M and Hrbek, I., "Stages in the Development of Islam and its Dissemination in Africa". In: M. El Fasi ed. *General History of Africa – III: Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, UNESCO, etc. 1988.
- Farugi, I.R., *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World*. New York: Macmillan Publications., 1974.
- Ferguson, J., *Religions of the World*. London: Fletcher and Sons Ltd., 1978.

- Fernando, J.A., *Jesus and the World Religions*. London: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987.
- Fish, B.C and Fish G.W. *The Kalenjin Heritage: Traditional Religious and Social Practices*. Chelsea, Michigan: AGC and WGM, 1995 and 1996.
- Getui M and Theuri MM., *Guests for Abundant life in Africa*. Nairobi, Acton Press, 2001.
- Gifford, Paul, *African Christianity: its Public Role in Uganda and other African Countries*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999.
- Hansen, H.B. and Twaddle, M., *Religion and Politics in East Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995.
- Hastings, Adrian, *African Christianity: an Essay in Interpretation*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *The Church in Africa: 1450 – 1950*. London: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Harvey Van, A., *Theological Terms*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1976.
- Hollis, A.G., *The Nandi: their Language and Folk-lore*. London: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Huntingford, G.W.B., *The Nandi of Kenya*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953.
- Huntington, S. P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Sydney: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd. 1996.
- Idowu E. B., *African Traditional Religion, A definition*, London, 1973.
- Johnson, Douglas H. *Nuer Prophets: a History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Kasomo, D., *Research Methods: in Humanities and Education*. Egerton, Kenya: Egerton University Press, 2006.
- Kateregga, B.D and Shenk, D.W, *Islam and Christianity*. Kisumu: Uzima Press, 1980.
- Kenya: Land of Opportunity*. Nairobi: Central Bank of Kenya, 1991.
- King, N.Q, *Christian and Muslim in Africa*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971.
- Kipkorir, B.E, *The Marakwet of Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973.
- Kloss R.M., *Sociology with a Human Face*. Saint Louis: 1976.
- Kobishanov, Yu.M. *Istoria Rasprostranenie Islama v Afrike (History of the Spread of Islam in Africa)*. Moscow: Nauka, 1986. (in Russian)
- \_\_\_\_\_ *et al.* “Sinkretizm Islama s Traditsionimi Religiami”(Syncretism and Traditional Religion). In: *Traditsionnie i Sinkreticheskiye Religii Afriki (Traditional and Syncretic Religions of Africa)*. Moscow: GRVL, 1986. (In Russian)
- Krapf, H.F and Wisley, T.N., *Readings in Dynamic Indignity*. London: William Carvey Lib., 1979.

- Kuper, Adam. *Anthropology and Anthropologists: the Modern British School*. London and New York: Routledge, 1973 and 1986.
- Lewis, J.F and Travis, W.G, *Religious Traditions of the World*. Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Leys, N. 1924 (1973) *Kenya*. London: Frank Cass. P. 276.
- Magut P.K. arap. "The Rise and Fall of the Nandi Orgoiyot c. 1800- 1957." In McIntosh, B.G. (ed.) *Ngano*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.
- Majid Khadduri, ch.3.2 – The Islamic World. In: ed. M.A. Al-Bakhit et al. *History of Humanity: Scientific and Cultural Development. Vol. IV - from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*. (UNESCO, Routedge: 2005).
- Major World Religions*. Centre for Extension Studies, Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India, 1982.
- Malinowski, B., *The Dynamic Culture Changes: an Enquiry into Race Relations in Africa*. London: 1945.
- Manners, Robert A., "The Kipsigis of Kenya: Culture Change in a 'Model' East African Tribe," In: Julian H. Steward ed. *Three African Tribes in Transition: Volume I of Contemporary Change in Traditional Societies*. Urbana, etc: University of Illinois Press, 1972.
- Masih, A., *Who is Allah in Islam*. Sydney: Light of Life, 1982.
- Matson, A. T. *Nandi Resistance to British Rule*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Nandi Traditions on Raiding." In *Hadith 2*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reflections on the Growth of Political Consciousness in Nandi." In B.A. Ogot. ed. *Hadith 4: Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Nandi Campaign Against the British 1895-1906*. Nairobi: Transafrica Publishers, 1974.
- Mazrui, Ali. A. *The Africans: a Triple Heritage*. London: BBC Publications, 1986.
- Mbiti, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Introduction to African Religion*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1975.
- Mitchell, R.C., *African Primal Religion*. Illinois USA: Argus Communication, 1977.
- Mugambi, J.N and Kirima, N, *The African Religious Heritage*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976.



- Musk, B.A., *The Unseen Face of Islam*. Australia: Albatross Books Ltd, 1989.
- Mwanzi, H. A. *A History of the Kipsigis*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1977.
- Nehls, G., *Islam: As It Sees Itself, As Others See It and as It Is*. Bellville: Evangelical Mission Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Premises and Principles of Muslim Evangelism*. India: GLS Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Christians ask Muslim*. Nairobi: English Press, 1992.
- Ng'eny, Arap S.K. "Nandi Resistance to the Establishment of British Administration 1893-1906." In Ogot B.A. (ed.) *Hadith 2*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1970.
- Norman, A. *Islam in the Modern World*. Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1990.
- Nottingham, E.K., *Religion: A Sociological View*. New York: Random House, 1971.
- Nyaundi, N.M., *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, Kendu Bay, Kenya: Africa Herald Publishing House, 2003.
- Nzibo, Yusuf A. "Islamization in the Interior of Kenya: a general overview," In Bakari M and Yahya Saad S., *Islam in Kenya: Proceedings of the National Seminar on Contemporary Islam in Kenya*. Nairobi: Mewa Publications, 1995).
- Oded, Arge, *Islam and Politics in Kenya*. Nairobi: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.
- Ogot B.A, "The Remembered Past: Reflections on the Nature and Value of Traditional Evidences", In Ogot, B. A, (ed.) *Hadithi 2*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972.
- \_\_\_\_\_ ed. *Hadith 8: Kenya in the Nineteenth Century*. Nairobi: Anyange Press Ltd. and Bookwise Ltd., 1985.
- Opoku, K.A. 1985. "Religion in Africa during the colonial era" in Unesco General History of Africa Vol. Vol VII edited by A.A. Boahen. Heinemann. P. 543.
- Parrinder, G., *A Dictionary of Non-Christian Religions*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Africa's Three Religions*. London: Sheldon Press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *The World's Living Religions*. London: Pan Books Ltd, revised ed., 1977.
- Peel, J.D.Y., "Chapter 4: Social and Cultural Change," In: Michael Crowder, ed. *The Cambridge History of Africa: Vol.8 – from c. 1940 to c. 1975*. Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Peristiany, J.G., *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964.
- Rahman, F., *Islam*. London: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Republic of Kenya, *A Guide to the Contents of the Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service – Part I*. Nairobi, March 1995.

- Rosander, Eva and Westerlund, David eds. *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters Between Sufists and Islamists*. London: Hurst & Co., 1997. pp. 1- 27; 95 – 125.
- Sambu, Kipkoech araap, *The Kalenjin People's Egypt Origin Legend Revisited: Was Isis Asiis? A Study in Comparative Religion*. Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers, 2007.
- Schants, B., *Islam in the Post World*. Thailand: Autumn House Alma Park, 2003.
- Smith, Wilfred C., *On Understanding Islam*. Delli: Idarah-I Adabiyat-I, 1981.
- Stewart, C.C. “Chapter 4: Islam”, In: A.D. Roberts, ed. *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 7: from 1905-1940*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Stigand C.H. 1913 (1966) *The Land of Zinj*. London: Frank Cass. p. 323.
- Sutton, J.E .G. “The Kalenjin”, In: *Kenya Before 1900*. ed. B.A. Ogot. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1976.
- Toweett, Taaitta, *A Study of Kalenjin Linguistics*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Buerau, 1979.
- Vansina, Jan, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* .London, etc: Penguin University Books, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Oral Tradition as History*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Chapter 7: Oral Tradition and its Methodology,” In: ed. J. Ki-Zerbo, *General History of Africa – Vol. I*. (UNESCO, etc. 1981.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Wamue, G and Theuri MM. *Guest for integrity in Africa*. Nairobi, Action Press, 2003.
- White, Luise, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Woodberry, J.D., *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*. USA: MARC Publication., 1989.