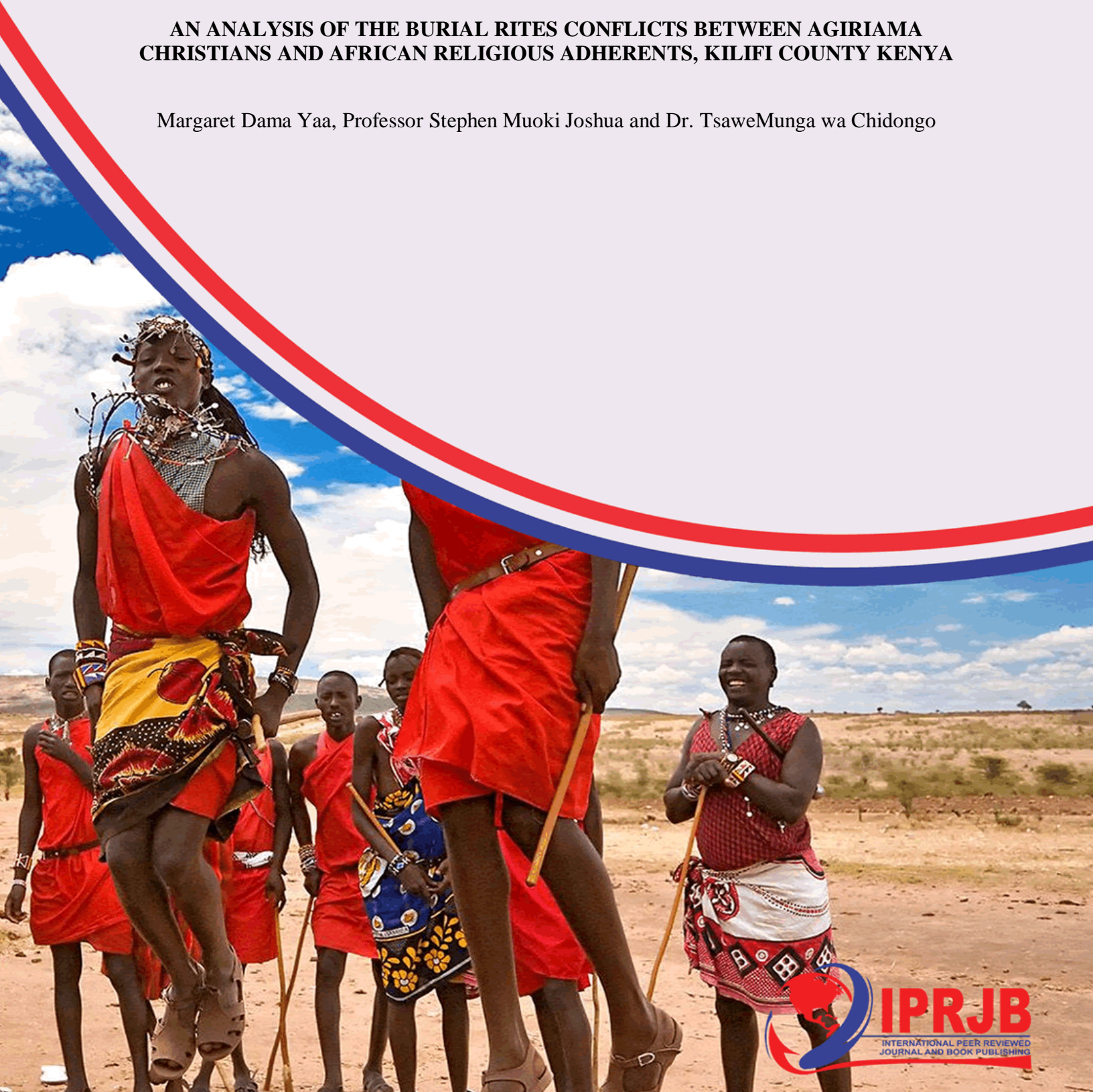


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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE BURIAL RITES CONFLICTS BETWEEN AGIRIAMA
CHRISTIANS AND AFRICAN RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS, KILIFI COUNTY KENYA**

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE BURIAL RITES CONFLICTS BETWEEN AGIRIAMA CHRISTIANS AND AFRICAN RELIGIOUS ADHERENTS, KILIFI COUNTY KENYA

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.Abstract

Purpose: This work is an analysis of the burial rites conflicts between Agiriama Christians and adherents of African traditional religion in Kilifi County with specific reference to PEFA church in Mariakani; Kilifi County in Kenya. Burial rituals and practices vary across cultures and are often heavily influenced by religion. The objectives of the study was to establish an analysis of the burial rites conflicts between Agiriama christians and African religious adherents, Kilifi County Kenya

Methodology: The study was guided by inter-faith dialogue theory and Native/non-Native relations by Jonathan Napier. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources. Secondary materials such as books, journals and articles were used to gather the necessary information. The study equally utilized some primary sources such as oral interviews, focus group discussion and participant observations. Through snow ball sampling technique seventy respondents of Agiriama community took part in the study. The study sample comprised of pastors, church elders, kaya elders and bereaved family members, based on criteria such as gender, age, social status and length of period in the church. The data was then coded and analyzed in the themes following the objectives, thus forming the chapters which make the work complete.

Findings: The research findings include: the similar burial practices between the Christians and the adherents of African traditional religion, are treatment and care for the sick, prayers, unity preparing the body upon death, breaking the news of a death and burring the body. The differences include many restrictions to the close family member, categorizing death, and the funeral songs, talking to the dead, the belief that death is a rite of passage, the burial of young babies and the way the body is laid in the tomb. The Christian burial rituals lack post burial rituals unlike that for the adherents of African traditional religion.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The researcher recommends further research on the post burial rituals like throwing of the death if there are any alternatives to such indigenous burial rituals which are even violating human rights. It would also be of great interest to explore further the challenges faced by those who throw the death in contrast to those who do not cleanse their homes nor throw the death.

Key words: *Burial Rites, Religion, Practices, Contemporary*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the English Oxford dictionary, death can be defined as the permanent end of the life of a person or a living organism. One is said to be dead when the physical body ceases to function and starts to decompose. To Merriam Webster death is the cessation of all biological functions that sustain a living organism. Equally, Atinga explains that death is the cessation of breath that sustains a person's life (Atinga, 2006). Death is a return home, it is the finality of life which occurs when the vital breath ceases, the body decomposes, and the spirit goes to God the creator, man is soil and returns to the soil. The spirit returns to God who gives it. The soul returns to the unseen world where it came from. Death is the separation of the soul and the body. In the African worldview, death is seen as a transition from the visible to the invisible spiritual ontology where the spirit, the essence of the person is not destroyed but moves to live in the spirit of the ancestors' realm. It means when a person is dead the spirit lives in the spiritual world. This finality of life makes the human being feel frustrated as man desires to hold on to his life by every means possible, as there is the fear of the unknown. According to Mbiti, it is not clearly known what really happens when one dies (Mbiti, 1990). Michael Karisa confirmed this by using a Swahili saying "*Adhabu ya Kaburi aijuaye maiti*" by this he meant that only those who are dead can know what exactly happens after death. The concept of death among the Agiriama community in particular and many African communities in general is that of a journey with no return "*endaye kuzimu kauya*" it means that he who goes to the world of the dead does not return. It is considered to be a return trip home. It is a departure going to the ancestors. Equally, Atinga asserts that in the African context, death is both mysterious and certain. Hence, Africans have produced an equally mysterious ritual to deal with it (Atinga, 2006).

Helmut Thielicke expresses death as that of an old common place that people go to live and that if anything in life is a certainty it is death. Death conditions every moment of this advance towards death that we call life just as our walking is actually a kind of falling. Though with every step we check our fall, so life itself is a matter of dying, that is repeatedly held in check. At the verge of death human nature feels frustrated because of the desire to hold on life by every means possible still exists as there is fear of the unknown world (Mbiti, 1990). Mbiti asserts that "death is a monster before which man is helpless; friends and relatives watch the person die, and they cannot help him escape death. Death is the ultimate to every creature; it has neither cure nor escape, it is inevitable.

Death is considered to be cruel, heartless and unjust as it takes away ones mother father, husband, wife, son, daughter, best friend for whom there can be no substitute. Edmund Ilogu observed that the philosophy behind the people's concern about life and death is that all the visible world around us and the invisible world beyond, the divine and the human, the past and the present, the living and the dead all form a harmonious entity (Adegbola, 1983). He further said that death is one of the dissonances of life disturbing this entity, but because the dead themselves belong to this harmonious entity all that is necessary is to ensure that the balance of life's harmony is not upset when one member of the group is transformed through death to another level of existence, namely the souls of the dead who constitute the unseen part of the community. Setsiba asserts that the death of a loved one is a ubiquitous human experience. It is a period of transition, following the death of a loved one. The bereaved individuals therefore need to adjust and go back to normal life (Setsiba, 2012). Thus most cultures have prescribed

burial rituals and rites to facilitate the adjustment of the bereaved members. Ngumbane observed that to die in Traditional African community is like ‘going back home where you belong (Ngubane, 1977).’ Therefore, proper burial would be elements of showing respect and dignity to the deceased. For Ngumbane, any respectable Zulu person was buried at home at the back or sides of their family’s hut irrespective of age. The Agiriama like any other African community believe in giving their dead a good send off so that their souls may rest in eternal peace as they watch over the living.

Mbiti argues that death to African community is not an event which just occurs, is handled and then is forgotten about (Mbiti, 1990). When one dies, there are a series of events which usually take place. These include feasting and gathering associated with the funeral rites, while in some families, prayers are held (Setsiba, 2012). The unborn, the living, the living-dead and the ancestors are related to each other. Proper rites and ceremonies performed following death reflect this belief; failure to perform the burial rituals would hinder the deceased soul from resting in peace (Mbiti, 1969). Failure to observe the obligatory funeral rites and practices is perceived as a sign of disrespect for ancestors and misfortune could befall anyone who does not adhere to the stipulated practices (Setsiba, 2012). With the coming of Christianity and other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism in Africa, there have been differences in funeral rites and practices. This has brought both a positive and a negative impact on the Agiriama community; among the negatively affected beliefs and practices are the burial rituals and practices.

Religious beliefs and expressions are constantly nurtured by the community’s culture in terms of language, symbols, and attitudes towards life. These beliefs and practices exist through people’s experiences with God from time immemorial, passed on from father to son (Amanze, 2007). Similarly Christianity which entails the spiritual and practical expression of faith in Jesus Christ is also rooted in the Jewish culture (Adegbola, 1983). Christianity has undergone different Cultural evolution in various regions where it has had some contact. What the missionaries in Africa did was to transmit to their congregation their own understanding of the gospel and the way it had developed in their communities. The missionaries ignored the key issues which included religious ideas and the new culture which they came across (Bediako, 1992). The Agiriama adherents of African traditional religion practices suffered a great deal from the missionary approach to the gospel as their cultural heritage was regarded as dark and full of polytheism (Kilonzo, 2010). The most affected customs were the ones related to burial and funeral rites. The missionary approach to evangelization was in sharp contrast with the Pauline theology to the Gentile, that there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile for they are all called by the same Lord. That Jesus Christ had come to seek and save the sinners, a universal savior who is ready to save even the Agiriama people without any discrimination. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the teachings of Jesus Christ “Follow me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead,” can be interpreted to mean that the sinners have no room for eternal life so they are considered to be dead and those who die in sin will taste the second death so they are considered spiritually dead. In recent times this situation has created conflicts among the Agiriama when a Christian loses a relative. Some fail to attend the funeral services and even the burial while others ignore the traditional burial practices as they consider them heathen. The Agiriama people are faced with this cultural conflict in relation to funeral and burial practices between them and their Christian counterparts.

1.2. Statement of the Problem.

There exists a continued conflict between Christian and indigenous African belief systems with reference to burial rites and practices among the Agiriama community. The teachings of Jesus Christ are that there is happiness for those who die knowing Jesus Christ for they will not test the second death. It is the Christian belief that when one dies while knowing Jesus Christ she/he will have eternal life. For this reason, the Christians have a duty to make converts from people of different background and culture in order to win souls to Jesus Christ that they may not perish but have eternal life. The eternal life is for those who have died in the Lord, that is, those who died knowing Jesus Christ. Bishop David Kiponda explained to the researcher that it is those who may have died while believing in Jesus Christ as their personal savior, and who have lived according to the teachings of Jesus Christ whose desire was to do the will of God. The first one to die in the lord being Abel whose blood cries from the ground., this represents the need for resurrection and vindication at the second coming of the Messiah. This belief gives hope to the believers in Christ that even if they die, they will live again, they are therefore given proper burial to wait for the day when Jesus Christ resurrect them into a new life. Within the African context, some of the dead are regarded as ancestors and they are treated with great respect as they are believed to have a special relationship with the living. Therefore, they are accorded proper burial rites upon death. Any deviation from the above could be perceived as a sign of disrespect for the ancestors and bad luck could befall anyone who does not adhere to the stipulated practices (Setsiba, 2012). The Agiriama Christians in many ways differ with the Agiriama African religion adherent practitioners on issues of burial rites, especially when it comes to burying a family member who has been a Christian but the indigenous believers among the family members want the deceased to be rested according to African burial rites. This has caused a great impact between the Agiriama Christians and the indigenous believers both positively and negatively due to differences in faith, belief systems and practices. Even though, the Agiriama have accepted Christianity, the religion still remains alien to them because it has not yet fully embraced the culture of the local people especially in terms of burial rituals. The Christian missionaries had little knowledge of the African culture hence they condemned the Agiriama rituals and practices as archaic without any attempt to understand their symbolic meaning. Consequently, they considered most of these rituals as non-Christian practices and incompatible with the gospel message. Christians were encouraged to part completely with their native way of worship and celebrations. Among the negatively affected cultural practices were the burial rituals and practices, these in most cases left the bereaved family members, dissatisfied and full of anxiety about their future life. Therefore, this study examines the conflicts between Christian burials rites and African traditional burials among the Agiriama community.

1.3. Research Objectives

The study was guided by a general objective out of which four objectives were derived which guided the chapters of the study.

1.3.1. General Objective

The aim of the study is to examine burial rites and practices; both in Christianity and African religion that cause conflicts among the Agiriama community.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives.

- 1) To analyze the Agiriama burial rites and practices.
- 2) To discuss the Christian burial rituals and practices.
- 3) To evaluate areas of conflict between the Agiriama Christians and Agiriama adherents of African traditional religion on burial rites and practices.
- 4) To propose suitable methodology of addressing the existing differences between Christian and indigenous religion burial practices among the Agiriama.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Location of the Study

This study design is primarily qualitative in nature which involves a descriptive approach (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). This is a method which involves collecting of information by interviewing sampled individuals. This design is suitable for collecting information in the form of words. Equally, a descriptive survey design seek to obtain the information that describes the existing phenomenon by asking individuals to explain in their own terms how they perceive them (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Creswell conceptualized qualitative research as a study process that investigates a problem where the researcher conducts the study in a natural setting and builds a complex analysis through rich description, and explanation, as well as a careful examination of data (Cresswell, 1998). The description is important for clear understanding of the Agiriama cultural heritage which underpins the current discourse. This allowed the researcher to draw relevant conclusions that could be generalized to a much larger population. The study was carried out at Mariakani in Kaloleni Sub-county in Kilifi County Kenya. The study population was the Agiriama people both Christians and African religious adherents at Mariakani. Therefore, individual respondents were sampled for oral interviews and focus group discussions to solicit for relevant information on the experiences and meaning attached to the burial rituals and practices and the areas of conflict during burials.

Sampling Procedure and Technique

Punch argues that all research, whether qualitative or quantitative involves sampling since it is tedious to study everyone or everything everywhere (Punch, 2013). Therefore, the researcher gathered information from ten funeral services conducted within the period of two years at Mariakani in Kaloleni Sub-county, Kilifi County. The study area was carefully selected as it could be accessed easily by the researcher. The target group consisted of the Agiriama Christians in Pentecostal Churches and the indigenous Agiriama people since they make the larger part of the population in Mariakani; Kaya elders are have witnessed the burial conflicts so they were believed to have the necessary information. Mariakani has approximately twenty Pentecostal churches with only 17 registered with the government. Using purposive sampling technique, Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA) was selected for the study. This was informed by its large membership that cut across urban and rural areas. From the Church, three branches from the rural areas and two from the urban set-up were randomly selected for the study. The two churches which were selected from the urban area included Mariakani and Guruguru PEFA church while from the rural area involved Munyenzeni, Gotani and Ikanga PEFA churches. This helped the researcher to bring a comparison as the believers from the urban

area might have been affected by modernization and could not give all the necessary information concerning indigenous burial rituals and practices.

The researcher in her visits to the churches she came to understand that each church had at least two pastors and two elders. Using purposive sampling technique, five (5) church pastors, and five (5) church elders were selected for interviews based on the length of period in the Churches. They were the ones who conduct the Christian burial services. Moreover, they had the knowledge of the fundamental Church doctrines so they were capable of giving the necessary information. This was because it was not easy to interview all pastors and church elders in the region. The smaller number of participants was easy to handle since a large population was hard to access at the given time frame. The researcher also identified (20) Christian family members of some bereaved families and relatives were selected through purposive snow-balling technique based on gender and age. The selected Christian family members were further divided into ten older Christian family members and ten Christian youth family members both male and female using snow-balling sampling. The youth were interviewed to identify whether indigenous or Christian burial rituals and practices had any meaning to them.

The sampled pastors, church elders, and family members of the bereaved who were Christians gave the relevant information on burials that they had witnessed and some of the observation they made. In particular, the pastors were able to give their experiences from burial services that they had conducted in the area and some of the challenges they had faced. On a similar note, ten (10) Kaya elders were randomly selected for interviews, in order to shed light on the Agiriama burial rites and practices. Kaya elders were considered in this study, because they were well informed on the cultural heritage of the Agiriama community. Therefore, they gave information on the Agiriama African traditional religion adherents' burial rites and practices. In addition, using non-probability purposive sampling method, thirty (30) African traditional religion adherents Agiriama family members were selected for interviews to gather relevant information to the study. These were further divided into two, fifteen (15) older family members and fifteen (15) youth. The older family members were well informed on the Agiriama burial culture; moreover, they had experienced a lot on the burial rituals and practices and had the necessary information for the study.

Of the youth who were interviewed gender was considered to identify whether the indigenous burial rituals and practices had any meaning to them since they had been born and lived in the world at a time when there is cultural, political, economic and technological evolution. This method depended on the availability and willingness of the respondents to participate and on those cases that were typical to the population in terms of characteristics being studied (Blanche, Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The table 1 below shows the categories of the respondents that were sampled for the study.

Table 1: Categories of the Sampled Respondents

Category	Sampled Respondents (n)		Percentage of Sampled Respondents
	Male	Female	
1 Church pastors/clergy	3	2	7.14
2 Church elders	3	2	7.14
3 Kaya and clan elders	5	5	14.28
4 Indigenous Agiriama family members	15	15	42.86
5 Christian Agiriama Family members	10	10	28.57
Total	36	34	100

Data Analysis and Presentation

The raw data collected from the field was coded and transcribed for further analysis. After the analysis data was presented through various ways including charts and pictures and graphs. The researcher used pictures of small group discussion for data presentation since the pictures were easy to follow and understand. Equally, charts were used to show the main causes of conflict between Christian and Agiriama burial practices. In addition, graphs like bar graphs were used to show the differences and similarities in Christian and indigenous burial practices. In qualitative analysis, the researcher employed a qualitative method of data analysis where data is organized inform of themes with supporting facts/evidence.

In qualitative analysis, the researcher obtained detailed information about the phenomenon being studied; established patterns, trends and relationships from the information gathered (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). It is important to note that the information gathered was critically analyzed according to the objectives of the study, which formed the chapters of the study. The data was examined and brought into comparison where Christian burial practices were contrasted against the Agiriama. The chapters were organized in themes depending on the data gathered.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 Agiriama Burial Rites and Practices

The Agiriama people have very many and elaborate burial rituals and practices, which have to be performed for the deceased to go in peace and the family to receive blessings from God. According to Mwaiha Mwambire, when the dead are at peace, the family members receive peace and prosperity. David Parkins stressed the importance of the Agiriama burial rituals that they were paramount for the community's well being (Parkin, 2006). Equally Chidongo confirmed that whatever ritual the Agiriama performed was to the well being of the community *uzima wa lalo* (Chidongo, 2012). However these rituals and practices depend on the type of death, age of the deceased, sex, position of birth, type of disease which caused the death, social status of the deceased and if the deceased is the first one to die from the mother. This is because the Agiriama believe that death does not alter or end the life or the personality of an individual,

but only causes a change in the condition expressed in the concept of ancestors. This view is confirmed by Kaya elders, the clan elders and Ade, Mbiti(Mbiti, 1969), Tinga(Tinga, 1998). The Kaya elders confirmed that the Agiriama people like any other African community fear death thus prefer a slow death rather than sudden death which is also confirmed by Mbiti(Mbiti, 1969) when he said that when a person falls sick, the family members will do all possible ways and means to treat the person, which include consulting herbalist, diviner to identify the causes of the illness and its cure. Kenga Chai, in an oral interview with the researcher said “nobody likes death,” he explained that though death is inevitable, people would try all means possible to avoid it. If the illness continues to worsen the sick person if an adult, will send for her/his close family members such as sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, grandsons and granddaughters to give them his/her last words which are very important as they serve as a will and blessings to the family members.

The most elaborate rituals are performed when an adult has died, just like the case of Honorable Ole Ntimama, the Maasai elder, his burial was conducted in a more elaborate manner as compared to other deaths because he was an elder of the Maasai people and a national figure. Moreover a certain number of rituals are omitted depending on the age, sex, marital status, type of death and the disease which caused the death *kulingana na mafereri*(SHINO, 1997) (depending on the cause of the death) as supported by Kaya elders. The ways in which some of the rituals are performed reflect the way a particular death occurred. The rituals are categorized as being in two broad categories which are primary and secondary burial rites and practices. In my primary sources, the kaya elders confirmed that if the after death rituals are not performed the dead person may become a wondering ghost, thus unable to ‘live’ properly after death and therefore, a danger to those who remain alive; this was confirmed by Atinga in his study *Death and Dying*(Atinga, 2006) Performance of burial rituals and practices also serve as a guarantee of protection for the living other than to secure a safe passage for the deceased.

3.1.2 Primary Burial Rituals and Practices

These are rituals which are performed as soon as death has been confirmed until burial has been conducted. According to Richard Airo; these burial rites can also be referred to as pre- burial rites as they are performed in preparation for the actual burial. Upon death, the following rituals have to be done: The eyes of the deceased have to be closed once a person is confirmed to be dead. The eyes are said to be powerful even if one is dead. If the eyes keep on staring at the mourners they scare people, the elders say the deceased eyes when left open they claim for another *soulanaiha mungine*. The eyes are also openings which when left open flies will touch these eyes and spread maggots which makes the body decompose fast which is a shame to the family members that they did not close the eyes at first before the body became hard. In all the burials I observed, the deceased’s eyes and mouth were closed. It is believed that when a dead person opens the eyes or mouth upon the arrival of someone, then that person is identified as having had a hand in that person’s death. This was narrated by the elders such as Kenga Chai, Charles Baya and some of the family members who participated in this study. Sidi Wanje who had just lost a mother said that they had to close the eyes and the mouth quickly and lay her body straight. She said that the mouth is also closed and may be supported with a piece of cloth tied around the head. Kenga Chai explained that if the mouth remains open it is said that the deceased is calling for another life which is scaring to the mourners. The mouth is an opening which when

left open, just like the eyes; flies will enter the mouth and grow into maggots before burial which is not good to those who love their dear ones. An interviewee who did not want his name mentioned narrated as follows.

“If it is someone who did bad things to the deceased, be it his/her father, mother, brother, sister or grandparents, the deceased will open the eyes or mouth, to see that particular person. If he looks at that person and opens the mouth *kumlola na kumaka* (looks at the person and wonder) it is bad it’s like a curse, and it is believed that bad things will happen to that person”.

After closing the eyes and the mouth, the body is straightened and laid facing upwards *Vingarigari* (lying with the back) covered with sheets once that have been done then the close family member may start crying loudly. Kache Charo Menza said that crying can be done only if the family members are sure that the body has been kept well such as after washing and dressing has been done.

3.1.3 Breaking the News of a Death

Among the Agiriama people death news is done by a woman, sometimes it’s done after consulting some elders to find if there are any things to be done before people start the loud cry. If the deceased person had some instructions, such as the person might have instructed the close relatives that if he/she dies nobody should cry then people will inform each other that they should not cry loudly. Changawa Karisa one of the elders explained to the researcher that for those very old people and mostly diviners upon death it’s until a diviner is consulted to come and give guidelines whether the mourners should cry loudly or not and guide the family on what to do as far as handling the deceased is concerned and on the performance of burial rituals and practices. Equally Mwawara Garero said that failure to observe the prohibitions could anger the ancestors who would in turn punish the whole family. Sidi Maya said that if the deceased died of diseases like *mahana* (leprosy) or *kiraho* (aoth) people are not allowed to cry. Kenga Chai confirmed that if people cry for such death the disease that killed the diseased will infect other family members and cause some more death to the family members. Mwaiha Mwambere said that the elders of the family would contact a diviner to perform some rituals. In a group discussion some of the respondents explained to me that for a person who dies of leprosy nobody is allowed to cry instead the elderly men will cut some cactus plant *chaa* drop its milk around the deceased and these are the ‘tears’ for the deceased which will also be placed at the grave after burial just like flowers on the grave. If a polygamous man dies, only the first wife is allowed to break the cry (*kumula kiriro*).

3.1.4 Preparations for Burial

Death for married adults calls for more preparations as the burial rituals are very many and elaborate (Parkin, 2006). The Kaya elders said that burial for witchdoctors require the fellow witch doctors to perform rituals according to their tradition. Mariam Mohammed Salim said that a specialist has to be contacted to guide the family on what to do as far as burial arrangements are concerned. To my observation, there are some ritual herbs gathered by the specialist to sprinkle around the home and the deceased house when taking the body to the grave. Charles Baya explained that if the herbalist’s bag *mkoba* is left unattended as the owner is dead it could cause harm to the family members in the near future. For the Kaya elders and old people who die

at the age of seventy and above the elders said that special oil *mafuha ga mbono* (castor oil) have to be prepared.

Kache Charo Menza said that, on the following day after death has occurred the elders gather *mbono* (castor seeds), dry them and select special women to pound them to produce castor oil. She further said that the castor oil is applied on the deceased body on the third day and dressed for burial. This kind of ritual is very important as explained by some of the respondents in that it is a sign of respect to the deceased elder who is an ancestor to the clan. Kenga Chai said that such elders who are given this ritual of castor oil are sometimes after burial given another big memorial ceremony *sadaka* (sacrificial ceremony) where the living elders put a memorial post *Kigango* for such elders who are highly respected even after death. Robert Kasiwa Mwambegu explained to the researcher that the place where the memorial post is kept is considered holy and it becomes the family shrine where they conduct their prayers in future. Mwaiha Mwambire added that the place where the memorial post is erected becomes a land mark for the family; in future they can identify that as a place where they once lived (Parkin, 2006). This proves their belief that death is not the end of life but the spirit of the deceased continues to live in the world of ancestors and in this case the elder is the ancestor as confirmed by Mbiti.

Preparations for a person who died with a dreaded disease like leprosy include building a small hut outside the compound. Sidi Katana explained that when her father in-law died of leprosy, a small hut was constructed where the body was kept till burial. In this case the body is taken out of the house through a hole. Immediately after burial the hut is set on fire, at the new grave some branches of cactus plants are spread to drop its white liquid 'tears' *matsozige* (his/her tears) as nobody is allowed to cry. Airo Richard asserted that those who die with leprosy their corpse are not touched due to the contagious nature of the disease. The home is later ritually cleansed by a diviner who will sprinkle the whole home with medicinal herbs. Failure to do this it is believed that the leprosy will spread to other family members.

3.1.6 Dressing the Deceased

The Agiriama community dresses their dead in a white shroud *sanza*. A piece of the shroud about one metre is cut and given to the wife /husband to wear it every day until it is torn, *jimbiri*, to show that he/she lost he/his lover, to make the wife be known that she lost her husband *Gungu* or that the man lost his wife. However, the Kaya elders and diviners may differ, as explained by the elders in focus group discussion. Daniel Mwawara said that if the kaya elder lives in the Kaya and dies there it is a great honor and will be buried inside the kaya forest by his/her colleagues. This one they say he/she has acquired ancestorship. Kenga Chai said if the Kaya elder dies outside the Kaya, then he/she will be buried at his/her home. The Kaya elders are dressed in clothes like those which they used to wear while still alive. These clothes include *kikoi* which has black, white and red stripes tied around the waist. A black colored cloth *kaniki* put around the belly and white cloth *bafuthaput* around the shoulders.

Hadija Mdzomba said that the kaya elders upon death are dressed just like the way they dressed on the day when one was initiated into the elders' rank position he /she is holding in the society. This was confirmed by Parkin who said that the Kaya elders upon death are dressed in their clothes which they wore on the day when they were being initiated to the eldership (Parkin, 2006). The symbolic meaning the Kaya elders gave is that though the elder is dead, the

leadership continues in the next realm of life. The diviners on the other hand are decorated as if one is still alive and is performing divination.

In the researcher's observation, the researcher witnessed the burial of a diviner. He died at the hospital after a long illness which caused his body to paralyze at the age of about sixty years. The burial rituals were very much elaborated. The man was dressed in red *ngundu*, black *kaniki* blue *musimbiji* and white *bafutha* clothing tied around the waist, around the belly and *kishutu* was put under the head just like a pillow. The diviner decorated the deceased's face with red soil *mbuu* and black color from charcoal. The diviner guided the family members in every part of the rituals. When the body was being taken out for burial, a goat was slaughtered and the blood was poured at the door so that those carrying the body could step on the blood. The family members explained to the researcher that when this happens they believe that the deceased has stepped on the ritualistic blood. Chula Kalume explained to the researcher that the deceased had become a spirit and blood *milatso* is the food for the spirits *koma*. When the body was taken out for viewing and later for burial the wife who was a Christian, upon seeing her husband decorated like that she said her husband was alive. She was overcome by emotions; she collapsed and was rushed to hospital which made her not witness the burial of her husband. The songs which he used to sing when performing his work were also sang to give the deceased a good send off to remember his work and to sooth the mourners.

The Agiriama African religious adherents perform elaborate burial rites to show love and respect to the dead. The Agiriama and many other African communities strongly believe that death is not the end of life but it is a gate way to a much fuller life in the world of spirits. This has a vital influence in the way they handle their dead. Their belief that the dead continue to live in the spiritual world and some becoming ancestors and the important place of the ancestors in the Agiriama life makes them have great respect for their dead. The belief that for one to rest in peace, proper burial rituals and practices have to be conducted is a clear fact, it is clear that the burial rituals and practices are very important to the Agiriama community. Respect for the dead, the ancestors and the fear of death are reasons for the elaborate ritual performance among the Agiriama people. The Agiriama view funeral rituals as rites of passage which have to be performed in order for one to attain peace in the spiritual world. It is clear that for the Agiriama and many African communities burial alone is not enough, the elaborate rituals and practices have to be performed. These rituals and practices help those left behind to come into terms with the loss of their loved ones. Hence the burial rituals and practices are as important as the burial itself to the Agiriama people, hence doing away with these rituals to the Agiriama is disrespecting the dead who are also part of the family.

3.2 The Christian Burial Rituals and Practices

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the Christian burial rituals and practices, a case study of the PEFA church. The information was gathered through primary and secondary sources. In the primary sources the researcher gathered the necessary information through participant observation, where the researcher was able to attend five burial services conducted between 2015 and 2016 in the study area, where she keenly observed and recorded all the areas of interest to this study. Information was also gathered through interviews from five pastors, five church elders.

3.2.1 The Christian Burial Rituals

According to Bishop Kiponda, one of the respondents and a senior pastor, the ritual is not rigid it is dynamic; it changes at every stage of development depending on the pastor and organizers conducting the ceremony. However, Pastor Gideon Karisa said that in preparation of the liturgy for a funeral, it is of great importance that the pastor, family and community take into consideration the situation, the culture and circumstance of the deceased. The Church ministry should choose the text and rites best suited to the situation, those which will meet the needs of the mourners, the circumstance of death and the customs of the Local Christian community in consultation with the family

3.2.2 Liturgy for Christian funerals

The Pentecostal burial customs are similar to other Christian burial customs; however there are slightly differences among some church denominations. The Catholic burial services differ from those of Pentecostal Churches. As observed by the researcher the Catholics conduct burial with mass which is conducted by a priest, the body is taken to the church and from church to the burial ground. According to Atinga, the funeral with mercy is conducted at the church while the funeral liturgy without mercy is conducted at home(Atinga, 2006). The funeral liturgy with mass, they pray for the deceased soul for God to forgive the deceased sins and receive the soul in his hands. The Catholics also conduct funeral liturgy without mass.

Bishop David Kiponda said that the Catholics light candles and sprinkle holy water on the coffin unlike the Pentecostals; this is confirmed by Atinga Samuel where he gives a clear analysis of the Catholic burial practices(Atinga, 2006). This work was useful to this study; however, Atinga did his work from a Catholic perspective while this work is built on Pentecostal perspective. Moreover Atinga did his work by analyzing indigenous burial practices among the Frafra of Ghana, while this work analyses indigenous burial practices among the Agiriama community of Kenya. The Catholic liturgy with mass has Eucharist and the liturgy without mass does not have Eucharist. The Pentecostal church holds the liturgy without mass as explained by the pastors and church elders that the researcher interviewed. The catholic liturgy without mass is composed of the liturgy of the word including the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, final commendation and the rite of committed. It is without mass due to the absence of a priest.

At the death bed

Through observation, focus group discussions, interviews and information gathered from secondary sources, it is clear that when one falls sick they will either go to hospital or call a pastor who will pray for the sick for healing. Joyce Shidha asserted that Jesus is the healer and whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved. She added that some believers prefer one way healing, depending on God and will not go to the hospital for any assistance. Pastor Gideon Karisa said that those who have strong faith in Jesus when they fall sick they would call for a pastor to confess their sins and the pastor would pray for them and by God's grace and their faith in God they would receive healing. Joseph Kazungu Kenga explained that when prayers have been made but the illness persists, the pastor and church members will continue to pray for the will of God to be done and encourage the sick person whether at home or in hospital.

As said earlier the Jews believe that death is the will of God as well as the Christians will keep on praying for the sick and ask God to help the sick person according to his will. This was confirmed by all the pastors, Church elders and Christian bereaved family members. Pastor Alfred Musya asserted that this world is not our home; we are strangers travelling to heaven to be with our heavenly father. This explains that death is inevitable whether through sickness or other causes no one shall escape death.

Bishop Kiponda said that the greatest hope is that, death to the believers is the beginning for hope in the everlasting life with Jesus. Charles Baya, one of the church elders said: “at the final stage of life, the patient has to accept the situation as given”. Atinga asserted that, at this stage the patient begins to remember the scriptures and hopes to rise with Christ (Atinga, 2006). This shows that it is the same for other Christians who are not from the PEFA Church. Bishop Kiponda asserted that if there is Physical body then there is also spiritual body, he said this by referring to Apostle Paul in the Bible, for this case therefore, the Christians also believe in an afterlife. Jesus clearly explained to his disciples that he would die but rise on the third day as well indicated in the gospels Most important is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Pastor Joseph Charo said that it constitutes in itself the resurrection of the believer since Christ rose from the dead us too shall rise Pastor Alfred Musya said that Some death like those caused by accidents occur without any expectations hence the urge for people to remain alert to keep on watching and praying, confessing and forsaking their sins for the second coming of Jesus our Lord and savior.

Closing the Eyes, the mouth and trimming hair

Grace Kadzo Charo said that once death has been confirmed, these close family members near the deceased will inform the others that it is finished (*vidzagoma*), he/she has left us *adzahuricha* (he/she has left us) and break into crying and wailing. Christine Kadzo Ngala asserted that, the close family members at the same time have to close the eyes, mouth (*mamutengeze*) and lay the body straight facing upwards. The mouth is closed to avoid flies and air from entering the body and cause swelling of the body especially the abdomen part. Rachael Shani Yaa added; “if the deceased has long hair it may be trimmed as a sign of beginning of new life.” Grace Kadzo said that the deceased has to be washed clean with warm water because some people take a bath with warm water when still alive. She explained that this shows love for the deceased who cannot do it at that time; however, she said that some could use cold water.

Rachael Shani Yaa asserted that warm water is used to wash the body so that the body remains clean for it is shame and irresponsible if the body is not washed and many people come to see the body. Washing is also a sign of respect to the deceased. Joyce Shidha said that in such time a church elder or a family member leads a prayer to God to give the family strength during the difficult moment, and to thank God for the life lived by the deceased. One of the respondents who did not want his name mentioned said that her father died when she was the only one around him. She said: “when I discovered that he had left me, I had to remain calm. I closed his eyes, mouth, made him lie straight (*namtengeza kwanza*) and then I covered him with the clothes well, then I prayed before I started crying”. She did all this to ensure that when people come to see the deceased they find him well made.

Unlike the Jewish customs where being near the dead body makes a person unclean, the Christian do not have this custom.(Atinga, 2006) The body is washed thoroughly, a woman is washed by fellow women and a man is washed by fellow men just like the Jewish custom as explained above. After the preparations, the body is laid on a mat to rest. News of the death is sent to all relatives, friends, pastor and other church members. Rachael Shani Yaa asserted that depending on the deceased's wishes and the financial status of the family members, the body may be taken to the mortuary or they may decide to bury it without taking the body to the mortuary.

The Christians allow crying as it brings healing to the soul and helps the bereaved come to terms with the loss; however the Christians are advised to mourn with limit so as not to blaspheme God. Pastor Joseph Charo stated that; to live is the will of God and to die is the will of God. Pastor Joseph Charo explained to the researcher that we should be encouraged by Job who after hearing the news about the death of his seven sons, he said "naked I came from my mother, and naked I will return. The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away." Whenever one is overcome by grief, a close friend may comfort her/him and may tell them not to be like the pagans who have no hope for everlasting life in Jesus.

The deceased hair is trimmed in preparation for burial however this is done soon after death when the body is still warm. If the deceased is a woman trimming of the hair is done by women counter parts, and if the deceased is a man fellow men will do it so long as they are close family members such as a brother, son or sister, cousin or name sake. Joyce Shidha said that if the deceased has short hair it can be left like that. She said that the short hair will make the deceased look smart and presentable when dressed in the burial clothes on the burial day. It is also done to make the deceased look neat on this special occasion when many guests come to see him/her.

Washing the Deceased

Washing the corpse is a practice which was performed by the early Christians a common practice as said earlier which was found amongst the Egyptians, Romans, Greeks and the Jews(Rowell, 1977). Unlike the Jews, the Christians do not fear being near the corpse. Jesus said that whatever comes out of the mouth is the one that makes a person unclean. So even being near a dead person does not make one unclean. The body is washed to be clean since many people will be seeing the body. It is also done as a sign of respect for the deceased since he/she cannot do it by him/herself. Joyce Shidha said 'Washing is done to prepare the deceased on a final journey to be with the Lord Jesus Christ She further added that washing is done by males if the deceased is a male and if the deceased is a female it is done by fellow females. Therefore, in both cases washing is done by close family members of the same sex to the deceased, with warm water and bar soap.

Vigil/Singing

This ritual was preserved and carried on from the early Christianity funeral rituals. When news about death reaches to the ears of the people they gather, relatives and neighbors start gathering to join the mourners. Females who come stay around the body to guard it while others assist in the domestic chores such as fetching some water and fire wood. The male take part in digging the grave. Vigil or wake keeping takes place in the deceased's home where the mourners gather to keep the family members company during the difficult moment, a moment when they are in a

state of shock and grief over the sudden death of the loved one. It is a kind of celebration for the Christian community. During the vigil service, there are usually greetings from the organizer to call on people's attention. Worship songs are conducted by praise and worship groups or a choir member or a member of the congregation. This is followed by opening prayers to commit the service into God's hands so that God may lead the service. Songs are then sung, choruses, hymns, testimonies by church members concerning the life well lived by the deceased and Choruses concerning their own lives.

3.2.2 Areas of Conflict between Christianity and Indigenous African Burial Ritual Practices

Many times the Agiriama people find it hard to live without performing some of the indigenous burial and funeral rituals. The idea that the indigenous people may assist a dying person to hasten his/her death is in sharp contrast with the Christian teaching. Life is a gift from God and no one is allowed to take it, therefore assisting someone to die is considered to be a sin. Joyce Shidha said that this is a cruel act because everyone has a right to live as much as he/she can. The Kenyan law gives every individual the right to life, so this act is against the laws of this country. Though it is done secretly, it leaves the individuals who perform it with a guilty conscience hence it has got psychological effects. Consultation of traditional healers is not a Christian practice; Pastor Gideon Karisa said that it is like turning to other gods which God forbids. Bishop Mackenzie confirms that it is not God's plan for people to seek any assistance for healing from somewhere else except from God. Bishop David Kiponda said that it is the Christian right to be healed by Jesus because Jesus is the healer.. He added that the Christians are healed by the stripes of Jesus. However, Grace Kadzo said that some of the Christians when faced with problems like severe illness may fail to hold upon the faith and may secretly go to be treated traditionally or go to be treated in hospitals. She further said that her late husband was taken to a traditional religious specialist for treatment yet he was a Christian. She said that she was wondering whether God was going to give him eternal peace since he died at the traditional healer while undergoing treatment. Grace Kandzo and Chula Kalume said that it was good to leave such matters which are beyond our human understanding since God is the one who knows the hearts of all people and is the great merciful judge.

Other burial rituals and practices like the throwing of the death tears some believers between Christianity and African indigenous religion (*kikwehu*). Grace Kadzo said that some of the Christians with little faith secretly contact traditional religious specialists to be given traditional herbs for protection (*kubururushwa*) against the ancestral spirits and the mystical dirt of the death *kithio cha kifo* (dirt of the death). Atinga asserted that this has to be normalized through a purification rite for the woman (Atinga, 2006). He further said that at the death of a person and before the deceased joins the ancestors in the life hereafter, all those who have had relations with him or her have to purify themselves from this 'dirt', which they had contracted during their relationship with him/her (Atinga, 2006). Hence, the deceased's wife or widow in this case is left with the fear that she might become crazy or sick and die if the ritual is not performed or if she is not given any charm for protection..

The indigenous funeral songs place yet another tug of war between the Christians and the indigenous Agiriama people. Pastor Joyce Shidha, a strong believer in Jesus Christ, at the burial of her late husband said; "I cannot agree to sit for funeral." This is because she knew that once

she agrees to sit on the traditional mats *vitseka* (mats) then on the last day of mourning she would be asked to do the ritual of “throwing the death which is against her faith. Christine Kadzo advised her not to agree to sit for funeral because she said the climax would be to cleanse the home and throw the death. In this case the brothers to her late husband became so furious and said that they did not want anything to do with Joyce. Karisa Iha Charo, one of the deceased brothers, said; “you woman have no respect for your husband that is why you killed him.” It was not true that the widow, Joyce Shidha had killed her husband, it was just because Karisa and his indigenous relatives were not pleased with her refusal to sit for the funeral. Sidi Charo narrated that Yaa Baya was very famous, successful and an elder of the clan, upon death; some of his sons were Christians. He had left a wish concerning the kind of tree he wanted to be used to make the coffin. The sons did not follow their late father’s wish and used a different kind of tree which had small pieces of timber.¹ She further said that, because of this reason, the coffin was small and could not allow the body to be laid straight comfortably to rest in peace. She said that the legs were folded to make the body fit in the coffin; Grace Kadzo said that during the viewing of the body the deceased body was already covered with some small ants which was a bad sign. After the burial had been conducted, Sidi Charo said that, some months later, the deceased’s spirit started appearing in dreams to the family members who were not strong Christians demanding for a bigger coffin for burial claiming that he was tired of folding his legs in the small coffin. Sidi Charo narrated that, the deceased’s spirit appeared to the living several times with the same message but the sons did not pay any attention She further said that one day in the widows’ house were found two big cobras lying together side by side. They called for people and the two snakes were finally killed. On the following day the house caught fire, yet all the fire in the kitchen had been put off. The elders of the family consulted religious specialists to identify the cause of all the misfortunes. Shani Yaa said that after several consultations it was discovered that the misfortunes were caused by the late head of the family who was demanding proper burial with a decent coffin as he had instructed his sons before his death. When the message was given to the elder son he said that those were just propagandas the deceased father was gone and had no relationship with the family anymore. Sidi Maya said that on his way to the working place, his car refused to start off, he called several mechanics to check on the problem but there was nothing wrong. His Uncle Mangi Mweri told him to consider his father’s wish, when he agreed; the car was able to start without any problem. A day was chosen to carry out the second burial for the already buried man. The family members set a date and made all the necessary arrangements for the function.

In this chapter it is clear that the Agiriama view of life and death contrasts with the Christian view on life and death. There are some burial rituals and practices that are similar to both Christians and the indigenous among the Agiriama community. It is also clear that for both the Christians and the Indigenous Agiriama people, death calls for togetherness, it is a communal event. In both cases there is the fear of the unknown, so whenever one falls sick, the family members try as much as possible to look for cure, however, death is inevitable. The following rituals must be performed upon death. Closing of the eyes and the mouth is done as a first step to prepare the deceased. After the necessary preparations have been made death news is spread to

¹ Sidi Charo Mangi in an oral interview with the author on 12th April 2016 at Mariakani.

the members. The Agiriama indigenous have many prohibitions which aim at giving the family and the community protection, unlike the Christians who believe that God protects people not the rituals. It is also very clear from this chapter that the Christians do not sit for many days like the indigenous people during funerals. Moreover, they do not shave their hair which is a sign of mourning and beginning of new life to the indigenous Agiriama community. The many differences noted in this chapter are the causes of the conflict which has forever existed during burials between Christians and the indigenous adherents among the Agiriama people; there is an urgent need therefore to address this matter to enhance peaceful co-existence between the Christians and the indigenous Agiriama Community.

3.2.3 Towards a Dialogue between Christianity and the African Indigenous Religion on Burial Rituals and Practices: The Search for a Possible Solution

With reference to embracing dialogue, God calls all people to reason where he promises them that even if their sins are as red as scarlet; they will be washed and made as white as snow. This depicts that dialogue brings understanding of each other, hence enhancing forgiveness. Geertz asserted that every ritual action has meaning attached to it (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, the Christians should embrace dialogue and find the meaning of each ritual practice performed by the Agiriama community during burial. This will enable the Christians to understand the reason why the Agiriama indigenous people cannot simply do away with their cultural practices even when they become Christians. At this juncture, the researcher wishes to emphasize that there is an urgent need for the intra-religious dialogue between Christianity and the indigenous religion for a peaceful co-existence. If possible, matters concerning death should no longer be feared, instead people should be sensitized and encouraged to make wills on how they would like to be buried. The wishes of the dying and the dead should be respected because they are helpless and depend on the mercies of those still alive.

4.0 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, there is presentation of the summary of the major findings of the entire study and the conclusions drawn from the chapters in the study. It also presents recommendations and suggestions on areas for further research. The main purpose of this study was to examine the Agiriama and the Christian's burial rites and practices in the light of identifying similarities and differences so as to establish the conflict which exists between the indigenous Agiriama and the Christians during burials. The study was guided by the interpretation of culture and the inter-religious theories. It was assumed that both the Christians and the indigenous Agiriama can understand each other through dialogue for a peaceful co-existence.

The early Christian missionaries planted Christianity with Western culture on the African soil. The early Christian missionaries did not promote the African rich and varied culture. Instead they promoted their own Western culture leaving no room for the African Christian to practice their culture. The research moves from the theoretical blame game that has always existed. It aims at interpreting the culture through an inter-religious dialogue which will bring about an understanding of each other's faith and beliefs. This will assist in promoting peace and harmony among the community members. Death knocks at the door of every human being. What happens after death is a serious concern not so much to the deceased but to the living. For this reason, many cultures and religions have rituals of the death and burials that correspond to their belief

systems and practices. The Agiriama communities of Kilifi County have a belief system concerning the dead that is very much related in their rituals of the dead. They view death as a journey into the next world: the world of the ancestors.

The Agiriama see their rituals as not just a ritual of adieu but as an aid to the journey of the deceased to the ancestral world. Food and animal sacrifices is to assist the deceased to celebrate with the ancestors in the spiritual world. Therefore, it is believed that the ritual celebration will bring about the peaceful arriving of the deceased into the ancestral family. Burial rituals and practices are seen as a celebration that re-establishes the equilibrium of the community after the loss of their loved one; in that death disturbs the family and the whole community. With the Agiriama community, death is viewed as a community event rather than a simple passing event that affects a particular family.

There is a close relationship between the living and the dead, the dead remain in a very effective way: they are the custodians of the moral and religious lives of the living. The dead are highly respected by the Agiriama because they guide and protect them, the indigenous Agiriama also believe that the dead bless those who are living. Therefore, the living members have the obligations to offer sacrifices to the ancestors in the form of libation and food staff. The burial rituals and practices performed are believed to aid the dead to the ancestral world, namely home. For this reason, the Agiriama indigenous adherents care for their dead relatives graves by erecting memorial posts. They also build shrines *k'oma* which serve as places of worship. Both the Christians and the indigenous Agiriama believe in life after death. However, there is a sharp contrast in the way one spends his/her life after death.

The Agiriama indigenous adherents believe in the spiritual world of ancestors. The living and the dead are virtually connected; the dead still take active part in the lives of the living. On the other hand the Christians believe in a day of judgment, where every person shall be judged and the wicked, whose deeds are bad, shall be thrown to the lake of fire. The Christians believe that those who will have confessed their sins and have lived according to the teachings of Jesus Christ shall go to heaven to be with Jesus Christ. Heaven is believed to be a very good place where there is no sorrow, worry, there is eternal happiness. For the Christians, the dead have no relationship with the living, they are asleep. The Christian may not have any elaborate burial rituals. Moreover, the Christians leave no room for post burial rituals. This has created much misunderstanding between them and their indigenous counterparts.

4.1.1 Summary of the findings and conclusions of the study

This study dealt with the analysis of burial conflicts between Agiriama Christians and African Religious adherents of Kilifi County. The first chapter gave an introduction and the background of the study. In the second chapter the Agiriama burial rituals and practices were analyzed. The third chapter analyzed the Christian burial ritual practices a case study of Pefa Church. The fourth chapter of the study examined the areas of conflict between the two rituals. The fifth chapter presented the possible solutions to the existing conflicts between the Agiriama Christians and the African religious adherents of Kilifi County. Chapter six is the final chapter of this study and it presents summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The study explored a conceptual framework with concepts borrowed from the 'interpretation of culture' theory by Geertz. Every ritual practice that the Agiriama and the Christian perform has

some meaning. This framework formed the basis for establishing the reason as to why the African religious adherents of Kilifi County value so much the traditional burial ritual practices that they can not simply abandon them. The study also used some Biblical teachings concerning death and afterlife. This assisted in giving the theological meaning of the Christian burial ritual practices. To bridge the gap, the study proposed an inter-religious theory by Jonathan Napier. This was also borrowed from the biblical teachings on dialogue. The data obtained was organized and arranged in themes according to the objectives of the study for the purpose of analyzing and interpretation. What follows is a discussion of the summary of the study objectives.

Data for the study was obtained through participant's observation. The researcher was able to attend five burials. The researcher was mainly concerned with what rituals were performed from death till burial and some days after the burial had taken place. The researcher also used Focus Group Discussions, oral interviews and obtained the necessary information. The researcher also used secondary sources to gather more information and seek clarifications on what was obtained from primary sources. The data obtained was organized and arranged thematically according to the objectives of the study for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. Below is a discussion of the summary of the study objectives:

The first objective was to analyse the Indigenous Agiriama burial ritual practices. It established that the indigenous Agiriama have an elaborated burial rituals which must be performed when one dies. These burial rituals are very important for the family wellbeing and they assist the spirit of the deceased to rest in peace in the spiritual world of the ancestors. The burial rituals among the indigenous Agiriama people are as important as the burial itself. They believe that failure to observe the burial rituals would hinder the deceased's spirit from reaching the ancestral world which they believe that the deceased's spirit become wondering and could cause harm to those living family members. It was established that death among the Agiriama community is a community affair and the death of children was not given due importance.

The Agiriama believe that death provokes the need for celebration, through the funeral rituals. The funeral rituals are both for the living and for the dead. The celebration brings together the community which has been disturbed by the death. In order to comfort each other, this is necessary for the healing of the hearts of the bereaved family members and the community at large.

The burial rituals and practices bring about the equilibrium of the community that has been disturbed by death. Among the Agiriama community, like the Frafra of Ghana, the dead are not just the one time members of the family who are gone before but are still effectively full members of the family and the community. The dead are the custodians of the moral and religious lives of the living. The dead watch over the living and the living offer sacrifices to the ancestors (*k'oma*) during burials. During burials, the living have the task of ensuring that the dead arrive safely to the ancestral world by giving them proper burial rituals.

The Agiriama people view life in fullness in such a way that whatever they do, they perceive it with reference to community life. To the Agiriama what promoted human life was considered worth it, thus to the Agiriama people life is given by God and it is sacred. Whenever one was

sick, it was a community problem hence, the members did all that was possible ways to make that person get well.

The Agiriama people cared for each other in times of happiness and in times of sorrow. So it was a duty of every member to show love and care for the afflicted. To live alone and to die alone to the Agiriama was like a curse and an evil act. Hence the spirit of togetherness (*udugu*) was highly emphasized among the Agiriama people. Like other African communities, the Agiriama people's life is connected to their ancestors in such a way that there is no clear cut line between the living and the living dead, hence they pay great respect to them. Thus the elaborate burial rituals and practices help to bring a check and balance between the living and the living dead.

The Agiriama people display great respect for their dead for they believe in an afterlife. The elaborate burial rituals and practices are performed to safeguard both the dead and those living as discussed in chapter two. The Agiriama love togetherness which is seen as *Ubinadamu/ Utu* (humanity). Hospitality among the members of the Agiriama community is expressed in their collective responsibility *umwenga* (unity) seen when one has a problem just like when death occurs. They stayed together to comfort the bereaved. During such times each family gave their contribution which shows a spirit of love and care for each other even after death. Some gave donations *Midzi-chenda* in form of money while others provided foodstuff and animal for slaughtering on the day for (slaughtering) *Siku ya kutsinza*. The elaborate burial rituals helped to heal the hearts of the living and give the deceased a smooth journey to the spiritual world.

Cleansing the mourners and the home also ensured that the family and the community at large stayed healthy *Uzimawa lalo* (community health). This explains why the Agiriama people probably could not renounce or do away with some of the burial rituals even when they became Christians. The Agiriama believe that every death has a cause such as nature, witchcraft and sorcerers, failure to obey the ancestors. The Agiriama tend to categories death into normal death such as death of very old people who have lived their lives to the fullest. They also have abnormal deaths which include death of young ones and those close to death.

Bad deaths are death where one dies alone far from family members. Other bad deaths include death from drowning, suicide, being struck by lightning, and accidents. Once death has occurred, the cause must be established so that they may prevent such death from striking the family again. The burial rituals and practices depend on the way in which death occurred and the age of the deceased. Burial rituals and practice also depends on the social status of the person. The position of birth also determined whether a person should be given full burial ritual.

4.1.2 Primary burial rituals

The Agiriama indigenous people perform very many rituals for their dead. However, all the rituals are performed only when elderly men died. A certain number of rituals are omitted depending on the age, sex and marital status of the deceased. The ritual performed include: closing of the eyes and the mouth, strengthening the body to rest on the back facing upwards, spreading the death news whereby every family member is informed on what has transpired to their beloved family member. The ear of the deceased is held ritualistically in case the deceased had a serious disagreement with one of the close family member. Washing the deceased is done to make him/her presentable to the many visitors. The study discovered that the Agiriama people

have their own mortuary rites and prefer to keep their dead at home rather than taking them to the mortuary.

This study discovered that the Agiriama community has great love and care for each other even death cannot stop this love. Upon death, the deceased is never left alone until burial takes place. The deceased's body is well prepared and dressed nicely for burial because death is seen as a journey to the ancestral world. The dead are dressed well because they are on a journey to the world of ancestors. When a pregnant woman dies, the Agiriama do not bury her with the baby inside her womb: a traditional postmortem has to be conducted then she is buried in the same tomb with the baby. The Agiriama funerals concern the whole community; therefore, consultations have to be done so that the elders are involved in the arrangements. Throughout the mourning period, the Agiriama keep awake to guard the dead and to accompany the bereaved family members. The close family members of the deceased are given strict instructions which they have to follow. Failure to observe the instructions could lead to another death of a close family member.

The Agiriama community has funeral songs which are suitable only for the accession not outside the context. The funeral songs such as *Kifudu* dance use very abusive words which one would not want to hear when there is a mother, father, daughter or son. For this reason the Christians cannot withstand these songs. The study discovered that the Agiriama women are not allowed to stay close to the grave. Burials are conducted by men while women stay a distance away watching what happens. The study discovered that the Agiriama community use mats for burial as a sleeping mat for the deceased.

4.1.3 The post burial ritual practices

The post burial rituals for the Agiriama people include washing the jembes immediately after sealing the tomb. The mourners also wash their faces, hands and legs. This study also discovered that the Agiriama indigenous people have a specific number of days for mourning. The mourning days have specific prescribed rituals to be observed such as shaving of the hair of the close relatives, slaughtering of animals for ancestral sacrifices and for food for the mourners. On the last day the widow/ widower, father or mother to the deceased has to conduct the ritual of throwing the death. An Agiriama religious specialist has to perform the ritual of cleansing the home to make sure that the family stays health.

4.1.4 The Christian's burial rites

The second objective of the study was to analyze the Christian burial ritual practice. Under this objective, the study also discussed the theological meaning of the Christian burial rituals. It was found that the Pastors and church elders conducted the burial rituals for their deceased members and this helped the deceased's family members to come to terms with the reality. The study established that the Christian burial rituals were conducted up to burial and that the post burial rituals were lacking. It was further noted that pastors, church elders and other believers conducted prayers for the bereaved family members. They also supported the bereaved families with some finances and foodstuffs; this makes them feel encouraged and focus their faith in Jesus Christ.

The third objective was to establish the areas of conflicts between Christianity and African indigenous religion on burial rituals. It was noted that most of the pre-burial rituals for both Christians and the indigenous people are similar. However, there are some differences on the belief in after life. The indigenous African adherents believe in an afterlife to be in a spiritual world of ancestors. Hence, there is a link between the livings, the living dead and the ancestors. To reach the ancestral world, both the pre-burial rites and post burial rites are mandatory. On the other hand, it was found that to the Christians death is centered on Christ's death and resurrection. The Christian believe in an afterlife; to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in a good place known as heaven or paradise. It was noted that the Christian also believe on the day of judgment, when those found to be righteous will go to heaven, while those found with sins will be thrown to hell. Hell is believed to be a place of torment where the sinners will surfer for eternity. It was established that some indigenous people's burial practices such as; cleansing the deceased's home, burial of babies under the mother's bed, ritually throwing of the death, wife inheritance and offering animal sacrifice for the dead were in sharp contrast with Christian teachings. The burial rituals have caused many conflicts when death occurred in a family where there were different faiths. From the findings from the respondents, the study discovered that the Agiriama Christians in PEFA church in Mariakani in Kilifi County have done little in interpreting the Agiriama culture with reference to burial rituals and practices.

The fourth objective was to suggest possible solutions for the existing conflicts. The study established that there is need to interpret the Agiriama culture to establish the meaning of every ritual practice performed by the African indigenous religion adherents. It was established that an understanding of each other's faith and beliefs is of paramount. The study noted that the understanding could only be achieved through an inter-religious dialogue between the two groups. It was also discovered that little has been done on the engagement of dialogue between the Christians and the indigenous Agiriama people. It was discovered that this study was the first study that attempted to examine the cultural heritage and Christianity concerning burial rituals and practices and how these two groups are at a cross roads during burials. For this case, this study established that although the PEFA church has been in Mariakani in Kilifi County for many decades, it lacked any proper evidences in engaging with the local communities and culture. The study found that anything to do with culture is considered evil and superstitious. It is therefore, important for the indigenous and the Christians to engage in dialogue. It is also important for the cultural practices to be interpreted to remove the notion of negativity which exists.

Although some cultural practices are for the wellbeing of the community little has been done to interpret them for a better understanding. There is need for a proper dialogue between the Agiriama indigenous religions (AIR) and Christianity so that those bad concepts which have been overtaken by time and space can be interpreted and replaced by good elements. This study argues that the interpretation of culture and interfaith dialogue are vital aspects which the church needs to address with urgency for the wellbeing of the society.

4.2 General Conclusions

The study discovered that the Christians have some burial rituals which they perform upon the death of their loved ones. The Christians like the indigenous Agiriama perform the following rituals: the eyes and the mouth of the deceased have to be closed and the body laid down straight

facing upwards. Prayer has to be conducted to give the family strength, protection and courage during the mourning period. The deceased's hair may be trimmed or combed nicely to make it neat. The body must be washed and dressed with nice clothes to make the deceased look nice and presentable before the many guests who come to view the body. The news of the death has to be spread to the relatives living near and far. The body is taken to the mortuary to give the family time to prepare for a good send off for their beloved one. The Agiriama Christians too guard the dead bodies of their loved ones. Therefore, they stay awake day and night during which they sing Christian hymns and choruses to comfort the bereaved family members. The grave is dug at the usual family burial ground by the neighbours with the full authority of the head of the family. Preparations for the body for burial are done at the mortuary where the body is washed again and dressed well. The close family members may select common clothes to wear on the burial day such as *dhera*, *kikoi* and *khanga*.

There is usually a program organized and followed by the master of ceremony. There are speeches from various people starting with the family members. The eulogy or biography of the deceased which may have been prepared after death is read. Singing and dancing Christian choruses accompanied by the ritual of the word is conducted. The mourners are then given an opportunity to view the body for the last time. Then the body is escorted to the grave for burial. After the body has been buried, prayers are conducted for the family members. The jembes are washed and flowers may be placed at the newly sealed grave. A family representative gives a vote of thanks followed by a closing prayer. The mourners are saved with food and they can leave at their own diction. The close relatives who remain sleep in the deceased's compound. The deceased's clothes and other belongings may be distributed to the family members.

4.2.1 To Analyze the Relationship on Biblical Themes on Death and Afterlife

Analyzing the Similarities and Differences in the Light of the Judeo – Christian Culture:

This section concerns the fourth objective of the study which was to identify the similarities and differences, in order to identify the cause of the conflict. Inter-religious dialogue is one of the modalities suitable for developing African Christianity. The baseline data collected from the field indicated that there were lots of similarities in the burials among the Jewish which were carried into the Christian and the Agiriama people and which were in line with Biblical teaching. However, there were sharp contrasts with some of the Agiriama cardinal burial rituals and practices. The rituals of closing the eyes, the mouth, washing the corpse and shaving the bereaved were common to the Jews, the Christian as well as the Agiriama people. The rituals of prayers are a common practice. Bereaving with the deceased's family for a period of time is also common to both the Jews and the Agiriama as well as to the Christians.

The contrasting burial practices according to the findings of this study include the burial of small babies in their mother's house, the slaughtering of animals at the grave as an ancestral ritual for the dead. Throwing of the death, where the bereaved man or woman has to have sexual intercourse with a known or unknown man in the name of throwing the death is in sharp contrast with biblical teaching. The ritual of cleansing the home in order to send away bad spirits, done by a religious specialist with the use of a mixture of herbs is in sharp contrast with Christian practices. The practice of wife inheritance is a ritual done by the indigenous Agiriama; it is a practice which is becoming outdated and it is also in conflict with Christian practices. It is clear

that prayers for cleansing the home after death has occurred is necessary for both the indigenous Agiriama and the Christians for the community's well-being (Uzima wa lalo), however the way the indigenous people perform the prayers is in sharp contrast with Christian practice.

4.3 Recommendations for further research

Since the Christian burial rituals lack post burial rituals, the research suggests that the Christians should adapt some of the post burial rituals in order to fill the gap which exists between the Christian and the Agiriama indigenous. The Agiriama indigenous post burial rituals have many days for sitting with a lot of feasting. These can be reduced to minimize the expenses encountered during the mourning period. The research recommends that a study of Christian burial rituals and practices should be done with different Pentecostal churches for more understanding of the Christian burial rituals. The findings of this study should be used to further equip the Christians and the Agiriama indigenous in the importance of burial rituals. The research recommends that studies on the topic of burial of young babies be carried out. From this study, young babies are not given any burial ritual. The burial of young babies is left for women. It has to be investigated whether their spirits become wondering spirits due to lack of burial rituals or that they join the world of the ancestors. The Christians give the young babies equal burial importance like the adults, because to the Christians everybody is equal. This has to be investigated whether there is any effect to the child, mother and the community at large.

The researcher recommends further research on the post burial rituals like throwing of the death if there are any alternatives to such indigenous burial rituals which are even violating human rights. It would also be of great interest to explore further the challenges faced by those who throw the death in contrast to those who do not cleanse their homes nor throw the death. The study recommends that a comparative study be carried out on how other cultures other than the Agiriama treat the death of a child and the death of a mother with a baby in her womb. The researcher recommends that more research on the topic be carried out for more clarification of the findings.

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