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LUO RITUALS PERTAINING TO ANCESTRAL SPIRITS' VENERATION AND THEIR IMPLICATION ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP – A STUDY IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, KENYA LAKE CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study analyzed Luo rituals pertaining to ancestral spirits veneration and their implications on Christian worship practices, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church -Kenya Lake Conference.

Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive research design and data was obtained through interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The findings were analyzed through MAXQDA 2020- qualitative data analysis software designed for companies which are analyzing different types of customer data as indicated by Radiker & Kuckartz (2020).

Results: The results indicated that Luo rituals pertaining to ancestral spirits veneration are deeply rooted in the lives of SDA Church members and cannot be dispensed with. Moreover, Luo rituals pertaining to ancestral spirits' veneration are predominant cultural practices that seemingly engulfed every member in the community; hence affect worship practices in the Kenya Lake Conference.

Unique contribution to theory and practice: The study is informed by two major theories which are: functional and essentials of religion as presented by Durkheim (1912) and Otto (1917) respectively with a burden of explaining the benefits of various Christian worship practices and cultural veneration approaches. Essential view of Otto (1917) understands religion as binding feeling of reverence characterized with awe and fascination when worshippers are in the presence of mysterium tremendous the compelling yet repelling mystery of religion.

Key words: *Rituals, ancestral spirits, veneration, pouring libation, symbols, death, widow inheritance*

1.0 Introduction

This study focuses on Luo Rituals Pertaining to Ancestral spirits' Veneration and their Implication on Christian Worship. In dealing with the subject, Idowu (1973) reveals that ancestral spirits' veneration is found correspondingly among the civilized Asian, Chinese and Japanese communities with emphasis that families are viewed as closely united groups of living and dead relatives rather than groups of individuals. Accordingly, Hiebert (1999), postulates that many Filipinos believe that the soul of a dead person returns to visit his or her family through dreams or sensory experience and this may occur three days after the death or it may be delayed for some months after the funeral. However, the Seventh-day Adventists message first arrived in Kenya Lake Conference in the year 1906, and its teachings were enthusiastically embraced by the inhabitants of the area which resulted into the baptism of 17 (seventeen) new converts. The number has continued to expand to the current membership of 90608 (ninety thousand six hundred and eight). Notwithstanding a marked numerical growth based on the figures indicated above, some of the members who correspondingly had accepted the Gospel truth as taught by Seventh-day Adventist Church still continue to hold to aspects relating to rituals pertaining to ancestral spirits veneration.

This notion possess a problem as to whether these members belong to the SDA Church or believe in Luo ancestral sprints. Hence, we find among the SDA Church members in Kenya Lake Conference, a kind of dual allegiance demonstrated in worship. Such kind of dual allegiance has established confusion in the community of non-believers. It is on this light that this study aims to find ways in which these members can be assisted to have worship that is not characterized with Luke warmth by taking a stand either to remain believers in the SDA Church or continue with their traditional ways of worship. The Luos engage in the ritual practices pertaining to ancestor veneration which are the honoring of ancestral spirits in acts such as pouring libation, water symbol, naming of children, levirate marriages, and death and after burial ceremonies among others.

2.0 Rituals Pertaining to Ancestral Spirits' Veneration

2.1 Pouring Libation

The pouring of libation is one of the ways in which ancestral spirits' veneration has been perpetuated from the past to the present. According to Nehusi (2013) pouring of libation for one's father and mother who rests in dead invokes God's witness of that action and He accepts it. In Africa such action should not be forgotten even when a person is away from his home so that they may expect their children to do for them likewise when they sleep in death as indicated by (McGee 1994).

In regard as to how ritual of pouring libation is conducted, Olokun (2005), explains that the choice of the liquid to be used in terms of water, wine and hard liquor depends on the nature of libation and prayer for the awakening of the ancestors. In order for one to experience cool environments,

healing and reconciliations within the community, water is commonly used while liquor and wine function to perform purification and flawless friendship between humans and spirits respectively. Further, Olokun (2005), points out that pouring libation is a powerful spiritual science that connects the living with the dead, and it is an everlasting reality among the African Christian believers in ancestral spirits that strengthens the practice. In performing such rituals, the African Christian believer finds himself divided between two opinions in his worship experience of God and the veneration of ancestral spirits.

2.2. The Water Symbol

Water symbolism is another key element in the African Christian believer in ancestral spirits' veneration that has predisposed SDA Church members into dual allegiances. The submission of Verouden (2010), affirms that water has meaning for health, illness and wellbeing of the society. Even though Verouden (2010), postulates that water's central themes of meaning can be identified consistently throughout history, sometimes it is easily discernible, while at other times more difficult to identify, since these meanings have substantial social dimension, and reflect physical and bodily interactions with water. A similar position is held by Power (2019), who states that water has obvious psychological connotations since it refreshes and gives life. It also destroys in times of aridity and barrenness.

However, with the understanding that water as a cleansing agent carries magical power and may be used concurrently in religious settings as observed by Gehman (2005), religion and magic cannot be separated in worship since magical practices and religious rites go hand in hand and sometimes are indistinguishable in functions since it is not easy to separate the two especially when dealing with beneficial magician practices.

In addition, Power (2019), posits that in baptism, water symbolism carries both natural and historical meanings with further determination of resolution and establishments whereby it is used as the central rite of entry into the believing community. It is on this account that the African Christian believer in ancestral spirits has used water for purification and to expel malevolent spirits as a religious rite. In this respect it has also been employed as a magical element in terms of its usage for the benefit of the community. The same water symbolism theory is expressed in religious terms in the thirst of the exiles for God's presence in their temple as indicated by (Power 2019).

Even though water symbolism carries a deeper spiritual implication in the death and resurrection of Christ, the death and rebirth of the Christian during baptism, the use of symbols ought to be administered cautious with the view of the Scriptures. It is on this view that Florendo (2019), adds that some Scriptural data shows that indeed God did specify certain visual aids to teach people certain lessons about His character but they were done under His own careful instructions. Hence, they did not originate from man. In substance, they were not visual representations of God before which people would bow in worship or act as intermediaries between ancestral spirits' veneration and Christian experience of God in worship. Neither of these two visual aids were exceptions to the second commandment indicated in the book (Exodus 20:5), which prohibits the making of images and using them as mediums of worship.

2.3. Widow Inheritance

In the Luo community, the practice of widow inheritance is both for the longevity of the family of the deceased individual and the protection of the survived family members. According to Maleche & Day (2011), widow inheritance is observed as a traditional practice in which a widow is inherited by her husband's brother whether she was left with children or not. It is basically a practice that was historically viewed as a form of social protection towards the widow and her children from economic hardship upon the loss of her husband. The process of widow inheritance is connected to belief in ancestral spirits' veneration in that a widow is considered unclean and must be ritually cleansed. According to Agot (2008), widows are to be exposed to cleansing rituals which involve a sexual act believed to purify the recipient through the semen entering the woman's body. The practice is common for widows after the death of their husband when the widow has sex with a man identified by the elders of the community. This does not discriminate women who are in church and probably serving as church officers.

According to Oluoch (2013), such cleansing rituals stem from the belief that a widow becomes unclean after burial ceremonies of her late husband. This practice is common among the Luo community in Kenya, who insists according to traditions that a widow must engage in sexual intercourse with a cleanser often a non-relative of the deceased husband, to remove the impurity she is believed to have acquired from the death of her husband.

According to Okeyo & Alan (1994), this deeply rooted tradition of widow inheritance is a determinant of sex among the Luo and it is widely practiced by Luo groups in Uganda, Tanzania, Zaire, and Sudan. A study by Ogola, (2014) points out that such practices are still valued by many communities, particularly in Africa. Widows still face consequences for non-compliance. It becomes more implication especially when a widow dies before cleansing was done. Such a ritual has to be performed on that dead body by a hired professional cleanser known as Jakowiny. Moreover, in a case where a widow had become too old such an unattractive occurrence could be circumvented by making arrangements early enough for an elderly person to hang his coat in the widow's house symbolizing the presence of a guardian (Ogola 2014). On the same Ogayo (2013) points out that a widow must be ritually cleansed in order to be free to visit their neighbors and even to be allowed to join their in-laws in their grieving moments. Agot (2005) postulates that while an increasing number of widows voluntarily choose not to observe the traditions, many still engage in these practices to conform to societal norms or because they are compelled to do so by their husbands' families, their own families, or the belief that engaging in the tradition will ensure that they or their children will not be ostracized or face illness or other misfortunes. Okeyo & Alan (1994) observe that widows who stick to health issues extend to female some level of empowerment that renders widow inheritance redundant because it increases widows' reservation beneficial. However, sexual acts appear to be the genesis and success of the community and it is an indispensable phenomena.

2.4. Death and after Death Rituals (Tero Buru)

The issue of death is a crucial human predicament that goes hand in hand with ancestral spirits' veneration. This process according to Lombardo, M. Corffman, P. and McCombs, K. (2018), begins from the time a person is found to be ill among the Luo community. In an attempt to make peace with the almost dying, Lombardo et. al, (2018) asserts that this family member would be

showered with affection and care and treated with the utmost respect and the known wrongs would be settled immediately to ensure that hidden hostilities with the sick and dying individual are amended with that person in hopes of reconciliation in order that the deceased would not return to haunt their wrongdoers. Such kind of concerns is biblically expressed as indicated in Matt.18:15-20) for conflict resolutions with the living in the presence of God. This idea as maintained by the Luo appears to attract meaningful importance in regard to maintaining peaceful co-existence with people. In the event that an individual dies, the respect that ought to be accorded to the deceased begins with the place where the deceased is supposed to be buried. The idea advanced by SHINO (1997) indicates that the Luo attitude towards their burial place evidently shows how they fear and respect the deceased ancestors. In the face of the ongoing modernization and urbanization SHIINO, (1997) points out that a Luo must be buried in his or her homeland as witnessed in the famous case of Otieno of Nyalgunga which was conducted in the years 1986-1987 in Kenya. This goes hand in hand with the particular place where the grave is dug as prescribed by an elderly person in the family.

According to Okpechi (2018) deaths are announced with the loud wailing of women, accompanied by the sound of drums. The death announcement is usually done by women and it is expressed in such a manner that it tells of the age of the dead. It is on this point that Okpechi (2018) asserts that it is done either late in the evening or in the morning which tells that an elderly person has died. However, the death of a baby is characterized with immediate announcements followed with speedy burial procedure which is basically done by women or young persons among the Luo community. Further, Okpechi (2018) points out that vigil nights are accorded the survived family members for several days to ensure protection from possible stressors that may lead into another death if not checked. This aspect may go beyond even after the burial. This is equally evidenced among the Luo whereby people sleep on mats in the open air while the elderly women accompany the widow who sleep inside the huts or houses and in an event that the bereaved is a man, elderly men will do likewise. According to SHIINO, (1997) two weeks after the death of an elderly man, his supposed to be lingering spirit is accompanied to the former battleground where a cock is strangled, roasted and eaten as a divides among male participants. However, meals could be served among the family members to involve the deceased in a meal with the living (Okpechi 2018). In this case, the relatives, most significantly, the daughters of the deceased return to share a meal with the deceased, an event known as Yawo Dhoot which is translated as opening of the door in order to make them happy, and to also signify that the dead person has started a new life.

The above ceremony is followed by the first Buru Matin (small Buru) and the second and Buru maduong (the big Buru) which usually comes after harvest to ensure substantial brews from the harvest. The family and relatives of the dead man take their cattle to the former battlefield in the same way as they did in the small ash ceremony buru matin as indicated by SHIINO, (1997). These events are characterized with drumbeating, trumpet blowing, horn blowing, and excitements that arouse feeling that lead people into renewed mourning. According to Ogayo (2013), mingling of African beliefs in ancestral spirits and Christian worship appears to establish a combination of different beliefs and misgiving among Christians. Such difficulties seems to create fears with undisclosed motives among church members to some degrees of refraining from flesh diets in funeral with precautions of not engaging in sacrificial offerings meant to appease the dead. This is

because, there are church members who maintain that the dead are actively participating in the spiritual worlds and must be appeased.

Further, Ogayo (2013) asserts that appeasement to the spirits of the dead cannot be skipped since after deaths rituals are performed secretly as survived family members of the deceased still prepare food offered for the glory of the dead and serve them along with other normally organized meals. This is meant to clear up their after death ritual meal obligations which may attract taboos when not resolved. Another key element in Luo cultural practices is the aspect of giving names to children or important object which attract high regards to ancestral spirits' veneration in this community.

2.5. Ancestral Name on Vessels Ritual

Naming among the Luos is observed as extending to vessels like boats as described by Otieno (2007) who asserts that it is best if a boat is named after the ancestor because it is believed that the dead can see things that the living cannot see. Whoever is named remains a paramount personality that guides the operation of the boat. Further, Otieno (2007) explains that ceremonies conducted in honor of the boats are elaborate, with plenty of food and drinks that climaxes with a beckon to one of the respected departed souls in the family who supposedly manifest himself or herself in a dream so that the boat could be named after them. This leads that the name thereby given remains permanently dominant for the benefit of the owner of the boat. Moreover, the same boat may dictate its expedition or not based on the wisdom of the soul of the person it was named after. Regardless the fact that ancestor veneration is a phenomenon at times associated with primitive societies, Merwe (2008), argues that the practice is still prevalent in many countries around the world today, including some who are generally accepted as modern societies and economic worlds. For instance, Gyekye (1996) points out that Luo belief in ancestral spirits and practices are often drawn into contest when they collide with Christian teachings.

Nevertheless, some of the Luo practices may not be considered harmful entirely because they are traditionally respectful to ancestral legacy even though Christianity may consider them anti-religious ones. This insinuation according to Gyekye (1996) confirms that Luo Christian believers still find traditional religious inclinations a contemporary challenge which exposes believers into double religious allegiance or get enrolled in the blacklist of tradition.

3. Research Theories

This study was guided by two theories the functional theory of religion by Emile Durkheim (1912) and the theory of essentials of religion by Rudolf Otto (1917). The functional theory of religion holds that religion is all about community since it binds and provides people with social cohesion, promotes behavior consistency in terms of voluntary social control, and offers meaning, purpose and strength during life's changeovers and tragedies such as illnesses, death and other associated catastrophic events affecting humanity. On the other hand the theory of essentials of religion argues that the reality and existence of the supernatural beings. In his appeal to essentials of religion which boards on feeling of reverence and inner push for worship within individual believers, Otto (1917) asserts that religious beliefs have relevant bearing with participants' feelings

of awe and fascination when in the presence of *mysterium tremendum* explained as the convincing yet repelling mystery of it all.

4. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research designs with a qualitative research approach which uses a single research paradigm, which according to Orodho (2005), holds all elements together to ensure data is well collected and analyzed to meet the purpose of the research. The target population comprised of 90,608 members from where a sample size of 383 respondents was drawn using Dessel (2013) formula. Stratified sampling guided this study as it was able to divide the respondents into categories and randomly selecting subjects relatively based on the population. The stratified sampling reduced the total research population to a number which was practically feasible and theoretically acceptable for the current study. It was in this light that Orodho and Kombo (2002) postulate that samples are always subsets of small parts of the total number that could be studied. Data was collected through questionnaire and interview schedules and analyzed through MAXQDA-a qualitative data analysis software designed for companies which are analyzing different types of customer data as indicated by Radiker & Kuckartz (2020) and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 3.0). The results obtained were presented as indicated below.

5.0. Results

5.1. The death and after death rituals associated with ancestor spirits' veneration

Death and after death rituals are part of Luo cultural practices that take most of wealth among the Luo community. The response in support of this assertion from pastors was 94.11% and church elders 100%. In exploring what happens immediately death has occurred, and after death rituals, the respondents elucidated that:

Death is one of the most challenging happenings among the Luos. Immediately a person dies, the question of who should be the first to give the mourning alert (*golo ywak*) arises. The one to give the mourning alert must be the wife or the first wife in case the deceased person was polygamous. When the deceased person is a female, a close female relative would be the first to mourn, and then others will follow. But if the deceased person is a male who is still single, the mother or any of his stepmothers is to be the first to sound the mourning alert. Once this has happened, the funeral citations and wailing commence by close relatives, and then others also break in tears addressing the dead person as follows, "Is it true that you are gone? Why didn't you tell us? Prepare a place for us. In a little while, we will join you." Such statements are direct speech with the knowledge that the dead person listens and understands what mourners say. During the funeral citations, things always become uncontrollable. Here the churched and the un-churched behave the same. Some are praising the dead while sending messages to the spirits of the ancestors. No death or sickness can occur among the Luos without a human agent attached to it.

The respondents' submission connects well with the notion of Okpechi (2018), who postulated that deaths are announced through loud wailing of women, accompanied by the sound of drums. Besides, Okpechi (2018) asserted that the death announcement is usually made by women, and it

is expressed in such a manner that it tells of the age of the dead. Consequently, the respondents observed that since death is not only for those who profess faith in the Seventh-day Adventist church alone but embraces mixed multitude, much solace is expected from the pastors and church leaders alike for both the bereaved family and the entire community. The respondents also pointed out that at such a time, mourners have hidden thoughts that some evil relatives or community members must be responsible for that death. Hence, the focus of the mourners is geared to imploring the spirits to reveal the suspected offender by implicating punishment on the offender or a member of their family with the same nature of death. At such moments, the respondents observed that the mourners should not be interrupted lest they turn against perceived obstruction with cruelty for another death in the same family. After wailing and mourning have subsided, the respondents added that relatives from far and wide register their presence to participate in decision making for the burial arrangements. They postulated that:

While the pastors should avail themselves during burial arrangements, the bereaved family members have a sole mandate over every event such as: burial date, place of burial, who speaks, and who sings during the service should be as per the will of the dead person if there be a verbal or written will. The underlying fact is that everything done is during such events are meant to benefit the bereaved members spiritually, emotionally, socially and psychologically. If the programs are not done in this tone, then the churches's presence will not have served any purpose.

The same restriction is fixed to the ancestral spirits' awe in the sense that the clan elders will make sure that they discriminate which side of the home and the direction the head of a man of the family should face during his burial. The same restricted trend is applicable to the ladies' head. The rationale behind such restrictions concerning the ancestral spirits and what is likely to happen if such limits are flouted came out from the respondents as follows:

Men should be buried on the right side of the house because the right hand is the side of strength, authority and defense, the side from which the enemy can be conveniently attacked and repulsed. So the men of the home and other male troops have to line up on the right side of the house to continue watching over the family. The females are to be buried on the left side, because they are visitors and have no authority and policing role. The mother came into the family from some far distant place. The daughters will all go to where they belong, here, they are just good guests, although they may have patrimonial claims to make.

While expressing the intricate concerns that the Luo community has over the dead, and validations of the immortality of the soul, the respondents further described the motivation behind the outlined restrictions stating that:

Heads of all men must face the gate because they are the defenders who keep on watching the affairs of the home since they are hunters and gathers. They also look for women and bring them to the family for procreation. Heads of all female members of the family are to face the inside of the home because it is abominable to stare at a lady climbing a tree without her panty. When their heads face the gate, it was assumed that anybody coming from the main house would behold nudity of

the woman, which is a curse. The other reason for this is; when you bury your wives with their heads facing the gate, then someday all women will flee the home.

The rationale behind these restrictions on which side the head of the deceased person should face carries the element of veneration of his or her spirits since both genders are regarded with a notion of continual life after death and that may affect the survived family members either positively or negatively. The home man is viewed as still conscious of his role as a protector of the family against invading forces. At the same time, women are buried with their heads facing inside the house to allow in-coming ladies into the house and never to flee from the house.

The respondents also observed that such restraints are found even in pastors' families. The validity of these submissions could be attested to by the narration that respondents presented as follows:

When the brothers of the deceased pastor saw that the head was not facing the gate, they forced their way into the graveside and commanded the lowering gear team to change the position of the casket from the direction it was facing to achieve the supposed direction of the head of the deceased. The wife of the deceased pastor also intervened by remarking that 'nobody should make any attempt to destroy other peoples' homes when they are always particular in making their homes prosper culturally.'

Hence, the head must face the gate as a assign that the head of this home can still see an enemy that may come to interfere with his family members, and more so his wife. In some instances, the respondents asserted that in case the head of the man of the home faces upwards, there would be a continuous disturbance in the family that could lead to exhumation to make things right. Therefore, for people not to attract the wrath of the spirits, the living must ascertain that they follow Luo cultural norms to the letter.

In the same desire of sending the spirits away, the respondents reported that Luo beliefs in ancestral spirits veneration demands that anyone who dies outside his homestead must come into the same homestead through the fence. The respondents stated the rationale behind this act that: "when a dead body is passed through the fence, death will not easily find its ways into the family for a while. The conviction is that bad spirits that claimed the deceased person will be confused with the entry point into the home, and this will accord that family amount of relief."

The respondents further explained the essence of Tero Buru which is one of the Luo cultural practices in terms of sending away spirits of the dead into distant places. Their notion agrees with the idea advanced by SHIINO, (1997), who stated that two weeks after the death of an elder man, his supposed to be lingering spirit is sent away to the former battleground, and a cock is strangled, roasted and eaten as divides among male participants. However, the respondents asserted that the Luo community perceives death as a mysterious occurrence that comes to steal individuals among his family or community and takes its prey into some distant bush. It is in this strength that the Luo community carries clubs, spears, and shields and drive strong cows and bulls into the wilderness, searching for their own that has been stolen by death. At the same time, the respondents emphasized that although the dead person cannot come back alive, the going out there would serve two purposes: (i) to chase away the spirits of the dead, in this case, the evil spirits which may come

back to torment the survived members of the community, (ii) to appease the souls of the departed one to look after his/her home with favor for the longevity of life to the survived ones. When asked to give answers regarding specific rituals that are performed immediately after the burial for the appeasement of the spirits, the pastors narrated that:

In the olden times, the sisters, aunts and the mother of the deceased woman would come back to the house of their departed sister to a ceremony called “Yawo dhoo migogo,” translated as opening the door of a married daughter who has died. Then they would cook their dishes, serve and eat with the widower and other family members. Since the church does not honor such a comeback ritual after burial, the family of the deceased woman makes sure they cook their ritual food items, mix the serving with the usual funeral meals so that no one can point a finger at their ritually accomplished deed. A strict condition is also given to the widower to avoid engaging in sexual intercourse with any other woman until his dead wife comes to him in dream, when he is sleeping in their marital bed requesting for her conjugal right, and the man must wet his marital bed to make the practice complete. After this experience is when the widower may take another woman for a wife.

Hence her spirit has to stay away without coming back to trouble the survived family members. In the same development, when asked of the essence of the night vigil during a Luo funeral, the pastors explained that: “Since Luos believe that no one dies a natural death, they believe that whoever caused the death of that individual would come and take either part of his or her body or the soil from the grave secretly when people are asleep.” Since the spirits of the dead are conscious, and have disciplinary powers, the pastors explained that:

The Luos believed that death must be caused by an enemy through black chemistry (ndagla, bilo or nawi). This enemy would usually come secretly before burial to make some physical contacts or bring some appeasing charm (manyasi) to send away the deceased’s spirit from haunting him and his family. After the burial, that is before the expiry of four days if the dead was a man or three days if the dead was a woman, the witch may come and take some soil from the grave to appease the spirit, thus freeing himself and his family from any lousy omen and quilt that would befall him because of the blood of the departed person. The night vigil will keep such a person away from evading the punishment he deserves for his wicked deeds. The same vigil night is for keeping away evil spirits (jochiende) from attacking another person in the bereaved family.

Further the respondents said that believe in the immortality of the soul is one of the reasons for the persistence of ancestral spirits veneration among Church members. On this area there was 100% agreement of the side of pastors, church elders 96:55%, personal ministries 89.2%, women ministries 100% and congregants 90%.

While the pastors reported that burial rites and rituals were none binding, their response on the effect of these rituals was 100% (one hundred percent) affecting their ministry. The results indicated that the dominant and mandatory feature in the burial rite pointed out that the men’s head must face the gate while those of the women facing inside the house. Therefore, Seventh-day

Adventist Church members participate in some practices indicating dual allegiances which are contrary to the church's worship practices. For instance one pastor quoted a tribute in a funeral program from a widow serving as one of the church elders. The statement read as follows;

My husband, you were such a wonderful man. I am not sure I can express just how much I will miss you. Not only were you a wonderful husband, but a wonderful father, best friend, colleague-and so much more, you may be in heaven now, but I know you are looking down at us with a big smile on your face saying, 'forge a head-make the best of life as I plan to see you soon. We have work to do up here too.'

5.2 The Ritual of Widow Inheritance

In connection with widow inheritance and marital obligations the respondents said that there was the obligating need for a widow to accomplish all sexual demands within the Luo community. Hence, they further said that when a widow dies immediately after her husband completing the after death rituals, her dead body will be subjected to sexual cleansing activity burial buried. Such a ritual is binding to the extent that members will not care about shameful experiences that accompany such activates. The underlying factor is to protect the lives of the survived family members from the supposed offended spirits if they would bury the body without sexual cleansing rituals upon it. The respondents emphasized the rationale behind this happening in the fear that the heart of a woman who dies immediately after her husband before all the death rituals are performed will return to torment the survived family members for not honoring her marital obligations. The ideas concurred with the submission of Bondi (2015) that if proper burial sites, including marital debts are not observed; the deceased may become a wandering ghost, unable to exist in a proper manner after their death and in this way may become a threat to those whom they have left behind.

These Luo cultural features illustrate that most of the significant Luo existential elements are safeguarded by sexual relations for daily operations in diversified sphere of influence. Therefore, sexual activities seem to be indispensable and might appear unconsciously adorable within the Luo community. In this light therefore, any individual who defies this condition when it was mandatory to fulfill them would find themselves restricted in interpersonal relationships. The study revealed that there were cases of restrictions among Luo Christian members of SDA Church, especially on widows who did not conform to sexual norms. The responses in percentage from the five main groups of respondents were as follows: Pastors 11.76%, church elders 75.86%, personal ministries 91.07%, and women ministries 20.40%. It was evidenced from the results that the pastors and women ministries reported low return rate on this restriction view. However, the finding disclosed that widows who bypassed the after burial rituals were not allowed to visit their in-laws even at a time when such close relatives were bereaved. The same condition was manifested in the church environment since their fellow female church members would not be free with the widows on suspicion that they would poach their husbands. Worse still, the church administration played a crucial role in disciplining widows who went into second marriages unofficially or with men in their active marriages.

Moreover, the reality of being forced into a sexual relationship with any man should the widow's son die before she is inherited or to imagine a situation of her dead body exposed to sexual

cleansing ritual at her death, makes immediate fulfillment of rituals inevitable reality. It is on this cultural commitment that every widow finds it critically viable to fulfill all these demands in time to remain both culturally acceptable and ritually clean. Any perpetual refusal to comply would also mean disrespect to both the community of the living and that of the ancestors. Nevertheless, widows who could not tolerate open disappointment due to orchestrated prejudice chose to stay at home while others went to other churches which could accommodate them. Thus, the reality was that Luo cultural practices extended on matters regarding horizontal relationships at basic human levels up to the ancestors' realms.

6. Conclusion

In making the conclusion of the study, the functional theory of religion was confirmed in the assertion of Durkheim (1912), who emphasized that religion is all about community since it binds and provides people with social cohesion, promotes behavior consistency in terms of voluntary social control, and offers meaning, purpose and strength during life's changeovers and tragedies such as illnesses, death and other associated catastrophic events affecting humanity. This submission was confirmed on the basis that religious activities are culturally universal and have the potential to fulfill several functions within human societies. Furthermore, the essentiality of religion was considered as inevitable as was pointed out by Tylor (1917) that beliefs in spiritual beings was and is still the essential source for all religions. Based on the fact that religion may function on several ritualistic domains, there are certain essential elements relating to supernatural powers that may not be dispensed with; such as the nature of God and His divine will as revealed in the Bible. Hence, Luo rituals connected with ancestral spirits veneration and SDA Church worship practices appeared as religious practices that may not be dispensed with. Moreover, Luo rituals' pertaining to ancestral spirits' veneration is a predominant cultural practice that seemingly engulfed every member in the community. Therefore, there is need for coming up with a strategy helpful to win confidence of SDA Church members who continue to hold beliefs in ancestral spirits in the Kenya Lake Conference. The conclusion is that Luo rituals pertaining to Ancestral spirits' veneration affect the worship practices among SDA Church members in the Kenya Lake Conference.

7. Recommendations

The study recommends that the veneration of the dead though not in harmony with biblical teachings, can be beneficial in transmitting important worship insights that are viable in SDA Church with on-going communications between human cultures in terms of dialogues, participation, listening and readiness to learn Christian traits from cultural lenses. Moreover, widows should look upon God as their protector and the sole care-giver other than basing their allegiance to human help which enforces inheritance even at their own peril.

Furthermore, the study recommends that Church leaders should consider providing detailed biblical teachings from the social perspectives for the church members relating them with some of the social problems including inequality, sickness, interacting with the rest of the community, death, and marriage which perpetually affect the community if left without checks and balances. This is due to the fact that daily endeavors of church members affect their lives, and addressing all aspects in an in-depth manner is vitally instrumental. The biblical teachings should be made in a

more detailed manner to provide justice, law, order, and hope for the Christians who suffer such injustices based on prejudices as witnessed in the condition of widows in the SDA Church.

The church should take advantage of the Luo concept brotherhood (Omera or Owadwa) by relating to (Romans12:10), which encourages Christians to love one another, and point them to Christ instead of condemning them for holding to cultural practices. By the same time the Church should look for alternatives to those cultural practice that are not in harmony with Christian teachings. Hence, when this concept of brotherhood is properly understood by Luo Christian worshippers, considerate adhesiveness in the family tie among SDA Church members in the Kenya Lake Conference will play a major role in the life of the church. Therefore, a continuous Bible study should be conducted by the church leaders as part of their spiritual responsibilities which they need to plan and provide in order to give hope to most of their desperate church members.

The study further recommends that Church leaders should also strike a consensus with the Luo traditional leaders and take part in most of all-encompassing community affairs like conflict resolution and civic education for the harmonious understanding of both the cultural and Christian worship practices. In this respect, the SDA church leaders should not distance themselves from some members of the community who resist biblical teachings.

Furthermore, since several social issues emerged during the discussions such as, rituals for appeasement of the spirits, existential relevance that ancestors have in the network of social relationships until very recently, horizontal social relations at human levels, and restricted interpersonal relationships between widows and other church members in the SDA Church in the Kenya Lake Conference, the study recommends further study on these highlighted social areas. This recommendation is based on the recognition that the theories advanced in the study appeared to be of great worth even to the distant future in the field of research.

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