

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Traditional Oath Administration and Cleansing in Africa: The Case of the Akamba Ethnic Group in Kenya

Monica N. Muliro

Arts Religious Studies Student, Egerton University, Kenya

Matthew M. Theuri

Dean, School of Business Management and Economic, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya

Reuben M. Matheka

Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy History and Religious Studies, Egerton University, Kenya

Abstract:

This study examined traditional oath administration and cleansing among Akamba in Machakos County, Kenya. This study was conducted as a qualitative case study in Machakos Sub County of Machakos County. The target population was the Kamba Christians in Machakos County. Purposive sampling technique was used in sampling Kamba Christians from Mainline Churches and those who participated were selected using snowball sampling technique. Informants identified were subjected to interview schedules to provide primary data for the study. Primary data was collaborated and supplemented by secondary data collected from various libraries. The data collected was edited, coded, classified and analysed. This study learnt of the various ways Kamba oathing (Kithitu) is administered and cleansed like public performance by a religious specialist, Ndundu oath, breaking of the earthen ware pot, swearing on the loin clothes by women, burning and urinating on a piece of wood, pouring millet on fire, and the use of soil in land conflict. However one can be cleansed of the effects of the oath. From the findings, this research concluded that Kithitu has a modern significance and it is interrelated and supported by continuity of other African traditional concepts like kinship ties, belief in ancestors, rites of passage, taboos and community. This research consequently recommended a further and contemporary study of African traditional Religious concepts as one main source of doing African Christian theology.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, Traditional oathing, Cleansing, religious specialists

1. Introduction

Today's African society is dominated by religions that originated outside Africa like Christianity and Islam. However, this does not mean that African traditional Religion (ATR) is no longer being practiced in Africa. It was expected that traditional religious beliefs and practices associated with ATR would decline and eventually disappear but this has not happened. Scholars like Kamaara (2009), Cox (2008), Kasomo (2010), Mathema (2007), Gehman (1989), Idowu (1973), Mbiti (1970) agree that Africans are still strongly influenced by African Traditional Religion.

According to Kamaara (2009), African Traditional Religions are widely practiced all over Kenya except if one is thinking of traditional religion in liturgical sense in which only 10% of the total population of Kenyans adhere to traditional religions. Indeed, African Traditional Religions may no longer be practiced as it was in the 19th century but this dynamic characteristic is common in all religions.

One practice that has continued is Oathing. Oathing is a very important aspect of African Traditional Religions Clough (1998), Thornton (1992), Mathai (2006), Oyugi (1994), Cooper (1996), and Gehman (1989). Oathing has been used in Africa to promote the African cultural beliefs and practices, harmony and mutual responsibility and in justice administration.

Oathing has continued to present Africa and cases of Africans professing Christianity using oath are not a rare occurrence. For instance the Kamba oath has been used to solve conflicts among the Akamba and has even been ordered by the courts. On 23rd October 2003, More than 3000 members of Kwa Mating'i Coffee Farmers Cooperatives Society in Machakos Town Sub-County administered a Kamba traditional oath against those who torched its more than 25 acres of coffee trees. The society's chairman, on behalf of members applied for and received a permit from the Matungulu Sub-County Officer, to administer the oath at the Cooperatives offices. Also members of a famous Sacco in Kiambu *Mbo-i-kamiti* forced their directors to swear on the Kikuyu oath that they will not embezzle the funds of the members. The members believe anyone who breaks the oath will face serious

repercussions.

When traditional oaths have been used the persons guilty and members of their families are punished by the oath which causes death and a series of misfortunes on the offenders and their families. However, when they make restitution, confess and they are forgiven, they can approach the religious leaders and be cleansed of the effects of the oath. This study discusses the administration and cleansing of traditional oaths and specifically examines the practice among the Kamba ethnic group in Kenya.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted as a qualitative case study in Machakos Town Sub County of Machakos County. The target population was Kamba Christians in Machakos County while the accessible population was Kamba Christians in Machakos Town Sub County. Sample size was determined through the approach based on the precision rate and confidence level Kothari (2004). The sampling procedure involved both purposive sampling (snowball sampling) and random sampling procedures. This study obtained information from two sources: first, secondary data obtained through Library research and second, primary data collected in Machakos Town Sub County. Primary data was obtained from 72 informants through personal interviews using interview schedules. Data analysis involved editing, coding and classification. Being an exhaustive study of a social unit the qualitative case study method enabled this research to understand fully the Kamba oathing (*Kithitu*) among the AKamba in Machakos County.

3. Results and Discussion

From the respondents this study was able to describe in details the various ways in which Kamba oathing (*Kithitu*) is practiced: the persons who administer *Kithitu*, how it is administered, how it works, and how one is cleansed of the effects of *Kithitu*.

3.1. Who Administers

First, 99% of the respondents indicated that the administration of *Kithitu* is done either by an offended person or by a hired religious specialist. Majority of the respondents said that an individual may decide to use *Kithitu* privately in secret when offended or use the services of a *Kithitu* keeper or religious specialist. However the religious specialist said using *Kithitu* secretly is discouraged and those found are punished for causing innocent deaths because *Kithitu* is said to affect the offender and innocent members of his or her family.

The second method is through a religious specialist. According to 99% of the respondents, the offended person is supposed to report the offence to the administrative leaders and inform them of his or her intentions to use *Kithitu*. The administration leaders are the one to then grant or deny permission for the use of *Kithitu*. If granted permission the offended person looks for a *Kithitu* religious specialist to now administer *Kithitu*. A notice of one to two weeks is given before *Kithitu* is administered on the supposed offenders.

However the interview with the administration leaders revealed that the use of *Kithitu* is not allowed and they no longer issue permits for its use. Furthermore, those found using it should face the full force of the law because the government cannot and does not allow killing. Moreover, allowing its use encourage killing. But 72% of the respondents stated that *Kithitu* is still a common practice in Machakos County and the religious specialist admitted to have cleansed people under the curse of *Kithitu*. The administrative leaders further said that when there is quote of death or concrete evidence that *Kithitu* has been used then those involved are arrested.

3.2. The Various Ways *Kithitu* Is Administered

This study gathered that in most cases *Kithitu* is administered by the offended party privately and in secret than by a religious specialist. Following is a discussion of the various ways *Kithitu* is administered from the respondents.

3.2.1 Administration through a Religious Specialist

From this study, 79% of the respondents could describe how *Kithitu* is administered through a *Kithitu* Keeper or religious specialist. Majority of the respondents explained that in this type of administration, a *Kithitu* religious specialist uses medicine put in a horn to curse the offenders. In this case, administration is done publicly in the presence of elders and permission must be sort from the chief or any administrative leader.

The respondents further explained that in this type of *Kithitu*, it is used when an offence has been committed and no one wants to own up to the offence. When administered or pronounced by the religious specialist, the guilty person wherever he may be is followed by the curse together with his or her family. Also it is used when one is accused and wants to proof his or her innocence. The person is given the horn by the religious specialist and swears publicly that if he or she is guilty misfortunes should follow him or her and his or her family.

This study also found out from the religious specialist that the *Kithitu* keeper or religious specialist must be a married man and of high moral standing otherwise the powers of *Kithitu* will kill or drive him mad. Some of the respondents RA13, RA10, RA9 stated that the horn of *Kithitu* is usually kept in desolate places and must not be rained on as it drives away rain. It must also be kept away from the homestead because it causes evil and be covered by a red, black or white cloth for identification. Furthermore one should not come near or touch it with the naked hands. The religious specialist interviewed refused to disclose details/ingredients of the horn of *Kithitu* but insisted that he does not administer it but cleanses those under the oath.

This study also gathered from the religious specialist that *Kithitu* religious specialists receive their powers/role from their fore fathers and he personally inherited from his grandfather. He also revealed that *Kithitu* religious specialists are men because only men are allowed to keep *Kithitu*. Moreover, one is supposed to seek permission to keep *Kithitu*. He further added that *Kithitu* religious specialists live normal lives like the rest of the people they marry and have children of their own. According to the religious specialist,

when it was time for him to become a specialist he had to come back home from Nairobi, marry and then become a religious specialist. However, before becoming a religious specialist a handing over ritual ceremony must be performed in the presence of close family members.

This study observes that traditional religious specialists are still recognized in contemporary Kenya. This means their roles are still significant and people appreciate and revere them. However, how do the young people view them? Are they ready to assume the role of religious specialists? This study observed that *Kithitu* religious specialist learn through apprenticeship and those who inherit the powers are grandsons meaning they are the youth. This study also reveals that apprenticeship is still an important part of learning African traditional religion and culture. However, with formal education it becomes a challenge because the same apprentice should go to school as stipulated by the constitution.

This study found out from majority of the respondents that during the public administration ceremony, the head men, chief and clan men are supposed to be present. The specialist may administer *Kithitu* or ask the offended person or the accused to administer it. Before the administration of *Kithitu* the specialist must inform the family of the accused and the community that he wants to administer *Kithitu*. This is because people fear and believe that it never fails in punishing the guilty. Moreover, the curse of *Kithitu* not only affects the accused but also his or her family. It is therefore important that members of his or her family and community know so that they can talk to the accused so that if he or she is guilty; he or she admits to avert evil. It is better for one to pay fine than let the whole family bear the consequence of his or her actions.

81% of the respondents were in agreement that this type of *Kithitu* is a recognized and allowed by the government. Majority were even able to outline the steps that are followed before one can use it. The first step is reporting the case to the chief and informing him of ones intention to administer *Kithitu*. The complainant is then issued with a permit. He or she then gives notice to the people. The notice period ranges from one to two weeks. He or she also gives the assembly place where the administration will be done either at home or at the chief's office.

If the notice period elapses without someone admitting to the offence, then a religious specialist and the elders assemble and the meeting is chaired by the chief. The complainant is questioned by the religious specialist and the elders present. The religious specialist then places the horn containing *Kithitu* medicine on the ground. The complainant is then instructed to strike the horn containing medicine and utters words to curse the offenders. The people wait for seven days and then observe the signs of the *Kithitu* curse. If the following signs are observed or occur, it confirms that one is guilty and *Kithitu* has worked. They include: breaking of a glass or cup containing water or tea, chicks being taken by eagles, swarm of bees flying to the compound and Miscarriages.

The guilty person is then ordered to pay fine in order to be cleansed to stop the evils caused by *Kithitu*. If the person refuses to pay fine, then people or livestock begin to die mysteriously after a month or after a certain period of time. It is said the oath carries with it powers which kill. So even if an individual suffers misfortunes, the eventual end of the individual is death. The guilty is not the first to die but his immediate family members. Usually he is afflicted by misfortune so that he feels the pain, admits the guilt and pay fine before evil continues to befall him and his family.

According to the religious specialist, during the administration of *Kithitu*, the religious specialist is supposed to refrain from bathing and having any sexual encounters with a woman for a week otherwise *Kithitu* will not work. The complainants involved also observe the same rituals.

From the above findings this study observes that the Religious specialists are only men and those involved must abstain from sex during the performance of *Kithitu*. In traditional African communities, Sex is sacred because of its power to transmit life and life is a gift from God. Therefore, because *Kithitu* is associated with causing evil and killing, those involved must abstain from sex. Moreover, because women are the ones to carry the child they cannot be allowed to keep *Kithitu* lest it affects them and makes them barren or cause miscarriages.

3.2.2. Ndundu Oath

The second type of *Kithitu* according to 47% of the respondents is referred to as (*Ndundu*) oath. This type of oath is also performed publicly. However, some scholars assert that *Kithitu* and (*Ndundu*) are different.

This study discovered that *Ndundu* oath is used when persons swear not to engage in some activities or to swear secrecy. 61% of the respondents said that *Ndundu* oath is used when a married woman has to swear that they will never use or buy witchcraft. Also it is used to determine whether someone is guilty of already using witchcraft. The accused person swears on *Ndundu* that she is innocent and has never used witchcraft or involved herself in any witch craft related activities. *Ndundu* is mainly used to ensure that people do not involve themselves in witchcraft activities.

In the first instance the husband instructs his wife to swear on the *Ndundu* that she will never use witchcraft. If she ever tries to use witchcraft during their marriage misfortunes befall her. The respondents further explained that the practice has been there to ensure that a woman does not bewitch his people (in-laws), teach or introduce his children into witchcraft. In the second instance, as explained by RD13 a woman is usually accused of using witchcraft or a person is accusing her of bewitching them. In such cases, the accused is told to swear on the *Ndundu* oath to proof her innocence.

The *Ndundu* oath is also used to swear secrecy. In such cases, according to RA5 people involved in the agreement swear not to reveal the secrets of the group. If any of the members breaks the agreement, then misfortunes sworn befall them and their families.

There are two ways in which *Ndundu* is performed. First, Respondent RA20 said that a cow is suffocated to death and a stick inserted into its rectum as words of curse are uttered or pronounced. In the second instance, according to RD9 a cow is slaughtered usually provided by the accused. Then the accused and the accuser are given special parts of the cow which are raw to eat. As they eat, both the accused and the accuser swear by it. As they swear by it, the true witch is afflicted by the curse of *Kithitu*.

Another observation is that *Kithitu* is used to ensure women do not engage in witchcraft. So this study asks whether it is lawful for a woman to be forced to take the oath before marriage. Also can it work when the wife comes from another tribe? Therefore the use of *Kithitu* must be interpreted in line with the constitution.

3.2.3. Breaking of the Pot

This study gathered that 99% of the respondents are familiar with this type of *Kithitu* which involves breaking of an earthen ware pot also referred to as Curse of the pot (*Mbisu/Kyungu*). This means it is the most commonly used type of *Kithitu*. The respondents said that People mainly use it privately when they have been offended but it can also be used publicly and people use it when a crime has been committed and the offender is not known.

The researcher found out that the offended individual smashes an earthenware pot or (*Kyungu*) and utters words cursing the unknown offenders. The earthenware pot used must have cooked food at one time. The pot is smashed completely into small pieces that are irreparable (*kukunania mbisu*). According to RA4 when used publicly the accused smashes the *Kyungu* and swears that if he committed the crime then his life should suffer (*naanya kindu kyaku nooiwa nisu*). The evil words sworn by the person breaking the pot are believed to afflict the offender and justice is administered.

In other cases according to RA9, RA18 and others a special stick is used to hit the pot. As one hits the pot to break it, one pronounces the curse. This ceremony is led by a religious specialist and people must witness the ceremony. The responded usually states that justice be established and consequences are established to the guilt. The curse then only afflicts the guilty.

However, the religious specialist and administrative leader said that many people perform it in secret and it is only discovered when people start seeing misfortunes befalling a particular family concurrently. Also people know that *Mbisu or Kyungu* has been broken when they come across broken pieces of a pot or after consulting a religious specialist. When the person who broke the pot is unknown, the matter is reported to the chief because it is a crime. A notice is then issued to alert the people that *Mbisu* has been broken and if they know the person responsible to report the matter immediately.

3.2.4. Ngumbe

This study also found out from 99% of the respondents another type of *Kithitu* referred to as (*Ngumbe*) or Women swearing on their loin clothes/ nakedness. This type of *Kithitu* is used by women only and is rarely used and sensitive among the Akamba but majority of the respondents are familiar with it. It is mainly used by women to curse members of their family who have wronged them. According to RA10, RD16 and RA14, the woman curses her family by swearing on her loin clothes or while naked. It can be a mother cursing her children for neglecting or disrespecting her. While cursing her children, she removes her clothes in front of them and using her index finger taps her private parts or loins and utters words cursing her children. The religious specialist added that in the African community it is a taboo to see the nakedness (private parts) of an old woman and especially a mother. When an old woman thus removes her clothes in front of her children, already that is viewed as a curse in itself.

In other instances according to RB11, RB3, RC5, a woman either a widow or a woman who is not married may be mistreated by members of her extended family by either taking her property or neglecting her and her children. Because of the pain and suffering she decides to curse the entire family. This type of a curse is feared because it kills or can affect the whole family or clan if not reversed. It starts with her family then spreads to the other members of the extended family and eventually the clan. It can be done publicly or privately. RA7 said that some women because of the pain may opt to perform it privately so that the curse is not reversed and the offenders suffer completely for the pain they have inflicted on her.

As stated earlier women who have used it usually remove all their clothes and that is why it is referred to as (*Ngumbe*) or nakedness. This study also gathered from the respondents that some women use their index finger to taps their private parts seven times and pronounce s a curse or evil on the other person while other women remove their clothes and hit their buttocks or behinds as they curse the offenders. An offended sister can also remove her clothes in front of her brothers and curse them. This type of a curse is not restricted to the family members alone. In other cases a woman may be offended by people outside her family and in rage publicly remove her clothes and curse the offenders or those who have hurt her.

The religious specialist further emphasized that this kind of *Kithitu* is feared and dangerous because it can lead to the extinction of an entire family, clan or lineage. So when such a curse has been pronounced, and it is known, the person responsible is usually called upon to reverse it. The offenders are supposed to ask for forgiveness and change their ways so that the curse is reversed.

The religious specialist explained that when the offended woman agrees to forgive the offenders, rituals are performed to cleanse the affected and reverse or stop the curse. If a mother cursed her children, they are supposed to set a date and assemble at their home. If any of the children cannot make it, they are represented by sticks failure to which they will not be cleansed. The children come with the following items: milk, millet and other prescribed items. The cleansing ritual is performed by a religious specialist. Those cleansed are supposed to stay for seven days without bathing or sex.

3.2.5 .Burning and Urinating on a Piece of Wood.

17% of the respondents stated that there is another type of *Kithitu* which involves burning and urinating on a piece of wood. According to RA11, RA16, RA18, RA15, and RA2 this type of *Kithitu* is used in secret by individuals when offended. It is only noticed when misfortunes start happening and on consulting a religious specialist it is revealed to them they are cursed. The offended person takes a piece of wood, burns it till it becomes black and then urinates on it. As he or she urinates on the burnt wood, he or she pronounces a curse on his or her offenders. The offenders then start experiencing misfortunes. This study found out that this type of *Kithitu* is not common and those who know about it are mainly aged above forty years.

3.2.6. Pouring Millet on Fire

Another type of *Kithitu* according to 52% of the respondents is the pouring of millet on fire, In this type of *Kithitu* the offended person takes millet and pours it on fire. As he pours it on fire, the millet makes a bursting sound. As they continue to burn, the offended person pronounces a curse on his or her offenders. The respondents further said that it is feared and acts very fast.

3.2.7. Use of Soil in Land Conflicts

64% of the respondents said that during land conflicts *Kithitu* can be used. This study found out from RA7 and RA15 that in most of these cases the rightful owner of the land is unknown. Those involved in the tussle are supposed to go to the land in conflict and stand on it and when the soil sticks on the sole of their shoes or feet, they shake it off. As they shake the dust or soil off their feet or shoes, they each curse themselves that if the land does not belong to them let them die or misfortunes should follow them. If they lie then they place themselves and their family under a curse. Moreover, the grabbed land becomes unproductive.

3.3. *Kithitu* Cleansing Ceremony/ (*Kuusya*)

According to 79% of the respondents, when people suspect *Kithitu* has been pronounced against them or their families, they seek to make amends or restitution. When the signs are suspect people start investigating and enquiring who is responsible or seek the help of a *Kithitu* religious specialist. In Most cases the persons responsible for cursing usually refuse to own up and people only find out through a *Kithitu* religious specialist.

The religious specialist gave an elaborate account of how he cleanses victims who are under the curse of *Kithitu* as follows. Also some of the respondents gave an overview of what they knew about the cleansing ceremony. According to the religious specialist, he usually uses special kind of medicine to cleanse the victims. During these periods of cleansing he is not supposed to take a bath or to have sex with a woman for seven days which he said he observes strictly. The victims to be cleansed observe the same and should also not talk to those who cursed them.

When the *Kithitu* religious specialist arrives at the homestead of the victims, he enters the house and sprinkles water round it. He puts a stick on his mouth (*Mutaa*) then spits. He uses a special herb which he referred to as (*Ng'ondu*) to cleanse the victims. (*Ng'ondu*) is a plant resembling the cassava. He crashes the plant and cleanses the victims three times. The cleansing procedure starts from the head and ends at the toes. Some respondents said that cleansing is done by a specialist who administered the oath or another chosen religious specialist. However, in most cases those who administer the oath are not the ones to cleanse the victims.

During the cleansing ceremony, the religious specialist must carry his paraphernalia or apparatus. These includes: (*Kyungu*) or an earthenware pot also referred to as (*mbisu*), three stones for holding the pot on fire (*Uthaana*), the medicinal herbs from the nearby forest (*Ngondu*), a special stick called (*Mutaa*) for applying the medicine, a house-like structure made of sticks (*Muvatha*), sticks to represent the missing members of the family (*Mti*), food which is mostly (*Nthoko*) or (*isyo*) and two calabashes (*Nzele*).

First, the three stones (*Uthaana*) are assembled. A fire is lit and the pot (*Kyungu*) or (*Mbisu*) is placed on top of the three stones. The aim of the three stones is to support the pot as the food is cooking. The available food is placed in the pot and cooked slightly. The most common food used being maize and beans (*Isyo/Githeri*) or cowpeas (*Nthoko /Kunde*).

As the food cooks, the religious specialist grounds the medicine (*Ngondu*) and adds it together with water to the cooking food. Then two special sticks are erected and joined together at the top to create a house like structure (*Muvatha*) in front of the cooking pot to symbolize the entrance of a house. The two calabashes (*Nzele*) are then placed in front of the (*Muvatha*).

The victims assemble at the entrance of the house (*Muvatha*) and the religious specialist applies the medicine (*Ng'ondu*) on them using the (*Mutaa*) as he utters some words. He starts from the head down to the hands, chest and finally to the legs. The victims then pass through the (*Muvatha*) to symbolize entering the house. They serve food from the pot and eat a little of the food with water because the food is only slightly cooked. The remaining food the victims return in the cooking pot.

The victims pass again through the two joined sticks (*Muvatha*) and are served food from the calabashes (*Nzele*) to signify a new beginning. All the affected persons must undergo the same ritual in order to be cleansed. When the religious specialist completes the cleansing ceremony, he instructs them not to have sex, eat meat and or give anything outside the house for three days. He also observes the same rules. Seven days later, the victims will be completely cleansed of the curse and the misfortunes stop. The above cleansing ceremony is done when a family realizes they are under a *Kithitu* curse and consult a religious specialist.

According to the respondents when *Kithitu* is used publicly and one is found guilty, one is called upon to confess, pay fine or compensation so that he or she can be cleansed. In such cases, RB7, RB13, RD19 and others said that the victims assemble at the chief's camp or at home. The guilt parties are supposed to admit guilt and settle their differences amicably with the offended persons who are usually present. The two parties then reconcile and the religious specialist performs the cleansing rituals and the offended party is called upon to revoke the curse. The guilt party must agree to the terms of the agreement before the members present. The religious specialist and those present must also be cleansed to ward off any evil effects of the *Kithitu*.

One of the administrative leaders said that the use of *Kithitu* generally is prohibited. In case a permit has been issued, the chief ensures the conflict is solved before the material day and the permit is revoked. However, *Kithitu* is still used in secret and when the suspects are confronted they deny and there is usually insufficient evidence to prove they have used it. Some elders support it and allow ceremonies to be conducted in secret. Some respondents stated that if the chief refuses one can seek permission from the District commissioner (D.C) or the Divisional officer (D.O).

The religious specialist explained that the Cleansing rite has been passed from one generation to another till present. The religious specialists inherit their powers from their grandparents who choose one of their grandsons to continue with the practice. The knowledge and powers is passed to the grandson through apprenticeship whereby the chosen heir accompanies the grandfather when

he is called upon to perform the cleansing ceremony. When the time comes for the grandparent to hand over the powers and position to his grandson, a special ceremony is conducted and the apprentice brings the following items: traditional beer (*Kaluvu*), goat, and a guard (*Kimee*) (*Kikuu*).

The religious specialist related his own experience as follows. He (the apprentice) prepared beer to be drunk by the grandparents and close family members. The goat was slaughtered and the meat eaten by those present while the blood was poured on the ground to bind them with the ancestors. Libations were also poured to appease the ancestors. Other rituals were also performed on the apprentice by the grandparents. However the specialist insisted these rituals are secret and private and he refused to reveal them.

The religious specialist stated that the chosen grandson must be morally upright otherwise *Kithitu* will kill him. These sentiments were also echoed by some of the respondents who stated that a well-known religious specialist who is immoral is not mentally stable because of the effects of *Kithitu*. *Kithitu* is used to fight evil and bring peace and harmony in the community therefore if the keeper or religious specialist engages in evils then it kills or makes him mad. He must also marry before becoming a religious specialist. He should not be cunning, overcharge or lie to his clients when going to cleanse them otherwise it will kill him.

Various aspects of traditional African Religion are observed in this study. First, is the pouring of libation. This means that Africans still acknowledge the existence and the role played by ancestors in their lives. Pouring libation in the African community was a way of venerating the ancestors or a way of showing respect. Moreover, according to Mbiti (1977) for Africans, the concept of community has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. Horizontal dimension comprised of immediate family members to the entire clan while vertical dimension includes the unborn and the ancestors. Therefore when they pour libation they invite the ancestors who are part of the community to share in the meals and to celebrate with them.

Another traditional aspect of *Kithitu* is that the religious specialist must be married and have children. In traditional African communities one of the qualities of the elders and religious specialists was that they should be married. Moreover in traditional African community marriage was a rite of passage that all members of the community had to undergo. Furthermore children were an important part of the family and any married couple was supposed to have children. Children were seen as a blessing and ensured continuity of the family and clan. Also marriage was a remedy against irresponsible sexual behavior. It showed that the individual is mature and responsible and is ready to assume important responsibilities in the community like decision making. Furthermore, children ensured continuity of the cultural norms of the community and the individual was fulfilling the wishes of the ancestors by venerating them through naming.

From the findings some other feature of African traditional religion are revealed such as belief in taboos. In traditional African communities it was a taboo for the young to see the nakedness of an old woman. Could it be the reason women remove their clothes to curse, because they know it is a taboo and taboos bring misfortune and curses? Also concepts like ancestors, kinship ties, community, apprenticeship, rites of passage, morality and values are revealed.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

From the findings it is noteworthy that *Kithitu* has not changed form and practice. The practice and beliefs have also remained undeterred even with the massive growth and spread of other world religions like Christianity and westernization. This has made the researcher to conclude that *Kithitu* indeed has a modern significance in the life of the Akamba in contemporary Kenya.

The study further concludes that African traditional religious beliefs and practices are still very important aspects in the African Society. Their importance needs to be underscored and it is noteworthy that these practices have not existed in isolation but are inter related with one another. One practice cannot exist in isolation without support from other practices.

Therefore, the researcher recommends a further contemporary study of African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices. Also Scholars of Religious studies, Theology and History need to intergrate this knowledge in their study of other world religions that Africans are adherents to like Christianity. This is because majority of the Africans who still practice African traditional religion are still adherents to these other world Religions.

From A Christian Perspective, African Christian Theologians should study these African concepts to see whether they are reconcilable or irreconcilable with Christianity because African Traditional Religion is source of doing African Christian Theology Gathogo (2007).

5. References

- i. Clough, M.S. (1998). *Mau Mau memoirs: History, memory and politics*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- ii. Cooper, F. (1996). *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa*. Great Britain: University of Cambridge.
- iii. Gathogo, J.M. (2007). Liberation and Reconstruction in the works of J.N.K Mugambi: A critical analysis in African Theology. *P.H.D Thesis*. South Africa: University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus.
- iv. Gehman. (1989). *Africa traditional religion in Biblical perspective*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- v. Idowu, E.B. (1973). *African Traditional Religions: A Definition*. London: SCM Press.
- vi. Kamaara, E.K. (2009). Religion and emerging religious movements in Kenya. *Unpublished Paper Presented at a symposium conducted as part of the IUPUI Fullbright Hayes group project held in Eldoret, Kenya from July 9-August 3 2009 at Moi University*. www.international.iupui.edu/kenya/resources
- vii. Kasomo, D. (2010). The position of African traditional religion in conflict prevention. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2 (2), 23-28.
- viii. Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques*. (2nd Ed). New Delhi: New age international press.

- ix. Mathai, A.M. (2006). *Sexual decision making and AIDS in Africa, A look at the social vulnerability of women in Sub-Saharan Africa to HIV/AIDS: A Kenyan example*. Germany: Kassel University Press.
- x. Mathema, Z. (2007). The African worldview: A serious challenge to Christian discipleship *Ministry International Journal for Pastors*.
- xi. Mbiti, J.S. (1977). *Introduction to African religion*. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Limited.
- xii. (1970). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- xiii. Oyugi, O.W. (1994). *Politics and administration in East Africa*. Nairobi: Educational Publishers.
- xiv. Thornton, J. (1998). *African and Africans in the making of The Atlantic World*. (2nd Ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press
Proceedings of a Symposium 1980. Los Angeles: African studies Centre