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# The penetration of Islam among the Babukusu, 1904-1998

Janet Nasambu Kassilly

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THE PENETRATION OF ISLAM AMONG THE  
BABUKUSU; 1904 - 1998.

By

KASSILLY, JANET NASAMBU

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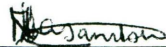
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS OF  
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.

APRIL, 1999

## DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.



---

Kassilly Janet Nasambu

This Thesis has been submitted with our approval as the University Supervisors.



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Prof. Muhammad Ibrahim



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Dr. Michael Katola

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father Gallicano M. Kassilly and my mother Julian N. Kassilly for having denied themselves to make me what I am.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu from 1904-1998. The persistence of Islam among a predominantly rural people coupled with stiff competition from Christianity and resistance by the indigenous religion provoked this research. The study aimed at investigating the agents and factors that facilitated and those that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu; the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu; and the factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. The study is based on the premises that: First, Muslim traders and Babukusu concept of Supreme Being (Wele) influenced the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu; second, Christianity and Westernization are some of the factors that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu; third, Islamic manner of dressing, greetings and language are some of the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu; and finally, the interrelationship between faith and practice, and *Da'wah* are the main factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. These four premises have been positively confirmed from our research findings.

The enquiry is guided by the theoretical framework of Islamization which has incorporated aspects of "Change and Continuity" concept. The theory states that Islamization

depends entirely on the contact-situation between the Muslim and the non-Muslim. Similarly whenever new influences impinge on any society, some of the pre-existing body of customs and beliefs are discarded, modified or retained. Since our study deals with the interaction of two cultures, this theory provided a model of thought to address the objectives of the study. Basically, the central contention of this thesis is that Islam has persisted among the Babukusu up-to-date despite competition from Christianity and resistance by the Babukusu indigenous religion.

It is observed in this thesis that when Islam reached Babukusuland around 1904, its adoption depended on the similarity between some of its beliefs and practices and those of the indigenous religion. However, certain aspects of Islam were resisted by the people. Inheritance rules are an immediate example. After Islam, Christianity coupled with Western education was introduced by missionaries and later by British colonial administrators. Western education as a means of economic prosperity attracted many Babukusu to Christianity than Islam. Consequently, only few people adopted Islam. Despite the interplay of the above factors in the area, Islam has persisted among Babukusu up-to-date. This therefore reveals that the contact - situation between Islam and Babukusu indigenous religion was one of penetration and not conquest.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

### **Elder:**

Man/woman whose age is around 50 years and above and can explain the Babukusu indigenous religion, and the Babukusu Islamization.

### **Middle aged:**

Man/woman aged between 25 years to 49 years.

### **Indigenous:**

Beliefs and practices in the Babukusu community whose roots go as far back before the coming of foreign religions, Western education and modern changes like Science and technology. These are the people's beliefs and practices which are neither Christian nor Muslim.

### **Islamization:**

The process by which the Babukusu converted to Islam and thus one verbally and by actions profess the Islamic faith, as enjoined in the Quar'an and Hadith.

### **Penetration:**

The process of Islam spreading to Bukusuland and making way into the Babukusu indigenous religion.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Islam, with its origin in Arabia, spread to other parts of Asia and Africa and hence Bungoma. This was through immigrants of war, individual initiatives, and trade. Fisher (1973), Trimmingham (1980), Kabiri (1990), and Gimode (1993) observe that when Islam spread to Africa, its adaption largely depended on the similarity it shared with the pre-existing African beliefs and practices. In this sharing indigenous beliefs and practices were discarded, modified or retained due to the influence of Islam. At the same time, some Islamic beliefs and practices were adopted while others were rejected by the African population.

Salim (1973), argues that local chronicles speak of Islam as having arrived on the East African Coast as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. However, there were some Muslims in Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He further notes that certain archaeological evidence attests to the existence of a flourishing Muslim town in Kenya on the Island of Manda during the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Safari (1994) confirms this when he states that in East Africa, the presence of Muslims is essentially linked with the arrival of Muslim traders from Arabia and Persia in the 8<sup>th</sup>

century. These contacts between Arabia and the East African Coast led to the rise of many Muslim city states whose inhabitants were ethnically mixed from the outset - Arabs, Africans and Shirazi (Persians). These communities became known as Swahili, a term derived from the Arabic term *Sawaahil* (of the coast).

In Kenya, Islam apparently remained confined to the coast and a few areas in the interior. For the latter case it was especially among the Somali in the North-East and Wanga in Western Kenya. Here, Muslim caravan traders had penetrated late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, most Muslims in the interior were immigrants (especially Asians) or individuals converted while working at the coast. Kabiri (1990) and Bakari and Yahya (1995) note that many of the early conversions in the interior were done through personal contacts. Most converts were attracted by the Muslim brotherhood in the *umma*.

Before the advent of Islam and other foreign religions on the African continent, Africans obviously already had their own belief systems. They had clear concepts of God. This is particularly true among Babukusu of Western Kenya, one of the seventeen sub-ethnic groups that constitute the Abaluhya community (Osogo, 1966). The Babukusu are the focus of this research. The penetration of Islam among the Babukusu needs to be properly gauged when viewed against the existing traditional belief



system. Wagner (1949), Lusweti (1974), Wanyama (1984), and Makokha (1993), observe that the Babukusu were conscious of their relationship with *Wele* (the Supreme Being). Accordingly, appropriate modes of worship existed to explain and articulate this relationship. Prayers addressed to *Wele* were said on a daily basis. This was usually presided over by the head of the family on behalf of the entire family. In addition, the Babukusu had places of worship in the form of small sacrificial shrines called *namwima*. At these places, the sacrifices to *Wele* and other spiritual entities, in particular the ancestral spirits were offered and prayers said. Besides the concept of *Wele*, the institution of polygamy, *kumulembe*, (absolute harmony) and inheritance rules are strongly established in the Babukusu community.

Osogo (1966), Were (1967) and De Wolf (1977) state that the Babukusu though living far from the Kenyan Coast, got in touch with Islam through Asian and Muslim traders. Asian and Muslim traders dominated commercial life in the district around 1904. They further argue that Swahili agents were also used by colonial administrators to collect hut tax among the Babukusu of Bungoma in 1904-5. Murunga who was a Wanga Muslim was made a chief in Babukusuland around this time. Being a Muslim, he spread Islam to the Babukusu who were under his jurisdiction. The presence of Muslim traders therefore influenced the Babukusu socially, culturally and economically. The above

scholars further note that since the Babukusu indigenous religion was strongly established, some beliefs and practices continued alongside the new Muslim Practices especially the indigenous inheritance rules. Due to this, only a few people adopted Islam which they still practise todate.

Barrett (1973), Gilpin (1976), De Wolf (1977), and Rasmussen (1995) contend that after Islam, Christianity was introduced in Bungoma. The first missionary societies there were the Mill Hill Mission (M.H.M.) and Friends African Mission (F.A.M.) who fully established themselves in Bungoma in 1912 and 1914 respectively. Many Babukusu turned to Christianity because with it came Western education. Through education, the converts learnt administrative work, use of formal political associations, how to agitate against Wanga chiefs who were Muslims, and were employed as clerks and teachers. Through education therefore, the converts were able to take advantage of the new opportunities the wider society was offering. Due to the above factors, many Babukusu turned to Christianity rather than Islam. Hence Islam seemed not to have a bright future in the area. Despite this apparent stiff competition from Christianity and resistance from the indigenous religion, Islam has persisted among a predominantly rural people todate. This calls for an investigation into the factors that have facilitated the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. This set the

basis for this research

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The present study investigates the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu from 1904-1998. This is because existing works on Islam among the Babukusu give generalised statements which are limited in scope. Osogo (1966), Were (1967) and De Wolf (1977) only gave a very brief highlight of the initial contact of the Babukusu with Islam. They did not give a thorough scholarly attention to the phenomena. There is an apparent absence of emphasis on the Islamization process undergone by the people, and why the religion has persisted among a predominantly rural people despite the resistance from indigenous religion and competition from Christianity. This underscores the need for more research into this lacuna. If we may ask; what facilitated the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu? What is the impact of the religion on the people? Why has the religion persisted this far among the Babukusu?

### **1.2. Objectives**

1. To identify and evaluate the agents and factors that facilitated and those that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu.
2. To examine the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu.
3. To identify and discuss factors behind the

persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

### **1.3. Research Premises**

This research was based on the following premises;

1. That Muslim traders and the Babukusu concept of Supreme Being (*Wele*) influenced the penetration of Islam among Babukusu.
2. That Christianity and Westernization are some of the factors that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu.
3. That the Islamic manner of dressing, greetings, and language are some of the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu.
4. That the interrelationship between faith and practice, and *Da'wah* are the main factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Very little has been written about Islam among the Babukusu. Osogo (1966), Were (1967) and De Wolf (1977) do not give a thorough investigation about Islam among the Babukusu. Factors which facilitated the Babukusu Islamization, the socio-cultural impact of Islam, and why Islam has persisted among the Babukusu are left to speculation. This being the case, the study will hopefully provide this information that is lacking and fill the gap. This will benefit scholars of religion generally and those of Islam in particular.

The current general objectives of the Islamic Religious Education syllabus particularly for secondary schools and institutions of higher learning require some insights in the historical aspects of Islam. These objectives include; to recognise and respect the cultural heritage of the Kenyan society; and to appreciate the role of Islam in history and understand its spread and influence in Africa (K.I.E. 1992; Kenyatta University Calendar, 1995). This study enhances the understanding of the above objectives by the Babukusu Muslims and the general Muslim *Umma* in Kenya.

Carrying out research among the Babukusu is one way of gathering and storing information that is perhaps best known to elders. In this way, the future generation of the community and the rest of Kenyans and other scholars will have a wide scope of evidence to inform their curiosity and research interests in the area. The study also contributes to literature on Muslims in Kenya.

#### **1.5. Literature Review**

The review of literature for this study was divided into four categories. First, Babukusu indigenous religion. Second, early establishment of Islam in Kenya. Third, socio-cultural impact of Islam on the community under conversion. Lastly, persistence of Islam in the community under Islamization.

Wagner (1949), Lusweti (1974), Wanyama (1984), and Makokha (1993) argue that before the coming of Islam, the Babukusu worshipped their God *Wele*. They further observe that the Babukusu religion had a very strong sense of dependence in terms of the relationship between human beings and *Wele*. One obvious implication of this relationship is that human beings develop a feeling of inadequacy. Hence, the notion that their entire existence is dependent on the transcendental force outside themselves develops. This explains the attitude of total reverence by humanity towards the object of worship, characteristic of all religions. The scholars hence state that the sacrifices, offerings at *Namwima* and other elaborate religious ceremonies of Babukusu people ought to be understood from this point of view. This dependence is clearly evident in Babukusu religion; both towards *Wele* and the spirits of the departed ancestors. Though these works failed to deal with the interaction of the Babukusu indigenous religion with other religions, they give an insight into the Babukusu concept of Supreme Being and their mode of worship. This appears to have some relevance to our study as far as factors that facilitated Babukusu Islamization are concerned.

Wagner (ibid), Makokha (ibid), Nasimiyu (1995), Andere (n.d.) give a general view of the place and role of marriage in the Babukusu community. They argue that

marriage is a mark of maturity, procreation is central to marriage, and the offsprings from marriage care for parents in old age. This explains why men marry more wives if the first one is barren. It also partly explains and justifies the practice of polygamy in the Babukusu community. Other scholars like Malnos (1968), Mbiti (1969), Maillu (1988), and Kayongo (1994) state the same about polygamy in other African societies. Our study examined the role played by polygamy in the Islamization of the Babukusu community.

Makokha (1993) provides important data related to the Islamic concept of brotherhood in the *umma*. He argues that the Babukusu moral fabric is captured in the concept of *kumulembe*, a term which signifies *absolute calmness*. Besides, it denotes order, harmony, love, solidarity and even prosperity. Thus, it indicates all is well. Within the community, social interaction is expected to be in harmony as members relate without conflict. It was vital for our study to find out how this concept may have had a positive benefit towards continued existence of the Muslim believers who otherwise would have been assimilated or faced attack by non-Muslims.

Being a patriarchal society, the Babukusu inheritance rules only allow male children to inherit and not the females who are expected to get married elsewhere (Osogo 1966; Makokha (1993) and Andere (n.d.)). This is against

the Islamic law of inheritance which guarantees both sexes the full right of inheritance. The shares are enshrined in the *Sharia* which stipulates the share of each individual (Mwangi 1993). Such differences in fundamental rights are likely to create conflicts yet we find the Babukusu Muslims living in harmony with the rest of the community. The above scholars failed to address the effects of the Babukusu inheritance rules on their Islamization. Our study set out to fill this gap.

Trimingham (1964), Salim (1973), Ahmed (1995), Kabiri (1990), and Nzibo (1995) provide a general view of the rapid expansion of Islam into the interior of Kenya at the end of the 19th century. This was through the establishment of colonial administration rule in Kenya, through British colonial administrators, and the building of the Kenyan-Uganda Railway in 1896 which brought the Coast closer to the interior people. They further argue that Islam had remained confined to the coastal strip, and only spread to a few areas of the interior. This further spread only occurred after World War 1. However, the above views are refuted by Abdallah (1971) and Muhammed (1984) who observed that the expansion of Islam in Mumias and Kitui respectively declined with the advent of colonialism. The aforementioned issues will enhance an understanding of how Islam spread to Bukusuland and the role played by colonialism in the Islamization of the Babukusu.



Gimode (1993) observes that the origins of Islam in South Luyia, is associated with the Swahili merchants and caravans. The traders established centres in Nyanza which acted as food markets beyond which they hunted for elephants to get ivory. However, it was nearly another half of a century before the impact of Islam could begin to manifest itself among the southern Luyia. He further notes that by the end of the third decade of the 20th Century, Islam was standing on its own ground against Christianity in Southern Luyia, particularly among the Logoli people. Gimode further notes that most of the Logoli were attracted by the Muslim use of Kiswahili language, translation of the Qur'an into the local language (olulogoli), cleanliness, use of candles, new foods and clothes. With time, Christianity superseded Islam numerically because it was a vehicle of the much needed Western education which was perceived as the key to success and economic prosperity in the unfolding colonial society which Islam lacked. Many converts turned to Christianity to achieve the needs of the day.

Similar views about the Logoli are stated by Barker (1950), Van Zwanenberg (1975) and Bode (1978). These scholars discuss the status of Islam among the Wanga and Logoli areas. Islam in other areas of Western Kenya, and thus Bukusuland in particular is left to speculation. This present study investigated the agents and factors that led

to the penetration persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

Kariuki (1995) notes that marriage, demand for food during famine, employment, and labour conditions at Nyeri are three related reasons which made the Agikuyu come into contact with Islam. Marriage as an Islamization agent is also confirmed in Nairobi and other areas by among others Stigand (1913), Kabiri (1990) and Safari (1994). Another noted agent of Islamization according to Nzibo (1995) is the military through which upcountry people got converted by coming into contact with Muslim colleagues from Coast. Most of those who got converted were from present-day Western Kenya and Nyanza provinces. These studies provided important data which informed our study in terms of Islamization agents.

Abdallah (1971) examines the Islamization of the Wanga. According to him, the similarity between the Wanga belief in one Supreme God and that of Islam reduced conflict between the two religions. The Wanga Muslims in Mumias however seem to have ignored the application of the elaborate Islamic inheritance rules. Instead, the widow-oriented traditional practice is still observed. The practice of clan land possession was so deeply entrenched amongst the Wanga that the Islamic property ownership rules never received recognition. Thus, indigenous beliefs and practices had influence on the Islamization of the

Wanga. The extent to which socio-cultural factors had impact on the Islamization process among the study population was examined.

Osogo (1966), Were 1967:176) and De Wolf (1977), state that colonial authorities allowed the use of Swahilis to collect hut tax among the Babukusu in 1904-5. They further argue that Catholics and Protestants were threatened by Islam, a religion which had been introduced in Bungoma by Wanga chiefs who administered North Bukusu in 1908. By the 1920s, Asian traders dominated commercial life in Bungoma town. However, these scholars neither stated the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu nor the reasons why Islam has persisted among the community. Despite this, they have highlighted the initial contact of Babukusu with Islam.

Trimingham (1964), Kabiri (1990), Gimode (1993), Nzibo (1995) and Ahmed (1995) observe that the main factor behind the acceptance of Islam among the African population was the apparent similarity between a number of African social institutions and those of Islam. These included polygamy, circumcision, Muslim hospitality and brotherhood in the *umma*. These aspects are similar to polygamy, circumcision and the concept of Kumulembe practised by the Babukusu. Although these studies are general, they have enriched this study by their insights. Other novelties that attracted Africans into Islam were

clothes, new foods, and Muslim cleanliness.

Kasozi (1974) on his part argues that it was not the similarity of the African way of life that facilitated and explained the spread of Islam in Africa. Rather, it was the weakening disruption and sometimes complete destruction of the African way of life that created a partial *belief vacuum* which Islam and other foreign religions filled. This was also facilitated by the failure of African beliefs either to compete effectively with the new-comers or to cope with the resultant changes. In this study, factors that facilitated conversion among the Babukusu were examined.

Fisher (1973) examines the differences between Islamic and Christian conversion. He notes that whereas the latter required lengthy catechumen, perhaps a literary requirement and probationary period, the former was content with a mere profession of faith as a beginning. Thereafter, induction into the doctrine of Islam would follow. In the same vein, Leys (1920) notes that Islam 'scarcely conflicts with any primitive conceptions'. This is to be seen in the light of the similarity between Islam and African religion. Mbiti (1969) claims Islam was the natural religion for Africa. He was looking at Islamic religious practices which are closely akin to African religious practices. This makes it easier for the Africans to point at areas of convergence between the two belief

systems and hence adapt themselves to Islam. These studies broaden our theoretical perception as they relate to the Islamization process undergone by African Muslims. On the basis of the preceding findings, our study examined the Islamization process undergone by Babukusu Muslims and why the religion has persisted among the people.

Abd al-Ati (1975) focuses on persistence of Islam in the community under Islamization. He argues that faith in Islam is not by any means something nominal or mere formality. He states that the Holy Qur'an and Hadith define the required measures and establish the standards which build up a meaningful faith. This is because Islam penetrates deeply and constructively into every aspect of life. He goes further to argue that faith without action and practice is a dead end, as far as Islam is concerned. The only way to enliven faith and make it serve its purpose is through practice. Practice itself provides faith with nourishment, survival and effectiveness. In return, faith inspires humankind to be constant in their devotion and persistent in their practice. This is because the interrelationship between faith and practice is very strong, and their interdependence is readily understood. The present study analyzed the implications of such a conclusion in relation to persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

Siba (1986) states that Muslims are all brothers and

should unite to propagate the religion of God in unison. Sayied (1986) on his part argues that the Muslim *umma* is composed of all those people, tribes, communities and nations who profess the religion of Islam. The unity of these people is unity in diversity whose bond is the religion of Islam. He further notes that the strength of this bond is directly proportional to the consistency, zeal and staunchness of the faith in Islam through word and deed. Muslims are commanded in Surah 3:103 to hold tight to the unbreakable rope of Allah which is the religion of Islam. Uzma (1986) and Shaassy (1986) share this view and further state that Islam came for all humankind and is for all times. Though these studies are general, they are relevant in terms of conceptualizing the unity of Muslims and their persistence in the faith. It was in the interest of this study to investigate the possibility of persistence of Islam among the Babukusu basing on the above command.

Asad (1982) while discussing moral degeneration in the Muslim world notes that the Muslim world today is faced with social, moral and economic degeneration. Foreign ideologies like Western culture and unIslamic tendencies are making rapid inroads into their social life, hence Muslims are leading a life devoid of Islamic virtues. He further notes that the Muslim youth are gradually drifting away from the ideals of Islam. The outward glamour of Western culture coupled with the impact

of Western education and secularism have to a great extent undermined the religious impulse of the faith. Because of this, the youth have sacrificed their moral and ethical values at the alter of Western materialism. The scholar further presents lack of Islamic knowledge or education as the fundamental cause of moral degeneration. This observation gives a general insight into the factors weakening the Islamic faith. However, he does not offer solutions to the problems. This study set out to establish how Muslims are persisting against such onslaught of moral decadence.

Samiullah (1983) discusses Muslim problems in Kenya and attempted to offer solutions. He contends that, the Christian church has always considered Islam as a threat to its very existence. Due to this, it has consistently reacted in the most hostile manner to Islam and Muslims. He states that this is evidenced by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (N.C.C.K.) campaign against Islam. To him the implantation of Christianity in a predominantly Muslim area such as North-Eastern Province is a clear indication of the rapid progress Islam's competitor is making in Kenya.

In the same vein, Barrett (1975), Gilpin (1976), De Wolf (1977) and Rasmussen (1995) contend that the establishment of Christianity in Bungoma in 1912 and 1914 respectively saw an inrush of converts to Christianity.

This was due to the advantages the Christian converts received especially Western education. The Friends Africa Mission in particular saw the emergence of "Friends-Schools system" in Bungoma whose purpose was the political, social, religious and economic development of the converts. The advantages the mission offered the converts who wanted to become teachers explains the expansion of Christianity in Bukusuland in the period after World War 1. The missionaries also provided the basis on which location-wide factions could agitate against the Wanga Muslim chiefs. They also trained Babukusu in the organisation and use of formal political associations (Barrett [1975], Gilpin [1976]). They further state that chiefs and headmen in Bungoma encouraged the Babukusu to send their children to mission schools - a good example is chief Murunga. Despite Islam's long history in the area, it has not spread widely. Therefore there must be other factors besides Christianity which account for its minimal spread. Our study sought to examine the role being played by Christianity and other factors in challenging the spread and persistence of Islam in our study area.

Arnold (1961), Kasozi (1984) and Atterbury (1987) focused on the Islamic *da'wah* in Africa. They argue that many devoted Muslims single-handedly spread Islam in Africa. These individuals never received funds, orders or guidance from any source be it individual or organization.



This duty was enjoined to Muslims from the beginning - (Surat 99-100; 16:125; 20:39-40; 42:13-14; 79:15; 3:9; 9:131). The spread of Islam in Africa is therefore by the mercy of Allah. They further observe that with planned Christian activities and conversions, even in Muslim countries, *Da'wah* cannot be left to chance. Muslims must plan for it, set targets and take appropriate measures to make sure they conform to them. It is on this basis that our study examined the role of individuals and organisations in the spread of Islam among the Babukusu.

What has emerged from this review of literature indicates that several factors contributed to the spread of Islam in the interior of Kenya in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is also observed that all communities under Islamization were influenced by the religion in a number of ways. The above cited studies have identified that the persistence of Islam in communities under Islamization may be due to the interrelationship between the faith and practice. The literature review however reveals that no thorough and systematic study on the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu has been done. This overt lacuna is what the present study sought to uncover.

#### **1.6. Conceptual Framework**

Islamization as a process involves the interaction of two or more cultures. It therefore calls for a theoretical framework that examines the interrelationship between the

two. The conceptual and theoretical orientation adopted for this study combines Bascom and Herskovits' conception of 'change and continuity' and Bungler's 'Islamization theory.' The former seeks to provide an understanding of the interaction between two or more cultures. It states that whenever new influences impinge on any society, some of the pre-existing body of customs and beliefs are discarded, modified or retained (Bascom and Herskovits 1959: 2-6).

Change and continuity are paramount to culture because culture is dynamic. Using this, it may be argued that the interaction of Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion resulted in some Babukusu religious beliefs and practices being discarded, changed, or retained. This concept helped us to examine the conflicts and harmony of the two religions merging. This then brought to the fore the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu. Through the concept, the indigenous beliefs and practices that facilitated Babukusu Islamization were examined. However, the concept has loopholes. It does not provide for an analysis of the agents of Islamization and the factors accounting for the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. Because of these loopholes, the "Islamization theory" was adopted.

The "Islamization theory" developed by Bungler (1972) states that, Islam in any given place is a function of the

contact situation between the group which becomes Muslim and the group introducing Islam. The contact situation is, in turn, a function of: (A) the pre-Islamic culture/religion of the group which becomes Muslim; (B) the culture of the group which introduces Islam; (C) the particular variety of Islam introduced; and (D) the precise nature of the contact. This theory is thus built on the above four significant features.

In reference to the pre-Islamic culture/religion of the group which becomes Muslim, certain features are particularly relevant. These include the conceptions of the superhuman beings and interaction with them, and the conception of human nature and personality. Here, a people who believe in a High God and a definite form of life after death would be more likely to feature provided a basis for analyzing the Babukusu pre-Islamic religious beliefs and practices which facilitated the penetration of Islam among them.

The second feature (B) states that the major groups introducing Islam in Africa have been; merchants, frequently either accompanied by Muslim clerics or being at the same time both clerics and merchants (Lewis 1966:26-27, Levtzion 1968:23); Nomadic tribes such as the Somali and Baggara Arabs; and Muslim brotherhoods such as the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya. To this end, this feature informed our study in that it helped us to identify the

agents and factors that led to the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu. It also helped us identify the culture of the group which introduced Islam among the Babukusu and its socio-cultural impact on the people.

The theory further explains that for the last five hundred years or more, only Sunni Islam has played a major role in Africa. There are also Kharijite Berber communities, Ismailis and other Shi'a late-comers in East Africa. Differences in the type of Islam introduced are determined by the culture of the agents of Islamization. In this respect, our study identified the particular sect of Islam introduced in Bukusuland and examined its socio-cultural impact on the Babukusu.

Considering the nature of the contact situation (D), the theory states that the most important element would seem to be whether the contact is violent or non-violent. Therefore, the two primary types of contact situation are penetration and conquest (or attempted conquest). This study investigated whether the contact situation between the Babukusu and Muslims was of penetration or conquest or any other form it might have taken. We also sought to find out the causes of the particular kind of contact situation. This then helped us identify and discuss factors which facilitated the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu. We were also able to identify and discuss factors accounting for the persistence of Islam among the

people.

Bunger (ibid) further argues that Islamization occurs in three stages. First, Muslim dress, and method of slaughtering animals are adopted. The High God is called Allah, and Bismillahi (in the name of Allah) is used in invocations and incantations. The old ritual practices continue side by side with Muslim rituals. Circumcision is adopted if not already present in the culture. Second, the indigenous religion is viewed negatively as people become more conscious of the gap between present practices and the Muslim normative culture. Most pre-Islamic rituals are deprecated and the remaining few continue side by side with Muslim rituals. Lastly, the old religion is given up by the community as a whole and former ritual sites and paraphernalia are abandoned or destroyed. Allah alone is worshipped in public and pre-Islamic practices are subject to outright condemnation and persecution. Village mosques and Qur'anic schools are built and Friday prayer is institutionalised. Ramadhan is observed and beer drinking is given up. An attempt is made to follow the Sharia rules of inheritance. These stages are also advocated for by Fisher (1971), 1973a), (1985) who calls them Quarantine, Mixing and Reform respectively. These stages facilitated an examination of the Islamization process undergone by Babukusu Muslim converts. This then pointed out the factors that facilitated their conversion, the socio-cultural impact of the religion and why Islam has

persisted among the people.

In conclusion, the 'change and continuity concept and the theory of Islamization allow a study of the spread of Islam from the cradle-land to other areas of the world. They explain the pre-Islamic religion of the people who later become Muslims, how Islamization takes place, the agents of Islamization, the form of Islam introduced, and the contact situation between Muslims and non-Muslims. The theories also explain the features of contemporary Islam, how, and why Islam takes the form it has taken. To this end therefore, this conceptual framework provided a model of thought to address the objectives of this study.

### **1.7 Area and Scope of the Study**

This study was carried out in Bungoma District (see map 1 in appendix I). It was centred mainly on the Babukusu community. Bungoma, one of the districts of Western Province occupies an area of 37,042 square kilometres and has an estimated population of 0.8 million people (*Republic of Kenya; 1994-1996*). Babukusu people speak mainly *Lubukusu* and belong to the Luyia community which belongs to the larger group of Bantu speaking peoples of East and Central Africa. The Babukusu were chosen purposely because they are a dominant group in Bungoma District. About 80 percent of the total population of Bungoma District are Babukusu (Makila, 1978:32). Field research showed that they are also the majority among the

4,000 Muslims in this area. However, the Imams in the study area who were not Babukusu were interviewed.

Bungoma district was chosen for the study because it is an area with a Muslim population which has been overlooked by researchers, hence little is known about them.

The District is divided into five divisions of Sirisia, Kanduyi, Kimilili, Tongaren, and Webuye. The researcher mainly covered three divisions; Kanduyi, Kimilili and Webuye. This was because the three divisions comprise a bigger Muslim population than the other two. They comprise 1800 Muslims out of the 2500 Babukusu Muslims in the study area.

The study covered 1904-1998. Islam is said to have reached Bukusuland around 1904 (De Wolf, 1977) and hence 1904 enabled us to trace its history in this area. The period 1904-1998 is long enough to facilitate an analysis of change in religious beliefs and practices of the Babukusu. It is also long enough to test durability and sustainability of the Islamic religious aspects to which the Babukusu were exposed. The study dealt with persistence which shows that the religion is there todate.

Hence 1998 was appropriate to determine the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

### **1.8.1 Acquisition of Data**

Various methods and information sources were utilized in the collection of data for this study. These include library research, archival research and field research.

#### **1. Library Research**

Both published and unpublished materials in Kenyan libraries especially textbooks, journals, periodicals, local dailies, and official reports were read and analysed. They provided information written by other scholars on the spread and impact of Islam from Arabia to Africa, East Africa, Kenya, Western Kenya, and Bungoma. They also provided information on the interaction between the indigenous religion, Islam and Christianity in Bukusuland

#### **2. Archival Research**

The archival data required for this study were derived from provincial and district annual reports and Legislative Council debates at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. They provided historical information on the early establishment of Islam among the Babukusu and Bukusu indigenous religion.

#### **3. Field Research**

The researcher gathered primary data from the field to supplement secondary data. Collection of primary data



was mainly based on oral interviews. Oral interviews were conducted by the researcher in the presence of the Imam or a Muslim research assistant where necessary because the researcher is a non-Muslim. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, Lubukusu and English where appropriate. The interview guide was used in conducting interviews. The researcher tape-recorded the sessions where necessary besides note-taking. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis except in a few cases which required the presence of the Imam or a male Muslim research assistant. This was necessary in cases where the Muslim respondents could not agree to be interviewed with the suspicion that the researcher could be a spy of some sort simply because the researcher is a Christian. However, the presence of the Imam or male Muslim research assistant did not jeopardize the findings in any way. The questions could easily be reframed to encourage free discussions other than just eliciting questions and answers. The tape-recorder was used in order to avoid frequent interruptions while the interviewees were talking. It was also to prevent the possibility of leaving out important information. The questionnaire was not used because sometimes it tends to limit information.

Due to duplication of answers to our oral interviews in the field, the researcher was forced to reduce the initial number of respondents by half. This meant that instead of 20 elders and middle-aged respondents being

interviewed from each Mosque, only 10 respondents from each group were interviewed. For the indigenous adherents, only 4 respondents were interviewed from each division instead of 6. Therefore the study population was 75 instead of the intended 141.

### **1.8.2 Sampling Procedures**

The study employed different sampling techniques for the interviews. The selection of the study population was done as follows:

#### **(a) Imams:**

The Imam was purposively sampled from each mosque in Kanduyi, Webuye and Kimilili. This is because each Mosque has only one Imam. Hence three Imams were interviewed. They provided information on the growth, spread and persistence of Islam in the area.

#### **(b) Elders:**

This group was divided into two, thus;

- (1) Muslim converts - At least 10 Muslim elders were sampled from each mosque. These comprised 5 men and 5 women. The snow-ball approach was used here. The already identified respondent introduced the researcher to the next respondent after being interviewed. To deal with the weakness of the snow-ball approach, a

purposive sampling approach was used. This involved breaking the linkages of the snow-ball approach after a series of five respondents. The next five respondents were then selected purposively as per their gender, age and knowledge on the research topic. They were interviewed on the early establishment, spread and persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

- (2) Babukusu indigenous religion adherents - 4 respondents comprising 2 men and 2 women were sampled from each division. This is owing to their limited number. Only those with a wealth of knowledge on indigenous Babukusu beliefs and practices were selected. The snow-ball approach was used. The already identified respondent directed the researcher to other respondents after being interviewed. The researcher broke the linkage of the snow-ball approach after the first 2 respondents and then purposively

sampled the remaining two. These respondents provided information on Babukusu indigenous religion before and after the coming of Islam. This helped the researcher to identify the particular beliefs and practices that facilitated the Islamization of the Babukusu.

**(c) Middle-aged men and women.**

Due to the influence of modern education, new religions and modes of living in general, these respondents provided information on the role of Islam in their socio-cultural transformation. This is owing to the fact that they have been most exposed to these new influences. Ten respondents comprising 5 men and 5 women were sampled from each mosque giving rise to a total of 30 respondents. The procedure used to sample Muslim elders was similarly used. The total sample size was therefore 75.

These people are better placed to explain the Islamization of the Babukusu, its impact on the people and the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

The findings of the study revealed, that the above chosen number of respondents is representative of the respondents in the particular area and they provided adequate information.

**1.8.3 Data Processing and Analysis**

Some data gathered were transcribed and translated into English since Kiswahili and Lubukusu were used besides English. Data obtained from Oral interviews were compared and contrasted with documented data. The data were then categorised into themes based on the objectives. Data from primary and secondary sources were synthesized

and projected into chapters in line with the research objectives and premises. They were then interpreted within the articulation of "Change and Continuity" and "Islamization" paradigms. Through description, comparison, and interpretation as methods of analytical discussion, conclusions from the data were made in respective stages. From these conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research were made.

## CHAPTER TWO

# AGENTS AND FACTORS FACILITATING THE PENETRATION OF ISLAM AMONG THE BABUKUSU

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the agents and factors that facilitated and those that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu. To uncover this, the chapter also considers the Babukusu indigenous religion and its interaction with Islam. This is based on the premise that both Muslim agents and indigenous beliefs and practices played a role in enhancing penetration of Islam in Bukusuland.

It is important to stress that Islamization as a whole, whether in the initial stage of conversion, or later stages of consolidation, depends entirely on the personal contacts between the Muslims with the non-Muslims. Therefore, the "contact situation" between Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion is determined by the agents and factors that facilitated the penetration of Islam among the people.

### 2.1 Agents of Islamic penetration Among the Babukusu

Scholars like Trimmingham (1964), Maingi (1987), Kabiri (1990) (1995), Gimonde (1993) and Nzibo (1995) argue that the spread of Islam into the interior of East Africa mainly depended on Muslim traders. However, from

the primary and secondary sources, it was established that the main agent of the spread of Islam among the Babukusu were Wanga Muslim administrators from Mumias. The Muslim traders' major aim in Bukusuland was trade in Ivory and slaves. The traders were therefore not directly involved in the spread of Islam among the Babukusu. This is well explained in Abdul Muhammed's words (O.I, 9/5/98) which stated that;

*Takha Basilamu be buwanga babakhuruka chinyanga echo, andi efwe sekhuli basilamu tawe.*

If it were not for the Wanga Muslims who ruled us those days, we (Babukusu) could not be Muslims today.

Oral interviews showed that the Babukusu first received the Islamic influence through Wanga Muslims during Nabongo Mumia's time in the beginning of the 20th century. Nabongo Mumia was by then the paramount chief of North Kavirondo (present-day Western Province). Mwazema and Abdul (O.I, 9/5/98) observed that the Babukusu living in parts of present-day Kanduyi and Webuye divisions got in touch with Islam during Chief Sudi's time in the beginning of the 20th century. Sudi (a Bukusu) was the chief of North Bukusu under chief Mumia. He lived around river Nzoia where the Nzoia sugar factory stands today. Under the influence of Chief Mumia, he became a Muslim and some of those who came into contact with him also embraced the religion. Among his first converts were Yahya Tala, a

hotelier and Juma Mugania, a farmer in Webuye. The construction of the Railway line which passed by his home hastened the spread of Islam in this area. One railway station was established at his residence. It was named after Sudi, hence it called "Sudi station" todate. Some railway workers were Muslims and Indian coolies, hence those who had already embraced Islam learnt more about Islam from these railway workers thereby strengthening their faith.

Sheikh Ayub and Muhammed Ramadhan, (O.I, 9/5/98) observed that Islam first spread to Kanduyi division around 1904. This was through Wanga Muslim colonial administrators (chiefs and headmen) led by Nabongo Mumia of Wanga (Mumias) who had been Islamized by Milare from Zanzibar around 1890. As already mentioned Mumia was the paramount chief of North Kavirondo (Western Kenya). Being the paramount chief, he influenced many of his subjects into Islam. Nabongo Mumia's contact with coastal traders developed in him a taste for elaborate dress which impressed those who came into contact with him. This was because the modern dress was still a novelty in those days. In a "cloth hungry" society where certain types of clothing were the prerogative of various grades of statuses in society, it seemed logical that to obtain the right to wear the clothing one had to obtain the status, that is, to become a Muslim. This attracted some Babukusu to Islam. Similarly, those who were working in



to prevent incest. According to Islam, a Muslim woman should not get married to a non-Muslim man. For this case therefore, it was obligatory that Chief Amutallah embrace Islam in order to legalize his marriage. Most people who came into contact with Chief Amutallah embraced his faith which was Islam (Khamisi & Malik (O.I. 9/5/98). One of Chief Amutallah's converts was Juma Mandilla who was converted in 1929.

Islam in this area was first spread by Wanga Muslims and not Muslim traders. By the time these traders came into the area around 1930, the Babukusu had already felt the influence of Islam through their administrators. The traders therefore found Islam already existing. Their bid to convert those who came into contact with them was only a way of following the footsteps of the Wanga Muslims. Chief Amutallah made use of Arab and Nubi teachers in the area to teach other Babukusu Islam. Abdallah Mokaka & Muhammad (O.I, 9/5/98) confirmed the existence of Ganda and Nubi Muslim women in Webuye staying in the police camp in the 1920s. This women were married to Babukusu policemen staying in the camp. Adoption of Islam by the Babukusu happened through personal contacts between the Babukusu and Muslims.

The association of Wanga chiefs with colonial administrators however negatively affected the spread of Islam in the area at this time. This is because the Babukusu resented colonial administration, an issue which

of the present day Kimilili and Webuye divisions. He had married two of Chief Waluchio's sisters. In the Islamic context, it is *haram* to marry two sisters at the same time. This is to prevent incest. According to Islam, a Muslim woman should not get married to a non-Muslim man. For this case therefore, it was obligatory that Chief Amutallah embrace Islam in order to legalize his marriage. Most people who came into contact with Chief Amutallah embraced his faith which was Islam (Khamisi & Malik (O.I. 9/5/98). One of Chief Amutallah's converts was Juma Mandilla who was converted in 1929.

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The association of Wanga chiefs with colonial administrators however negatively affected the spread of Islam in the area at this time. This is because the Babukusu resented colonial administration, an issue which often resulted into wars for example the Chetambe war (KNA - PC/NZA/3/31/1/2). This explains why the Babukusu demanded the removal of Wanga Chiefs in the 1920s, and also explains why only few people (Babukusu) adopted the religion at the beginning.

Were (1967:176), De Wolf (1977:7), and Okwolo (1987:20) state that early in 1908, Suleiman Murunga, Mumia's half brother, had been appointed chief over North Bukusu to ensure all Muslims in the area were secure, maintain law and order, and to ensure collection of taxes.

When the railway was completed in the late 1901, new trading centres were opened where the roads crossed the railway. These were at present-day Bungoma town, Kimilili and Webuye. Asian traders some of them Muslims, who dominated commercial life in the district lived in these trading centres. Since they were few in number and far apart, the Babukusu were encouraged to set up local neighbourhood shops and retail daily necessities, and Asians acted as wholesalers.

De Wolf (ibid) further notes that both Catholics and Protestants in Bukusuland felt that they had to expand as fast as possible. However, there was the very real threat

of Islam which had become the accepted religion of most Wanga chiefs and headmen, who were used extensively in the administration of North Kavirondo.

Burgman (1990:4) observes that Chief Mumia of Wanga near mount Elgon was a good friend of Muslims. They were allowed to settle near his residence, as well as near present-day Kitale. In the words of Burgman (ibid:36), "the Arabs and Swahili had turned Mumias into an Islamic town." For many years past, Mumias town had been East Africa's window to the outer world, with the Arabs and Swahili being the channels.

It ought to be mentioned here that Islam, though it arrived before various Christian denominations, had made very little headway in Luyialand. The only place it had established itself was Mumias, where for a time the Muslim traders gained some influence over Mumias and Mbale in Maragoli (Osogo 1966:84). In order to serve the growing needs of Africans for imported and other goods, the Indians (ex-coolies on the railway) opened dukas in selected centres throughout Luyialand. By 1938, there were twelve such Indian centres in Luyialand. Kimilili town in Kimilili division was one of them (Ibid:137). All these were centres for Islamic growth in the area. Being run by Muslims, the people who came to do their shopping in these centre got the Islamic influence from the shop owners. Some of them converted to Islam (Ali, Ahmed and

Khadija, O.I, 9/5/98).

The Wanga Muslim administrators having been in close contact with their Muslim influenced them to embrace Islam. Most of them converted to follow the administrators' example while others converted for convenience purposes since they were working at the chief's camp.

Mention should be made of the fact that Mumias played a major role in the Islamization of the Babukusu. This is because Mumias, the capital of the Wanga Kingdom was the administrative headquarters for the British protectorate.

This was owing to the fact that it was already firmly established as a trading centre for the Arab and Muslim Coastal traders. Here the traders replenished their food supplies and rested before resuming their journey further north in search of Ivory and slaves. It was an important meeting place since caravan routes from Mrima Coast through Chagga, Maasai, Kikuyu country to the eastern shores of Lake Victoria converged there. Due to this, it got in touch with Islam with some of its people getting Islamized beginning with Mumia himself.

The history of Islam in Bukusuland therefore is a success story of the Wanga Muslim administrators. They became the pillars in the establishment of the Islamic community in the sub-region. They consequently enriched

the religious and cultural heritage of the Babukusu. The Islamic communities were characteristically along or near the road and railway network, and in market centres. Therefore, the first Islamic community in Bukusuland was the brainchild of Wanga Muslim administrators from Mumias.

The few Babukusu who embraced the religion began talking to their relatives and clansmen who were at the moment mere observers about the faith. With time, these people began to listen and show interest in Islam and later embraced it.

## **2.2 Factors Hindering the Penetration and Spread of Islam Among the Babukusu**

There were several factors that hindered the penetration and spread of Islam among the Babukusu. They include Christianity and Western education, lack of humanpower, social factors, lack of Islamic spirit, lack of Islamic knowledge, Islamic seclusion, and Babukusu inheritance rules. Each one of them is discussed in detail as seen below.

### **2.2.1 Christianity and Western Education**

Most studies done in western Kenya showed that most Luhya people converted to Christianity rather than Islam because of the many benefits Christianity offered them. For example, Gimode (1993:136) argues that the variable that did most harm to the free spread of Islam among the Logoli was Western education. He notes that the Logoli

people agitated against mere bible knowledge. They demanded to be taught subjects that would help them benefit from the colonial economy. The Logoli were therefore among the first to perceive how the new education correlated with success in the emerging order, an aspect Muslims did not offer (Kay 1973:128). The Logoli therefore came to identify more with missionaries who remained the main agents providing this education for a long time.

According to Painter (1966:102), Islam in Southern Buluyia was rendered ineffective with time because missionary education was a neutralizing agent. This was because Muslims failed to address the inevitable social change. Therefore, most Muslims in South Buluyia were not in government employment due to education deficiencies. Islam however does not separate between the sacred and profane. For the Wanga, when the Local Native Council gave a grant of one thousand shillings for the construction of a Qur'anic school, the Umma at Mumias diverted the money to building a Mosque (KNA-DC/NN/1/10).

Despite the above views, it should be noted here that since Christianity was under the colonial government by then, it meant an obvious win over Islam which did not have any power in the government.

With improved transport from the Kenyan coast to Kisumu as evidenced by the completion of the railway line

in 1901, missionaries had now easier access to the western part of Kenya and hence Bukusuland. Among the first missionary societies in Babukusuland were Mill Hill Mission (1912) and Friends African Mission (1914). The establishment of Christianity among the Babukusu saw a good number of converts to the religion, because with it came Western education. When education was under control of the churches, virtually everyone attending school would also join the denomination which sponsored the school. Missionaries were interested in influencing the Babukusu to follow Christian principles. They hoped to achieve this through control over the education system. Education was important if one wanted to take advantage of the new opportunities which the wider society was able to offer, for example recruitment into the lower levels of administrative hierarchy, clerical work, and teaching. They also provided the Babukusu with the basis on which location - wide factions could agitate against Wanga Muslim chiefs. They were also trained in organisation and use of formal political associations (De Wolf 1977: 68-79). This was to Islam's disadvantage because Muslims did not offer this kind of education and benefits to its converts.

The Friends African Mission saw the emergence of the "Friends-schools-systems" with Friends School Kamusinga and Lugulu Girls as pioneers, while the Catholic Mill Hill Mission saw the establishment of St. Mary's Kibabii Boys



and Misikhu Girls among others. The main purpose for the establishment of these schools was the economic development of the people. Western education therefore was the means of success and economic prosperity in the unfolding colonial society. (Barrett 1973, Gilpin 1976, De Wolf 1977, Burgman 1990 and Rasmussen 1995).

The missionaries felt that illiteracy was a terrible affliction from which people had to be redeemed. The Babukusu gradually realised the importance of Western education when lucrative government or colonial jobs were dangled before their eyes. Since these jobs required schooling, the schools henceforth became popular. Due to this, the Babukusu became more inclined towards Christianity other than Islam because Muslims did not offer this type of education to its converts. (Burgman, 1990:180, Qassim, o.1, 12/5/98).

Burgman (Ibid) and De Wolf (1977:18) further note that although adherence to a particular religion was not normally a pre-condition to being admitted to a school, nevertheless the pupils were exposed to the rules and regulations of a particular religion and often became converted to it. A denomination that ran the best schools would eventually have the most government positions taken by its adherents. This accelerated the speedy zeal with which the different churches built and upgraded their schools. With most Babukusu being attracted to

the Babukusu in various ways due to its secular outlook and ways of life. In the first place, it affected the Islamic mode of life especially the manner of dressing particularly the wearing of mini-skirts, short dresses and tight trousers. This mode of dressing contradicts the Islamic injunction of the "Buibui" and Veil. This therefore contravenes the Islamic injunction of modesty which requires a woman to cover herself from head to toe unless in the company of her husband or blood family member. Night clubs and discos held under the guise of westernization interfere with the Islamic way of life. Islam forbids the listening to secular music which has evil words or listening to music with a bad intention. This turns away the believer's mind from the path of Allah. All these aspects contradict the Islamic etiquette. Islamic civilization and western civilization being built on diametrically opposed conceptions of life, are not compatible with each other. Western education is bound to make the Muslim youth undermine their belief in the message of the prophet Mohammed, and fail to regard themselves as representatives of the peculiar Islamic civilization. Due to this, westernism has been a great setback to Islam's growth among the Babukusu (Muhammad R. and Sheikh Ayub, 0.1, 20/5/98).

Christians hold crusades oftenly to preach against Islam's impetus in the area. Some Muslims who are not strong in faith turn to Christianity after attending the crusades (Zaida, 0.1, 20/5/98). The effect of Islam is

converts to Islam therefore turned away, while those who were already Muslims were to remain "backward" because Muslims were not prepared for modernization. Muslims failed to provide the needs of a fast growing/changing society. This explains why the expansion of Islam among the Babukusu is so minimal and this has adversely affected its persistence.

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Christians hold crusades oftenly to preach against Islam's impetus in the area. Some Muslims who are not strong in faith turn to Christianity after attending the crusades (Zaida, 0.1, 20/5/98). The effect of Islam is evidenced by some of the missionary records which demonstrate the fright missionaries had of this religion.

Willis, one of the early Anglican missionaries in Uganda and in western Kenya, for example preferred to deal with natives who had been untouched, to those who had been out to work and thus exposed to the influence of Islam. (cited in Lonsdale, 1964:144). Painter (1966:11) also acknowledged the significance of Islam by arguing that Christianity succeeded only among those Africans who had not yet been reached by Islam.

Missionary records in 1909 reveal that there was marked proselytisation by Muslims to the detriment of Christianity. One of them reads; "Muhammedism is making tremendous strides. Every Mohammadan appears to be a Teacher and Missionary" (KNA - EAYMF 67/80, 1909 Annual Report). Due to this, the protestant missionaries in western Kenya this same year joined with the rest in the

protectorate to form a federation. The federations's main aim was to counter catholicism and Islam (Ibid, 19/3/1914 - Joint Protestant Societies Report). This to some extent, curtailed the progress of Islam among the Babukusu.

The government took over two Muslim primary schools in Webuye and Kimilili divisions after independence. These were Kimilili Muslim Primary school and Webuye Muslim Primary School respectively. They are the present-day "Kimilili D.E.B primary school in Kimilili division, and Webuye D.E.B primary school in Webuye division." These schools initially offered *Madrassa* classes and after being taken over, the government introduced Western education in these schools instead. The government never included Islamic Religious Education (I.R.E.) in the curriculum. Similarly, it never provided funds for the construction of other Muslim schools to replace the two. This therefore denied and continues to deny Babukusu Muslims chances of getting Islamic education.

Through western education, the students were taught administrative work where they could be employed as teachers and clerks, use of formal political organizations and how to agitate against Wanga Muslims chiefs. Therefore western education correlated with the new emerging colonial order, an aspect Muslims did not offer at the moment. The government wanted to civilize

the Babukusu through western education. It felt Babukusu Muslims with their Muslim education were uncivilized. The government therefore took over the two Muslim schools in order to introduce western education which would civilize the Babukusu. It claimed that the Muslim syllabus at the Madrasa level did not measure up to the needs of the day.

However, according to the researcher, the government failed in this case because Islam does not differentiate between the sacred and the profane. Therefore, all aspects of civilization are enshrined in the Qur'an and hence the Madrasa education could still shape up the people to fit in the emerging colonial society. Islam cuts across the social, political, economic and cultural aspects of life. Therefore whatever is referred to as civilization (ustaarabu) has its origin in Islam. Therefore the government might have had other reasons of taking over the two Muslim schools other than the claim that Islamic education was "backward".

Muslim students in both government and mission schools do not get time for their five daily prayers because of being in school most of the time. This is even worsened by the fact that these students in these schools are never allowed to worship in school. Though there is freedom of worship and a provision for students to engage in worship that is in line with their religious

inclinations, the school rules and regulations in most Mission-sponsored government schools do not allow Muslim students to worship in line with their religious ideals.

Muslim students in these schools are seen as violating the school rules and regulations in case they observe the five daily prayers or fail to go for Church services on Sundays. This leads to their being subjected to heavy punishment and even being suspended from school. Due to this, Muslim students in these schools have no alternative but to adhere to the school rules by attending Church services at the expense of their religion. They therefore remain nominal Muslims (Muslims by name) as long as they are in school. In some instances, some Muslim students turn to Christianity while in school, an aspect which has negatively affected the Muslim population and Islamic persistence in the area.

In the researcher's observation, the above reaction might be due to the religious rivalry between Islam and Christianity, where it is feared that if Muslim students are allowed to worship as per their religious inclinations, they might influence Christian students to embrace Islam thereby reducing the Christian population in the area. This seems to be an indirect tactic by Christianity to hinder the spread and persistence of Islam in Babukusuland. It is also a violation of the students' freedom of worship as spelt out in the

constitution of Kenya.

The dressing of female students in school uniform as required by the school is against the Islamic mode of dressing. They are not allowed to use the "*Buibui, Veil*", for girls and "*Kanzu and Cap*" for boys while in school, an issue which does not augur well with the Islamic modesty. In the same vein, the use of games - kits during games and physical education classes which expose the individual's body is against the rules of Islam. Islam forbids one from exposing his/her body to strangers except to one's husband or wife or when in the presence of "blood-relatives". This in itself has hindered the spread of Islam among the Babukusu. This has an intrinsic negative effect on the spread and persistence of Islam among the people (Miriam, and Zubedah, O.I, 20/5/98).

The Holy Qur'an in Surah 33:59 states:

O prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garmets over their persons (when abroad): That is most convenient, that they should be known as such and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

This quotation refers to all Muslim women - those of the prophet's household as well as the others. They were asked to cover themselves with outer garments which cover the whole body or between the neck and bosom when walking around. The aim here is not to restrict the



liberty of women but to protect them from harm and molestation by men. If a Muslim woman sincerely observes this rule, but owing to human weakness falls short of this ideal, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

In Surah 24:30-31, it is stated:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them. Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms.

The rule of modesty applies to both men and women, but on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than men, and especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom. Therefore the use of school uniform and games kits violate the modesty rule as enjoined in the Holy Qur'an.

The issue of co-education which allows boys and girls to attend same schools contravenes the Islamic concept of seclusion. The videos and films shown at school in form of entertainment are against the Qur'anic injunctions. They turn away the students' attention from the path of Allah. In my view, the school rules and regulations should take into consideration the religious tenets so as to avoid

exposing students to religious conflicts while obeying the school rules and regulations.

Most Muslims going to Christian schools take up their teachers as their role-models and being Christians they tend to make students incline towards Christian ideals thereby leaving Islam. Some of the Christian concepts taken up by these students may not be acceptable to Islam. These include wearing of mini-skirt, transparent clothes and leaving the hair uncovered. Therefore, some practices that go with Western education have watered down the vigour of Islam among the Babukusu. This has made some Muslim students to turn to Christianity while in school. This explains why though still persistent todate, Islam's population among the Babukusu is minimal (Farida, and Fatuma, 0.1, 20/5/98).

### **2.2.2 Lack of Humanpower**

Lack of humanpower to teach the Babukusu converts the *deen* has resulted into the superficial spread of the religion among the people. Babukusuland does not have enough Babukusu *dees* who know the religion in depth to teach other converts about the religion. At the same time, the Babukusu Muslims do not have enough qualified teachers to teach Islamic Religious Education (I.R.E) in schools. This to a great extent has hindered the spread of Islam among the Babukusu.

To collaborate with the above, Trimmingham (1964:72) argues that the problem of the spread of Islam among Africans and above all its assimilation, arises from the nature of those who should have been its chief agents. To him, the Muslims at the coast built their Islam into a defensive cultural barrier which cut them off from upcountry Muslims. They did not settle among them in the countryside, nor send out Qur'anic teachers. The later groups in interior settlements were often almost isolated, worshipped in their own Mosques, and had little social intercourse with coastalist Africans. This accounts for the superficiality of conversion in the interior.

Similarly, Samiullah (1983:15), states that lack of humanpower and material resources to teach the converts the "Deen" in depth has resulted in many unIslamic practices and ideas finding their way into the Islamic community. For example use of Qur'anic formulae in magical incantations, offering sacrifices to the dead in the name of appeasing Allah to bless them. Attempts to correct the misconceptions about Islam and established practices taken to be Islamic due to ignorance have met with opposition. This is because people reject anyone who criticizes something which has become ingrained. On the other hand, toleration and compromises are unacceptable because "any addition to religion is tantamount to going astray". Therefore, the people performing *Da'wah* have to exercise great tact and patience in order to win people

away from the unIslamic practices without hurting their feelings.

### **2.2.3 Social Factors**

There were some social factors which prevented the Babukusu from embracing Islam. Some felt they could not discard their cherished traditional attachment to traditional beliefs. Some of them put forward strong negative reaction from their society as a reason for not having adopted Islam. Some of them found it hard not to observe the taboos whose observance was not allowed after conversion to Islam. One of them noted:

Among the Muslims one cannot eat an animal which was not slaughtered in a certain manner ... I was used to feeding on any kind of meat even from pigs. (Kisielo, O.I., 11/5/98)

In the researcher's view, the strongly entrenched indigenous beliefs in the respondents' minds made it difficult for them to abandon the beliefs in order to accept/adapt Islam.

The Islamic etiquette does not allow a Muslim to eat meat not slaughtered in the Islamically accepted manner (see Surat 2:173, 5:3-5, 6:121, 138). The prohibition of eating unIslamically slaughtered meat went hand in hand

with prohibition of taking alcohol. Since Bungoma is blessed with maize, sorghum and millet, the making of local beer is not difficult. Beer generally termed *kamalwa* played a very important role in the social life of Babukusu. A person could make himself very popular by regularly entertaining friends and neighbours with beer. Apart from prestige enhanced by cattle-wealth, people struggled hard to brew good quality beer in order to win fame through liberal entertainment. This was one of the motivations behind plural marriages, for the more wives a man had, the more capable he becomes in maintaining an ample flow of beer for entertaining a wider horizon of admirers and well-wishers. Beer was an essential commodity in ceremonial entertainment, in ritual functions and for giving away as a present to "honourable elders and relatives-in-law". Even ancestral spirits were sometimes spared a miniature pot of beer to entertain themselves. Brewing of beer was mostly done after harvest. Drinking of beer and slaughtering animals accompany most celebrations. The prohibition of taking carrion and taking alcohol made most Babukusu Muslims miss the festivals (Yusuf F., O.I, 20/5/98).

The above prohibitions interfered with Babukusu socialization as it meant they could not meet their peers/colleagues whom they met during the beer drinking sprees and other festivals. Due to this, most Babukusu Muslims felt this was too big a price to pay. Therefore,

some of them left Islam on this account.

#### **2.2.4 Lack of Islamic Spirit**

Lack of Islamic spirit is another obstacle to the Islamic development among the Babukusu. After the establishment of Islam, the Islamic spirit required for deeper Islamization was lacking. Many converts remained deeply rooted in their various traditions and customs. There was no organised Islamic propagation like the one of Christian missions. The converts were left without care and some of them drifted back to non-Islamic faiths. Most Muslims were commercialists and not missionaries. Most Babukusu Muslim converts did not take upon themselves as a duty to spread Islam among their people initially. They did not realize that *Da'wah* is enjoined on them as long as they convert to Islam. Therefore, most Muslims remained Muslims by name - nominal Muslims (Qassim, O.I, 20/5/98). However, there is no fixed programme for activities in Islam like in other religions.

#### **2.2.5 Lack of Islamic Knowledge**

Islam among the Babukusu is weak fundamentally because of lack of Islamic knowledge. Governed by a purely materialistic concept of life, most Babukusu Muslims are concentrating all their energy, time and wealth to procure material progress. This is seen in line with the emphasis laid on the acquisition of secular education. Most parents prefer their children taking up

professional careers to becoming Alims (Religious teachers). According to them, with their children qualifying as doctors, lawyers, or engineers their accumulation of material wealth is greatly facilitated. The pursuit of Islamic knowledge is deprecated simply because it does not offer much in form of pecuniary gains. This has resulted in the lack of enough Alims to teach Muslim children. According to the researcher, since Islam does not separate the sacred from the profane, the Babukusu Muslims have failed in this case by differentiating between the two and leaning on the one side.

Abdul (O.I, 10/6/98) observed that most potential Babukusu Muslim converts were discouraged by the five daily prayers. Since most of them are farmers, they felt praying five times a day is time-wasting as they should spend this time on the farm. To them, praying early in the morning and at bed-time is enough. To this end, the researcher felt the Babukusu might have had other reasons for refusing to adopt Islam other than frequency of prayer because praying at most takes only 15 minutes. At the same time, prayer makes one peaceful and enjoy life on the path of Allah and therefore one cannot just afford to do without it. Similarly, some argued that apart from frequency, the issue of bending, standing and kneeling during prayer and the performance of ablution before prayer discouraged many. In relation to ablution, they

claimed it is not necessary as Allah does not look at somebody's outward appearance. Therefore, according to them, God accepts one's prayer as long as he/she is clean at heart. However, it should be noted that cleanliness is next to Islam. Cleanliness is one of the hallmarks of the Islamic faith. This is clearly stated in Surat 4:43, 5:6. This is also in line with the *hadith* which states

"Allah is beautiful and likes beauty".  
Therefore one should be clean and modest while in the presence of God and while in prayer (Sheikh al-Amin bin Ali al-Mazrui)

Fasting in the month of Ramadhan put off many Babukusu from Islam. Most of them had to think twice about becoming Muslims because fasting also called "*Saum*" was too big a price to pay. *Saum* has numerous benefits to a Muslim. It improves the moral and spiritual character of a person through renouncing the lawful satisfaction of his or her desires in obeying the divine. It produces in a person the ability to control his physical desires - hence self-discipline. It promotes piety and righteousness. *Saum* also trains a person to avoid evil and sinful actions. Apart from abstaining from food, drinks, sexual intercourse, one also refrains from temptations, for example, lying, quarrelling, backbiting and engaging in evil things. A prophetic *hadith* states:

When any of you keeps a fast, he should not speak indecent or filthy word or engage in a noisy sin and were anyone to quarrel with



him and call him bad names, he should simply say "am keeping fast, therefore I cannot pay you back in the same coin." (Sahih Al-Bukhari).

It seems the Babukusu turned away from Islam because they did not understand these benefits of *Saum* to the individual and society at large by then.

#### **2.2.6 Islamic Seclusion**

The Islamic concept of seclusion which prohibits the free irresponsible mixing of sexes and shaking of hands between men and women does not augur well with Babukusu socialization and communal living in society. The Babukusu are known as the "people of peace" (Babandu be Kumulembe). The only instances when they do not shake hands is when they encounter their enemies and this means there is no harmony between the two groups. Therefore, prohibition of shaking hands between men and women means denying the Babukusu Muslims their long enjoyed peace and harmony. This in turn interferes with their societal peace and mode of living. Potential converts who were not at peace with this Islamic etiquette turned away on this account.

Islamic seclusion however does not mean lack of interaction amongst Muslims themselves or between Muslims and non-Muslims. Both Muslim men and women are free to interact with all persons and work in any field as long as they interact responsibly, obey the rules of modesty and do not act against the Islamic injunctions about

relationships.

### **2.2.7 Babukusu Inheritance Rules**

The Babukusu inheritance rules greatly affected the spread of Islam among the people. As already mentioned in chapter one, the Babukusu indigenous inheritance rules only allow male children to inherit the deceased parents. This is because female children are expected to get married elsewhere. The female children would belong to a different lineage after marriage. The Babukusu therefore wanted their property to remain intact within the clan lineage. According to Islam, both male and female children are enjoined to a share of the parents' property at their time of death. Girls get a half share of what boys get (Surat 2:180-240; 4:7-12, 19, 33, 176). The principles of inheritance law are laid down in broad outline in the Holy Qur'an. The power of testamentary disposition, extends over only one-thirds of the property; the remaining two-thirds are distributed among heirs as laid down. All distribution takes place after the legacies and debts including funeral expenses have first been paid. Legacies cannot be left to any of the heir included in the scheme of distribution, or it will amount to upsetting the shares and undue preference of one heir to another. Generally, but not always, the male takes a share double that of a female in his own category. Equity and fair dealing should be observed in all matters so that no one's interests are prejudiced. These funeral

expenses should be reasonable; debts, must be genuine and not reckless debts and the shares must be calculated with fairness. Since these two inheritance rules and regulations opposed each other, some Babukusu who could not come to terms with the Islamic inheritance rules left Islam due to this.

These factors constraining the spread and persistence of Islam among the Babukusu did not mean to totally prevent the growth of Islam in Babukusuland. Islam among the Babukusu has continued to grow over time and this explains why it has persisted to date.

### **2.3 Factors Facilitating Conversion Among the Babukusu**

Islam was seen as a more simpler faith to convert or adhere to than Christianity on a comparative basis (Kabiri 1990:5). It appeared that the two religions were competing for converts among the Kenyan upcountry peoples.

This was seen in 1909, when officials in the colonial administration warned their colleagues that Islam was a serious rival to the spread of Christianity. (KNA - DC/KBU/3/4). The archival data reveals that the acceptability of Islam by the interior peoples was seen as banking on the fact that it did not ask one to deny the self as opposed to Christianity (KNA - PC/coast/1/1/20). Therefore this rendered Islam more acceptable than Christianity. It is this apparent cultural parallel that made Islam more attractive than Christianity in the

initial stages among the Babukusu.

Van Grunbaum (cited in Alpers 1972:173) states that Islam allows the potential converts to carry over with them much of their traditional way of life. For him, this accounts for Islam's amazing cross-cultural absorptiveness. The flexibility of both the indigenous religion and Islam facilitated the adoption of Islam by the Babukusu.

Islamic religious practices which are akin to Babukusu religious practices attracted some Babukusu to Islam. This made it easier for the Babukusu to point at areas of convergence between the two belief systems. This rendered it easier for the Babukusu to adapt themselves to Islam. On this basis, we shall therefore examine the particular factors that facilitated Babukusu conversion to Islam.

### **2.3.1 Polygamy**

Polygamy as a factor facilitating African conversion to Islam was cited by a good number of scholars. They include Trimmingham (1965) (1980), Kabiri (1990), Gimode (1993), Nzibo (1995) and Ahmed (1995). According to Bakari Juma and Aisha Muhammed, (O.I. 10/5/98), polygamy was a common aspect in the Babukusu religion and Islam. The Islamic law allows up to four wives as long as the husband is able to provide equitably for them in all

aspects of life. The Holy Qur'an demands justice to wives in terms of companionship, provisions, considerateness, and such controllable aspects of family life. Equity is therefore a pre-requisite to polygamy in Islam. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 4:3 states:

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

Among the Babukusu, the number of wives is not limited provided one has the ability and the means of maintaining them. Polygamy among the Babukusu is practised in order to get heirs who are supposed to be boys. A man with only daughters married another wife (wives) in order to get boys to inherit him. It was also practised in case the first wife was barren. At times some men felt they had a lot of wealth and sharing it amongst many wives was the best way of utilizing it (Kasili, Kisielo (O.I, 11/5/98,) Wagner (1949), Nasimiyu (1995), Andere (n.d), Makokha (1993).

The similarity between Babukusu polygamy and that of Islam made the two religions easily compatible thereby making Islam easy for adoption by the Babukusu. At the same time it did not demand a lot of social change on the part of the convert, hence there was no major social

conflict between the two religions. Therefore, polygamous Babukusu men embraced Islam while maintaining their wives whichever the number initially but today the maximum of four is restricted (Muhammed Abdul, Amina Jafar, O.I, 11/5/98). Salim Opwora (O.I, 11/5/98) expressed this in the words:

*Khubela edini ye Busilamu sekania Omundu  
khuba ne bakhasi bakali tawe, efwe khwabona  
khuli niyo edini endayi.*

Since Islam does not prohibit polygamy, we felt it is the right religion.

### **2.3.2 - Circumcision**

Since circumcision existed in both religions, Islam's adoption by the Babukusu was rather easy. As Banker (1950:27) put it, circumcision was one issue which made local people feel Islam was the right religion. In the words of Khamisi (O.I. 12/5/98)

"... most Babukusu Muslims still practice circumcision in the indigenous way where children are circumcised at home by local surgeons at the age of 13-15 years, beer is prepared and animals are slaughtered".

Beer is prohibited in Islam and therefore those who brew it during circumcision go against the Islamic rules.

Similarly, those who brew beer seem to be having a very low level of faith. He however observed some of them have turned to modern methods of circumcision where children are circumcised at an early age in hospital without any

ceremony. Some strictly adhere to the Islamic way of circumcision at the age of 7 days without any ceremony. This is because Islam forbids circumcision of old people. This is in relation to the Islamic etiquette, modesty, and its injunction of seclusion. Circumcision therefore attracted a good number of Babukusu to Islam. The mere fact that Islam was practising a similar initiation rite to that of the Babukusu circumcision saw a good number of Babukusu embrace Islam.

For the Babukusu men who converted to Islam before being circumcised, some were still circumcised according to the indigenous tradition while others were circumcised in hospital as a way of adhering to the Islamic etiquette.

Those circumcised when infants according to Islamic rules do not later on participate in Babukusu indigenous initiation ceremonies (Muhammed Ramadhan, O.I, 12/5/98).

In the Babukusu context, circumcision means a transition from childhood to adulthood. Once one is circumcised, he is looked upon as a mature person who is capable of making independent decisions and can live independently. Circumcision prepares one for marriage which is an intrinsic mark of maturity. At circumcision, the neophytes were given instructions on how to live as mature people, how to behave and relate with other members of the society, what the society expected of them and how to face life more objectively (Kasili, O.I, 12/5/98).

Due to the above, some Babukusu did not understand the meaning of Islamic circumcision only seven days after birth. To them, circumcision on the seventh day after birth demeaned the meaning/aim of circumcision as a rite of passage. It negated the role played by circumcision as a rite of passage in preparing the neophyte for adult life. This conflict therefore put off some Babukusu potential converts to Islam. Circumcision therefore played double roles in that on the one hand it facilitated Babukusu conversion to Islam, while on the other hand it hindered the same though on a minimal scale.

### **2.3.3 The Concept of Supreme Being (Wele)**

The Babukusu concept of one Supreme Being (*Wele*) who is regarded as the high God influenced their conversion to Islam. One respondent, Masindano, O.I, 15/5/98 asserted authoritatively "There is only one *Wele*, not two. Had there been two they would have caused considerable chaos through rivalry and conflicts." Continuing with his answer he explained:

From time immemorial our people held the belief that there was only one *Wele* who created heavens and earth and all that is in it, which no other person can ever do. Consequently whenever there was trouble, or hardship, people used to worship that one *Wele*.

*Wele* was therefore viewed as being without equal and



as a source of life itself and hence He was the ultimate object of worship. By virtue of His paramount role as creator, all life and religions practised by people spring from Him. All that He created are centred around Him. He is presumed to be the common denominator with regard to both the actual act and products of creation and the religious beliefs of His creatures. This reinforces the contention that the Babukusu believed in the existence of one God, called "Wele" and one creator who was one and the same. They consequently worshipped Wele alone through spirits of the dead relatives as the effective intermediaries. In every undertaking, a person had to ask for Wele's blessings and protection first (Aruta, Muhammed O.I, 15/5/98, Wagner (1949) (1970), Were (1967), Lusweti (1974), Wanyama (1984), Makokha (1993).

The Babukusu concept of Supreme Being is in close affinity with the Islamic concept of oneness of God. Islam believes in rigid monotheism. Thus, Allah alone is to be worshipped as he is the only God. He is the only creator, preserver, and the sustainer. He alone grants children and gives out life and death, health and sickness, poverty and riches. In short, whatever happens in this world is at His will, all are dependent on Him, He is dependent on none. He alone is worthy of worship and veneration. The basic Islamic concept is that the entire universe was created by Allah who is the lord and sovereign. He is the lord of the universe which He alone

sustains. He created humankind and appointed for each human being a fixed period of life which he is to spend on earth. Allah has prescribed a certain code of life, as the correct one for them, but has at the same time conferred on humankind freedom of choice as to whether or not he adopts this code as the actual basis of his life. One who chooses to follow the code revealed by God becomes a Muslim (believer - Mu'min) and one which refuses to follow it becomes a Kafir (non-believer) (Ahmad Khurshid, 1976:29). Thus Surah-al-Fatiha states:

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; Most Gracious, most Merciful; master of the Day of Judgement, thee do we worship and thine aid we seek (Surah 1:1-5, Also see Naomani 1969:81).

Our Guardian lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established Himself on the Throne (of authority). He draweth the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession; he created the sun, the moon and the stars, (All) governed by laws under His command. It is not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah. The Cherisher and sustainer of the worlds" (Surah 7:54, Also Surat 6:73, 164; 2:21-22, 117; 11:6-7; 13:16-17; 66:2-3; 25:61-62; 27, 29).

This close affinity in the concepts of *Wele* and Allah reduced the conflicts between Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion. This won over some Babukusu to Islam as they found Islam a perfect and true religion for them.

#### 2.3.4 Marriage

Stigand (1913), Safari (1994), Kabiri (1990) and Kariuki (1995) argue that most Swahili and Muslim settlers were single (had not brought their wives with them if already married) and were far away from their people whom they had left behind. It is this group that first intermarried with African women. These women converted to Islam after getting married. Personal and family benefits resulted from marriage to Muslim men. The women were given a new type of clothing and other gifts while their families benefited by receiving gifts like sugar, rice, sweets, and blankets. At times the woman's family sent some of their children to stay with the newly married couple. These children were taught the ways of Islam and most of them embraced the faith.

Oral interviews revealed that besides the Babukusu women getting married to Muslim men, there were some Ganda and Nubi Muslim women staying in the police camp in Webuye around 1914. These women got married to Babukusu men and hence influenced them to embrace Islam. The Arab and Nubi teachers used by Chief Amutalla to teach Islam in Kimilili division married Babukusu women who converted to Islam after marriage. This increased Muslim influence in Bukusuland (Abdullah Mokaka, Saum Ali, Khamisi Wamalwa, Sofia Asman, O.I, 15/5/98). Therefore, marriage of Babukusu women by Muslim men and vice versa facilitated

conversion to Islam among the Babukusu.

The only difference between Babukusu indigenous marriage and the Islamic marriage is in the wedding ceremony which is emphasised in the Islamic faith. The presents given to the bride and bridegroom depended on the family's welfare. Without it, one is seen as having gone astray. This Islamic wedding ceremony replaced the Babukusu indigenous marriage ceremony known as *Siselelo*. At the same time, dowry (Mahr) in Islam is given to the bride herself. It entails what is demanded by the bride herself. This is unlike the Babukusu indigenous practice of giving dowry to the father or family of the bride.

#### **2.3.5 Muslim Feasts**

Muslims used to hold celebrations such as Maulid, Idd-al-Fitr, Friday prayers, and marriage festivals. These festivals were accompanied with a lot of fanfare and Muslims all over the area and beyond and non-Muslims were invited. These celebrations really impressed the Babukusu non-Muslims. To most of them, the bond of unity, the need to be part of the "Jamaa" that was well-organized and took care of its people, the generosity of their hosts and the delicacies that went with the celebrations like *chapatis*, *wali*, attracted them very much. Being a novelty in the area, these delicacies attracted some Babukusu since they were different from their traditional foodstuffs. After the feasts, most of them would proclaim themselves

Muslims. This therefore won over a number of Babukusu to Islam. This was stated by Khalfan, Malik and Abubakar Omari, (O.I., 15/5/98). This is also expressed in the words of Quraishy M.A. (1989), thus:

.... They watched every activity of the Muslims... They watched them praying, observed them in their habits, in their dress and in their dealings with fellow human beings. They admired their simplicity and readiness to integrate by marrying with local people.

Besides Muslim feasts, Islam offered a way of attaining something like social equality with the envied merchants who had access to the outside sources of cloth, beads and salt. By becoming Muslim, one could eat from the same plate with other Muslims and speak to them as equals rather than as inferior to superior. This is the recognition of equal humanhood in all believers which prophet Muhammed earnestly impressed upon his followers. It is an illustration of the essential equality of all believers, whether white or black, bond or free (Atterbury, 1987). Islam hence introduced the concept of Ummat-al-Islam (community of peace). It is not surprising therefore that a good number of Babukusu opted to Islam.

Blyden (n.d.:11) confirms the above when he argues that in Islam once one becomes a believer, there is nothing in his colour or race to debar him from the highest privileges, social or political, to which any

other Muslim can attain. It is this sense of equality in Islam that won over some Babukusu to Islam.

### **2.3.6 Economic Benefits**

Economic benefits attracted some Babukusu to the Islamic faith. Muhammed Asman and Jafar Ibrahim, (O.I, 15/5/98), observed that the most evident contribution of Islam to the whole society was in the butchery business.

This became the official prerogative of Muslims and they came to dominate the butchery business. Even todate, all meat meant for public consumption has to be slaughtered by Muslims. Examples are Muhammed Abdi and Abdul Kundu who are the main butchers at Bukembe market in Kanduyi division and Bokoli market in Webuye division.

Besides running of butcheries, Muslims also owned shops and hence introduced the art of shop-keeping in Bukusuland. There were also non-Muslim Indians who owned shops. The running of butcheries and shops introduced money economy among the Babukusu which replaced barter trade. They therefore employed Babukusu as assistants in the butcheries and shops. These Babukusu assistants learnt the art of business from their Muslim employers. Later with the growing population, the Babukusu were allowed by Muslim businessmen and women to run their own butcheries and shops as they had now acquired the knowledge of business from them. This improved their economic status and hence raised their standard of living.

They could henceforth afford their basic needs like good food, decent shelter and education. They were seen as belonging to "a higher class" than other members of the society. This economic benefit made many Babukusu embrace the Islamic faith. Todate, most slaughter houses, super markets, hotels, retail shops and butcheries in the study area are run by Muslims.

### **2.3.7 World Wars (I & II)**

The World Wars had an impact on the expansion of Islam in Kenya and East Africa as a whole: Africans resisted recruitment to take part in the wars as they equated it with the seizure characteristics of the slave raids. Because of this, some desceded either on the way or during operations. Others ran away from their homes before the recruiting teams arrived. They stayed away from their homes until their cases were forgotten. In Kenya, the impact was first felt in terms of the peopling of Nairobi with natives who were in one way or another responding to the war, and finally settled in Nairobi either as actual or potential converts. The other impact was the African war participation (Kabiri 1990:99).

In Kenya, recruitment was done in already Islamised areas like Lamu and Mombasa (KNA-PC/ Coast /1/1/234). The Mijikenda, especially the Digo, were noted for their good response to the recruitment (KNA - ibid). These people were already Islamised. Therefore, the upcountry recruits

who were from Kamba, Maasai, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and Nandi ethnic groups were largely influenced by these Muslim recruits. These upcountry recruits were already working in the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.) even before the war (Cranworth 1919, Meineneutzhagen 1957, Savage 1966, Sperling 1988).

With regard to the Babukusu, two respondents, Hussein Jaffer and Muhammed Asman (O.I, 18/5/98) stated that during the war, many Babukusu were recruited into the war service. Since there were many Muslims in the War service, quite a number of them converted to Islam. These converts influenced their family members and their close associates to embrace the faith on their return. Among them were Muhammed Opicho, Sheikh Abdullah and Hamisi Nandasaba. Some Babukusu got converted while staying away from their home due to war and other crises. A good example is Abdul Kundu who got converted to Islam while staying in Uganda after running away to avoid being recruited into the war service (Abdul Kundu. O.I. 18/5/98). Because of his exposure while away from Bukusuland, Abdul Kundu had learnt to speak, read and write Arabic and enriched his knowledge of Islam. This made him to attain the status of the Chairman of the then Elgon Nyanza Muslim Association (Bungoma District Muslim Association) in 1973. This position gave him the authority to lead the faithfuls in the Friday prayers. He is the current Imam of the upcoming Mosque at Bokoli



Market in Kimilili division.

Sheikh Ayub and Sheikh Ali (O.I, 18/5/98) contended that by the end of the First World War, there were few Babukusu Muslims, most of them living along the trade routes who were influenced by the Wanga assistants to the slave traders from Mumias to Uganda. The other Muslim population comprised those who had embraced the religion after coming into contact with Wanga Muslim administrators, and those who had embraced the faith while in the war service and their families. After the war, many people joined Islam due to the peace that was prevailing and most converts felt they would be more secure in the Umma. Therefore by the time of the second world war, Islam had already taken firm roots among the Babukusu with many more joining it in order to get security.

#### **2.3.8 Natural Crises**

During the turn of the last century, Kenya experienced a series of natural crises that upset the status quo. Van Zwanenberg (1959:9), and Kabiri (1990:67-70) have observed that the entire East African region was hit by famine and epidemic diseases which followed each other. Rinderpest took its toll of the cattle while drought and locust invasion devastated crops. The economically impoverished populace as a result of these natural crises in turn yielded to diseases such as

dysentery, leading to mass deaths. As the survivors battled such adverse effects, the colonial forces invaded, and extinguished African sovereignty followed by such diseases as small pox, chicken pox, Measles, plague, poliomyelitis, influenza and whooping cough which appeared by 1890. Such kind of experiences, happening simultaneously with the imposition of colonial rule, implied a dislocation of societal harmony hitherto in existence. They set on stage movements out of the traditional homelands (Bujra 1975: 218). This implied that those involved were no longer to be confined by the boundaries of their microcosm.

According to Burgman (1979:79), the Babukusu were no exception when it came to these crises. Famine struck between 1918 - 1919 which wrecked the Christian missionary work which had begun in Bukusuland. These two years saw a continuation of disasters. Diseases took turns to play the role of champion killers of the year. The ravages of small pox reached a very high pitch; thousands took on epidemic proportions in 1918, but flamed up again in 1920. Dysentery took on epidemic proportions in 1918, but the great killer of that year was spanish flue. In 1919, thousands succumbed to plague, bubonic as well as pneumonia. All government offices were shut down. Chiefs combined efforts with Muslims to shut down Christianity among the Babukusu. Chiefs were not friendly towards missionaries in those days, despite the fact that very

early on they had entrusted their sons to them for education. They evidently resented the power of the priests which spilled over onto the catechists and the active Christians. These chiefs were not really the traditional leaders of their people (with the exception of Sudi) and once having been appointed by the British they had to assert their position. In 1919, they strongly opposed the re-opening of the catechumenate, which they said, perhaps without some justification - were sources of the epidemic befalling the people (Burgman 1979:79).

The crises however, were not new phenomenon. Ever since, societies under such crises had reacted by pawning their children to the neighbouring peoples. But the crises of the era was confounded by the fact that all the neighbours were victims. Hence, there was a stiff struggle for survival. There was an elevation of the prestige of those who could act as patrons to organize the means of survival, defence and raids. During this time, the British and their Swahili traders were second to none in serving as patrons (Lonsdale 199: 496, Boyes 1911). The British employees who were mainly Muslims based in Mumias acted as patrons to the Babukusu. They provided them with means of survival by giving them food, medicine and also employment as domestic servants and "askaris" at the camp. Those who had already embraced Islam had more advantages. Due to this, the Babukusu took up Islam which at the moment was their only saviour from crises (Muhammed

Rahaman and Zainab Muhammed O.I, 18/5/98).

#### 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the agents and factors that facilitated and those that hindered the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu. The chapter has revealed that Islam was spread among the Babukusu through the effort of the Wanga Muslims and not Muslim traders. Hence, it is clear that the first Babukusu blood to Islam was drawn by African Muslims, the Wanga, who administered North Bukusu led by Paramount Chief Mumia. The Babukusu who embraced Islam found it an indigenous religion, spread by indigenous people in their midst. This made it easy for them to be assimilated in the *Umma*. Therefore, the general contention by other earlier scholars that Muslim traders were the major agents or vehicle of Islamic expansion in the interior of East Africa and Kenya does not hold water as far as our study is concerned.

Though Islam was embraced by a good number of Babukusu, there were several factors hindering its spread among the people. These factors are exemplified by Christianity which brought with it Western education which saw many Babukusu flocking to it because of its privileges to the adherents. Since Christianity came immediately after Islam, Islamic expansion was curtailed because Muslims did not get the necessary education to meet the needs of the day.

It is also clear from the foregoing chapter that the similarity between some of the Babukusu indigenous beliefs and practices and those of Islam explains the ease with which the Babukusu embraced Islam. This demonstrates that the contact-situation between Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion was one of penetration and not conquest. This confirms one of our premises.

Since the Sunni Shafi'ite Islam had dominated the Coast despite the influx of Shi'ite Persians and Ibadhi oman Arabs, our research findings revealed that the branch of Islam that reached most of the interior through the Muslim traders but Bukusuland through Wanga Muslim administrators was Sunni of the Shafi'ite school of thought.

Lastly, the evidence we have adduced in relation to the agents and factors that facilitated the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu seems to be well articulated in the "Islamization theory" and "Change and Continuity concept" respectively.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF ISLAM ON THE BABUKUSU

#### 3.0 Introduction

In the foregoing chapter, we looked at the agents and factors that led to the Penetration of Islam among the Babukusu. We adduced evidence to the effect that the Wanga Muslim colonial administrators from Mumias were the main agents of Islamic expansion among the Babukusu. We have also shown that the similarity between some Babukusu indigenous beliefs and practices and those of Islam facilitated Islam's adoption by the Babukusu.

The following chapter seeks to examine the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu. It is guided by the premise that the Islamic manner of dressing, greetings and language reflect in part the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu. The socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu can be better conceptualized in Bascom and Herskovit's concept of "change and continuity" and Bungler's (1972) "Islamization theory". To uncover this, the islamization process undergone by Babukusu Muslim converts was examined.

Societies accept or reject a new religion in its adaptability to foreign influence. The whole question of acceptance therefore can only be evaluated within the framework of particular societal functional values. All

societies that adopt new religions are influenced by the same in a number of ways.

### **3.1 The Islamization Process Among the Babukusu**

Fisher (1973:32) explains the difference between Islamic and Christian conversion. He states that whereas the latter required lengthy catechumenate, perhaps a literary requirement, and probation period, the former was contented with a mere profession of faith as beginning. Thereafter, inductions into the doctrines of Islam would follow.

The Islamization process undergone by Muslim converts depended on the societal organization, and the way the religion was presented to the people. In other words, it wholly depends on the contact-situation between Muslims and non-Muslims, including the overriding attitudes and circumstances.

Most of our informants observed that Islamization among the Babukusu Muslim converts was not doctrinally demanding. Once one decided to embrace Islam, he or she was required to declare his or her intention of becoming a Muslim before any practising Muslim who did not need to be a Muslim leader or teacher. Once the individual declared his or her intention, he or she was required to recite the Islamic creed which he or she was taught. This was the most important part in the conversion process (Hawa Omari,

Hussein, and Farida Hamisi O.I, 18/5/98).

The Islamic creed, *shahada* or *kalima* is also called the concept of *Tawhid*. *Tawhid* is the bed-rock of Islam. In Islam, humankind joins the fold of Islam by honestly believing and professing faith in the unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammed. This is expressed as: "la-ilaha-illaallah, Muhammad-un-Rasullahi"- meaning "There is no God but Allah and Muhammed is His messenger". The *shahada* is clearly stated in Surah Al-Ikhlās-Surah 112. In the *Shahada*, the oneness of Allah is proclaimed at the outset.

The Holy Qur'an in Surah 112:1-4 states:

Say, He is Allah, the one and only  
God, the Eternal, Absolute, He  
begeth not, nor is He begotten, and  
there is none like unto Him.

The Islamic creed revolves around the focal point of monotheism, which means fundamental belief in the absolute unity and perfection of Allah the Exalted, a perfection that is without the least imaginable deficiency, and a unity so absolute that He, the Magnificent Creator has no partner or association, and is far above any attributes that he has bestowed on His creation.

After the profession of *shahada*, the neophyte was given a name which he or she chose, or the one chosen by whoever witnessed his or her profession of Islam. The convert was then taught how to read the Qur'an in



Kiswahili and Arabic. This is mainly done in the *Madrassa* classes by the *Mualim*. This is to enable them recite the Qur'an and at least learn some of it by heart.

The convert was also taught how to pray. Praying should be five times a day. He or she was taught the prerequisites of prayer particularly ablution as one should be clean before making the prayer. This went hand in hand with Muslim cleanliness and mode of dressing. A man, was taught the use of the *Kanzu*, cap and sandals. For a woman she was taught the use of the *Buibui* and the veil (*Hijab*).

This is in line with Islamic modesty and etiquette. The role of modesty applies to both men and women, but on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than men. This is especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom. The chief objective in view is the spiritual welfare. Muslims should make their individual, domestic and social life all contribute to their holiness, so that they can get the real success and bliss which is the aim of their spiritual endeavour. Other Muslim beliefs and practices like *Zakat* and *Saum* and the sharia rules of inheritance were slowly added and internalized.

Thus, the core of Islamic doctrine is the five pillars which constitute the basic acts of worship obligatory for every Muslim. They include: "strict monotheism, canonical prayers offered five times a day;

fasting during Ramadhan, Zakat and the pilgrimage to Mecca if one can afford.

Muslim elders made follow-ups to find out how the neophyte was fairing on in the new faith and encouraged him or her to prosper (Abdul Kundu, O.I, 18/5/98). This was not to force or coerce somebody into the religion but only to encourage the already Islamized convert to remain steadfast in the religion and to teach them more ideals of the religion. In most cases, the new converts carried on some of their indigenous practices like the shaking of hands and free mixing of sexes to the new faith. Seclusion was therefore not strictly observed initially. These practices were slowly abandoned with time though some still practise them today. Thus, the islamization process was not so doctrinally demanding hence many Babukusu found it easy to adopt Islam. With the above therefore one became a Muslim and immediately joined the fold of the *umma*.

It should be mentioned here that it was the simple style of presentation of Islam to the Babukusu that accounts for their conversion. For example, they were allowed to retain their Babukusu names, and initially polygamous men maintained all their wives even if they were more than four.

### 3.2 Socio-cultural Influence of Islam Among the Babukusu

Islam's approach to non-Muslims made many people to see it as an indigenous religion, spread by Africans, and whose adherents did not separate themselves from the community members (Opoku, 1985). For instance, the converts continue to give respect to their living-dead through the offering of sacrifices, believe in spirits, and Qur'anic quotations are used as magical formulae. According to the Qur'an, the offering of sacrifices by Muslims is only acceptable if it is done as an act of charity (*Zakat*). Sacrifices offered in order to ask Allah to reward the dead is accepted in Islam. All the meat of the sacrificed animal is given to the needy. At the same time, Islam is against magic and therefore the use of Qur'anic quotations as magical formulae is unIslamic (Surah 2:102).

All communities embracing new religions are affected or influenced by the new religions in a number of ways. The Babukusu therefore are no exception. The socio-cultural influence of Islam among the Babukusu is well examined through Bungler's (1972) Islamization theory, and the "Change and Continuity" concept advanced by Bascom and Herskovits (1959:2-6). The latter's concept states that whenever new influences impinge on any society, some of the pre-existing body of customs and beliefs are discarded, modified or retained. Hence change and continuity are paramount to culture because culture is

dynamic. Accordingly, the interaction between the Babukusu indigenous religion with Islam resulted in some aspects of the indigenous religion being discarded, modified, or retained.

### 3.2.1 Socio-Religious Practices

The coming of Islam among the Babukusu saw the rise of new religious practices. The outstanding influence was in socio-religious practices. Muslims introduced Islam which is a way of life. It is the blended whole of the socio-religious experience where the world of sacred is not distinguished from that of the profane. The concept of *Umma* is central to Islam. It is a concept that deals with the real nature of the human being. This includes his rights, duties and obligation, the criteria for judging his life, activity and rank, his relations with his sustainer and fellow beings, and the totality of creation. Islamic principles also deal with political, social and economic rights and duties. Hence all aspects of life are covered in the socio-religious realm of Islam.

The Islamic teachings are against "attributing partners in divinity to God." The Holy Qur'an in Surah 5:72 states:

They do blaspheme who say: "Allah is Christ the son of Mary", But said Christ: "O children of Israel Worship Allah, My Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah - Allah will forbid him the Garden, and the fire will be his abode.

There will for the wrongdoers be no one to help.

In Surah 6:22-23, 136-137, 163, it is stated:

No partner hath He: This am I commanded, And I am the first of those who bow to His will

Hence Islam is strictly monotheistic - thus Allah alone is responsible for everything in the universe. Once a Muslim recognizes the belief in the rigid monotheism of his faith, he or she appreciates the power of the creator in all aspects of life.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that the traditional belief in the creator God *Wele* among the Babukusu was interchanged in Islam by the rigid monotheism and the divinity of the Qur'an. The Babukusu besides believing in the creator God *Wele*, also believed in the power of ancestral spirits. Islam on the other hand only believes in the monotheistic God (Allah). Some Babukusu Muslims still practise spirit - worship. The Islamic belief that prophet Muhammad will intercede for the Muslim *Umma* on the day of judgement could replace the Babukusu belief in ancestral interceders. Prophet Mohammad is the only one who "bears witness to the Truth" and he is the one who came to renew the Gospel of Unity. He is the only one who can intercede with the permission of Allah (Surah 17:79). The Babukusu Muslims also started undermining the ancestral veneration at the family shrines

(*namwima*). The absoluteness of Allah not only overshadowed the ancestral spirits, but also emphatically forbade their veneration. One clear manifestation that a person had embraced Islam was to uproot the ancestral shrine (Khamisi, Zaida, O.I., 29/5/98).

Once a Bukusu got converted, there was a change in the religious beliefs where some of the indigenous beliefs were interchanged with Islamic beliefs. To this point, change in the indigenous religious beliefs and practices is explicit.

Despite the rigid monotheistic doctrine of Islam, Khamisi (O.I, 29/5/98) maintained that there are still a handful of Babukusu Muslims today who secretly offer sacrifices to their ancestors especially in cases of prolonged sickness. The sacrifices are meant to appease the dead/ancestors to intervene and heal the sick. Therefore not all Babukusu Muslims abandoned their indigenous beliefs after conversion. This explains Fisher's 1971; 1973a; 1985 and Bungler's (1972) mixing stage in the Islamization process where the neophytes combine some Islamic practices with the indigenous ones. Majority however, no longer hold to the indigenous practices once Islamized.

In addition to offering sacrifices to the ancestors, some Babukusu Muslims still plant Bamboo trees *Luteka* at

the Mosque and in their homesteads. This is a symbol of the indigenous shrine *namwima* where *Wele* their Supreme Being and ancestors dwell. The green leaves of the Bamboo tree are a symbol of long life. It was planted either inside or outside the *namwima*. It needed to strike roots and grow in order to bring about prosperity and long life.

As a sacred shrine, *namwima* served the functions performed by temples, churches and mosques in other religions. Such sacrificial places were holy places where *Wele* and ancestral spirits were appeased and invoked for help, guidance and protection in situations such as famine, distress, sickness, sterility, birth, and death.

The Bamboo tree, *Luteka* - symbolises that they are in close contact with *Wele* the Supreme Being and other ancestors besides Allah (Salim and Kisielo, O.I. 29/5/98).

This is an indication of the continuity of the Babukusu religion after merging with Islam.

### **3.2.2 Birth and Naming**

The other socio-cultural influence of Islam on the Babukusu is manifested in the rites of passage. Rites of passage is one area where we experience the epitome of Change and Continuity with regard to the beliefs and practices that accompany them.

To begin with, Islam maintains that one is born free of sin and therefore at birth no baptism is needed. As soon as a baby is born, the *Adhan* ceremony takes place.

The baby is washed and the father whispers the "call to prayer" into his/her right ear and then the "invitation to rise and worship" into the left ear. Thus the first words the baby hears are the call to worship Allah. The washing of the baby is not meant to take away an uncleanness, but it is in accordance with the prophet's Sunnah which requires babies to be washed or shaved on or before the name-giving ceremony. A name giving ceremony *Aqiqa* takes place on the seventh day of the baby's life. During this occasion, the father names the child after reading passages from the Qur'an though not a must, at times it comes after 40 days or one year. In the absence of the father, a male relative available will perform the exercise. The baby receives one of prophet Muhammed's names or one of his family's or one of Allah's 99 names with "ABD" (servant) added, for example Abdullah (servant of God/Allah) (Whiting 1983: 197). In the case of Babukusu Muslims, most of them still give Bukusu names in addition to the Islamic name. This depends on the season during which one is born. For example, Abdul "Kundu" and Jassimini "Namalwa". They have however made a departure from the style of naming children after ancestors. This demonstrates the mixing of Islamic and indigenous practices by Babukusu Muslims. Indeed, the Muslim name is one of the first features identifying a Muslim (Saum Ali, O.I, 9/6/98).

The baby's head is then shaven or washed to take away



uncleanliness at birth. Olive oil is then put on the head and money is given to the poor as a sign of gratitude to Allah for the new-born baby. Goats and sheep, two in case of a boy and one in case of a girl, are sacrificed in the Islamic way and the relatives consume two-thirds of the meat and a third goes to the poor. This replaced the Babukusu shaving of the baby after three days for a boy and two days for a girl and the bringing of gifts like millet, meat, and milk. (Mwanaisha M., O.I., 9/6/98)

### **3.2.3 Initiation**

Most converts to Islam have made a departure from the Babukusu style of circumcising children in the home by local surgeons at the age of 13-14 years. There are however, some who still hold to the indigenous practice.

In this case there is beer drinking and slaughtering of animals where all relatives and neighbours celebrate. The local circumcision ceremony goes with a lot of festivity.

Circumcision marks the end of childhood and introduces the youth to adulthood morality, behaviour and responsibilities, and also exposes him to a more serious form of traditional education. Such symbolic maturity was preceded, by a lot of tuition in all areas of life, including sex education.

In the Islamic mode, the child is circumcised on the seventh day after birth. Here, other Muslims are invited in the evening, where they sing in praise of Allah and

Muhammed (the way they do during *milad un-Nabi (Maulid)*). They read the Qur'an and in the morning of the following day, the child is circumcised. After circumcision, instead of putting on skin cloaks called *Kamatasi* or *Lulware*, which were the main garments for the young Babukusu people, the initiates are covered with sheets and blankets. This practice is now widespread in the sub-region among Muslims, Christians and even among Babukusu indigenous religion adherents. Some prefer circumcising the baby in hospital. In the researcher's view, the Babukusu accepted the Islamic way of circumcision in hospitals because it is more hygienic and less expensive. Local circumcision in homes is unhygienic and poses a health risk as one knife can be used to circumcise up-to 3-4 initiates. It is also expensive because of the festivity involved.

After the neophytes initiates have healed, those circumcised at the age of 13-14 years, are prayed for and given advice from the Qur'an on how to organise themselves as adults and live according to the Qur'anic injunctions.

This is a celebration at the Mosque where the parents of the neophytes and members of community bring gifts to the graduands. These include shoes, *Kanzus*, caps and even copies of the Holy Qur'an. Those circumcised after seven days are given the advice later in life when they mature.

There are no circumcision age-grades in Islam as there are in the Babukusu culture (Rajab Wanyama, Sofia Asman,

The above ceremony replaced the indigenous "feast of coming out," *Khukhweyalula*. During the ceremony, the initiates old-blood stained beddings were burned in the evening and the initiates slept outside in a banana grove. The following morning, they would wash themselves and put on new cloaks, *Lulware* and then return home singing. On arrival at home, they were served with hot cooked bananas.

All people around would also eat and drink beer. The initiate who is by now referred to as *Omutembete*, the fresh and soft one was given advice by the father and uncles in a symbolic language. They advised him about tribal rules of behaviour, for example avoidance of adultery, physical injury to other persons, involvement in quarrels, theft or other anti-social habits, respecting superiors and exercising valour and courtesy. The *Omutembete* henceforth stayed in a newly constructed bachelor's hut, *Esimba*. He would then go round homesteads revisiting neighbours and relatives who had witnessed his circumcision ceremony for the purpose of *Khubachukha* - receiving small presents like fowls, eggs and at times money.

#### 3.2.4 Divorce

Though divorce existed in the Babukusu cultural set-up, it was a rare phenomenon. Islam introduced some changes in the procedure of divorce. According to Islam,

several conditions have to be met before divorce is validated. The procedure of divorce in Islam is such as to encourage reconciliation where possible. This is evidenced by the Triple Irrevocable Sunnah divorce - which requires the man to pronounce his divorce declaration to the wife, keep her till she has had her menses for three months, and whose final waiting period has expired. After these, it becomes clear that reconciliation is extremely remote if not impossible. At this stage if no change of heart or mind takes place, divorce may then be pronounced and validated.

#### **3.2.5 Death**

Many respondents stated that during death, Babukusu Muslims mourn in the traditional way. This involves wailing loudly, and staying at the bereaved family's home. The main difference is evident at burial. Muslims believe burial should take place as soon as possible. This is to avoid the preservation expenses which can be used to sustain the bereaved family members. It is also to ensure that the body is buried before it decomposes. This replaced the indigenous practice of burying the dead after two or three days. This was meant to enable the spirit of the dead to stay in the house for the last time and also to allow relatives to bid farewell to the dead. However, Babukusu Muslims also delay the burial for 1-2 days in case relatives of the dead are far. Indigenous funeral ceremonies prevail in cases where one parent is a non-

Muslim or if the dead is a non-Muslim yet other members of the family are Muslims. To this end, Islam among the Babukusu fits in the mixing stage of the Islamization theory.

According to Islam, a dead body is washed, a man's by men, and a woman's by women. It is then wrapped in three white sheets, *sanda* and carried on a stretcher, bier or coffin, *jeneza* to the Mosque or burial place. This replaced the Babukusu style of wrapping the body in a hide before burial. A poor man among the Babukusu sometimes suffered the fate of being buried naked. A wealthy or respectable man had some of his ornaments and weapons buried with him. After prayers, it is buried in a grave with its right-hand side facing Mecca the direction which Muslim face during prayer and also the place where prophet Mohammad received the first revelation of the Qur'an. The dead among the Babukusu was buried facing the direction believed to be the traditional route by which clan ancestors had arrived into Babukusuland - North-east, north, north-west, south-west. The spirit of the deceased was supposed to return to the original ancestral homeland via that route. The first chapter of the Qur'an, *Fatiha* is recited aloud during burial, a practice often repeated by those visiting the grave afterwards. Prayers for the deceased, *Fitiha* are often said. Muslim women are not allowed at the burial site unlike in the Babukusu indigenous religion where they are allowed. This is

because it is believed they are too emotional and can therefore start wailing and talk ill of Allah or speak things which are against Allah in the course of their bitterness. Muslims also believe that the body should have contact with the earth and not be contained in a coffin. This explains why Muslims are buried without coffins. This is to allow easy and quick decomposing of the dead.

After burial, it is believed two angels visit the grave and question the deceased about his fitness for the next life and prepare him/her for the day of Judgement. Three days after, pious men read the whole Qur'an. This is called *Kusoma hitima* for the benefit of the deceased. Muslims are required to pray for the dead after burial according to the prophets Sunnah. This replaced the most important funeral function, "the hair-shaving ceremony", called *mulufu*. It was believed that ritual contamination arising from contact with the dead disappeared on that day after shaving the hair. On this occasion also, people witnessed the deceased's will, lodged claims or received counter claims, property was distributed and widows assigned future husbands, subject to their final concurrence. After this, funeral ceremonies, *matanga* are concluded by a communal meal, *karamu ya hitima*. This marks the end of the confinement period of the widow called *Eddah* and she is free to mix with other people. *Eddah* takes 4 months and 10 days. This is to ensure she

is not expectant, and should she be, she will remain in that home till she delivers. This is to ensure the legality of the new-born child. This is similar to the Babukusu indigenous practice of memorium service/ceremony held after forty days - literally called *sisini* - shadow which is still practised by a few Muslims. An animal is slaughtered and a beer party held for the occasion. Children aged six months and below are not covered by this ceremony (Abdallah Mokaka, Salim O. Masindano B. (O.I, 9/6/1998, Prins 1961:105, Lewis 1966:70).

### 3.2.6 Dressing

Before the dawn of Islam, the main garment of the Babukusu as already mentioned consisted of animal skins and fibres of certain plants. Their fashion styles were designed according to a person's sex, age, and social status. Children did not wear clothes until they attained adolescent age. It was the advent of Islam that introduced the wearing of clothes. Initially, the main garb consisted of blankets and sheets whose first suppliers were the Swahili and Arabs. To the Muslim, the animal skins were unclean hence they imparted the believers with ritual impurity. Cleanliness is one of the hallmarks of the Islamic faith. As stated in the Qur'an;

Be clean and pure, and seek not occasions for quibbles, nor go after sorcery or false gods. Be faithful in your trusts, learn obedience, and settle your quarrels under the guidance of Allah's messenger. Ever keep away from hypocrisy and every kind of

falsehood. Then will you be admitted to a glorious fellowship with the highest and noblest in the spiritual world". (4:44-70).

O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand All that ye say - nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (except when travelling on the road). Until after washing your whole body. If you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or you have been in

contact with women, and ye find no water, then take yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again (4:43), (Also 5:6-11).

The Muslim male dress is the *kanzu*, a long-sleeved gown, which may be supplemented by a coloured waist coat or long open robe called a *joho*, a coloured turban *kilemba*, and leather sandals. The women's dress consists of two cotton sheets called *kangas*, one folded around the body and reaching the ankles, the other thrown over the head and shoulders, often drawn over to veil the face. When in the streets or in public places, women wear the *Buibui*, a shroud of black or red Muslin covering them from head to foot plus the veil (Hijab). The Babukusu women's mode of tying headscarfs and *kangas* as a sign of modesty prevalent in Bungoma today as well as in other areas in Kenya was adopted from Muslims.

### 3.2.7 Kiswahili Language

Another legacy of Islam is in terms of Kiswahili language. Kiswahili, a bantu language which borrowed a



lot from Arabic, was the main language of communication by the first African Muslims at the Coast. They are popularly referred to as "Waswahili" though not all Waswahili are Muslims. It is the main language of communication among Muslims today both at the coast and in the interior. Kiswahili language is the common mode of communication by Babukusu Muslims in all their religious dealings, business and general communication with other members of the public. Kiswahili among the Babukusu is looked upon as the language of work, of inter-ethnic communication and of Muslim solidarity and self-pride. It is the language of community life among the Babukusu Muslims. Initially, those converts who spoke Kiswahili were regarded as "high class" people or civilized, *Waliostaarabika*. Since the Babukusu Muslims identify with it, it is an aspect which marks them off from non-Muslims. In fact people who speak Kiswahili in the villages are always associated with Muslims. It has to a great extent replaced the local language, *Lubukusu*. Hand-in-hand with Kiswahili language is the Islamic manner of greeting - *Asalaam Alaikum - wa-Alaikum Asalaam*. This means "The peace of Allah be unto you", to which the respondent replies - "And also unto you". Whoever uses this greeting is always identified or associated with Muslims even if he or she is not a Muslim. Therefore Kiswahili language as spoken today by most Kenyan people is an outright Islamic influence.

### 3.2.8 Majengo Estates

Mention should also be made here about Muslim majengo estates. These are Muslim estates which were initially semi-permanent buildings which looked more or less like slums. There is a majengo estate in each division occupied by Muslims with a few non-Muslims. Although most of the houses are still semi-permanent, some people have begun building permanent houses today.

The focus of the community of Majengo estates is the Islamic faith. The Muslims live around the Mosque, they have their own religious leaders and a distinct culture. Their food is different, they dress in the characteristic Muslim way and they speak Kiswahili as their first language, even though most of them are Babukusu. Their social life is centred around the Islamic obligations and celebrations, such as the regular prayers and Friday gatherings. They meet at family parties, weddings and funerals as well as informal visits. The Babukusu Muslims have associations and clubs, like the muslim youth organisation and a women harambee group which is engaged in textile decorations, handcrafts and other small business activities.

The Majengo estate in Kanduyi division is called Mjini Muslim estate, the ones in Kimilili and Webuye divisions are known as Muslim estates. These Majengo estates are a characteristic of the Muslim/Swahili villages which consisted of a large number of mud and

wattle houses surrounding a cattle kraal. The earliest houses were round, later replaced by rectangular ones, constructed by sinking poles vertically into the ground. They were plastered with mud and topped with a thatched roof, much as people continue to build today (Nurse 1985:22,29). Most people in the Majengo are engaged in the informal sector. There are many small shops and workshops. They depend for their income on a small number of regular customers who live close by. They also run hotels which get most of their customers from the towns especially on market-days. Others sell second-hand car spare parts and charcoal.

Some converts have imitated these Majengos in their homesteads by building many round or rectangular semi-permanent houses, at least 2 or 3 for each wife and sons.

These houses form a kind of a village in one homestead which resemble a Majengo estate. This was seen in Abdul Kundu and Abdullah Mokaka's homes. This also resembles the traditional format of Babukusu villages, *chingoba*.

### **3.2.9 Inheritance Rules**

Fatuma Kakai and Zubedah Ibrahim (O.I, 10/6/1998) observed that the elaborate Islamic inheritance rules have not been embraced by most Babukusu Muslim converts. The Islamic law of inheritance guarantees both sexes the full right of inheritance. The shares are enshrined in the sharia law which stipulates the shares of each individual.

The Holy Qur'an states:

From what is left by parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large - a determinate share.

But if at the time of division other relatives, or orphans, or poor, are present, feed them out of the (property), and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds As they

would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind, let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate

comfort (Surah 4:7-9). Also see Surat 2:180-240; 4:10-12, 19, 33, 176; 5:105-108). Also see Mwaingi (1993).

Being a patriarchal society, the Babukusu indigenous inheritance rules only allow male children to inherit since females are expected to get married elsewhere. They adduce this to the fact that men are the heads of families and all the care of the family is bestowed on them. Therefore, they need the wealth to take care of the family. At the same time, they claim that since the clan lineage is extended through the male line, all property and power in the family belongs to the man (Osogo 1966; Makokha 1993; Andere (n.d). Most Babukusu Muslim converts still hold to these rules which contravene Islamic injunctions. To this end therefore, Islam has failed to change this rule among the Babukusu Muslims.

Abdallah (1971:72) and Bunger (1972) state the same about the Wanga and upper Pokomo. For Abdallah, he observed that Wanga Muslims in Mumias seemed to have ignored the application of the elaborate Islamic inheritance rules. Instead, they had stuck to the widow-oriented traditional inheritance practices. As for the upper Pokomo, the system of patrilineal descent and inheritance has been virtually unchanged by both Islamization and outside administration. He goes further to observe that the provisions of Muslim inheritance law which, if followed, would allow women to inherit land have been ignored.

### 3.2.10 Islamic Seclusion

Though Islam enjoins as the ideal the veiling and seclusion of women, seclusion of Babukusu Muslim women is seldom practised. This is because among the Babukusu, women labour is needed in the fields as well as to fetch water and firewood. At the same time, the Babukusu socialisation does not encourage seclusion of women. The Babukusu refer to themselves as people of peace, *babandu be kumulembe*. They encourage communal living and responsible free mixing of sexes. They encourage people to stay together, intermingle freely, interact harmoniously and share whatever they have with each other. Though Muslims are also people of peace and allow people to work together, they do not allow irresponsible free

mixing of sexes and enjoin seclusion. Seclusion of women in the Babukusu context therefore interferes with this aspect of their social life. For this case therefore, the Babukusu Muslim women in most cases only put on the *Buibui* and veil at weddings, formal occasions and when going out across the family boarder or alliance. It is also worn as the distinguishing mark of a Muslim, but the Islamic modesty feelings and rules of seclusion have not been fully adopted (Adamis and Zaina, O.I. 10/6/98), .

### **3.2.11 Foodstuffs**

Another legacy of Islam was in terms of new foodstuffs. The coming of Islam among the Babukusu saw the introduction of several foodstuffs which led to dietary transformation. These include maize, rice, wheat and spices. Today maize is the staple food of the Babukusu.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This chapter set out to examine the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu. To uncover this, the Islamization process undergone by Babukusu Muslim converts was examined. It also revealed that the mode with which the Babukusu converted to Islam which was not so much doctrinally demanding. This to a great extent confirmed Bunger's (1972), and Fisher's 1971; 1973a; 1985; Islamization theory particularly the three stages of Islamization.

The socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu is reflected in the Islamic manner of dressing, greeting, and Kiswahili language. Besides these, other aspects of life like the Islamic monotheistic doctrine, the rites of passage, and the communal living in Majengo estates by Muslims further exhibits the socio-cultural influence Islam has had on the Babukusu. The socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu is well conceptualized in our conceptual and theoretical framework which is a combination of Bascom and Herskovits' (1959) conception of "change and continuity", Fisher's 1971; 1973a; 1985; three stages of Islamization, and Bungler's (1972) Islamization theory.

Lastly, conflicts and harmony were experienced in the merging of Islam and Babukusu indigenous religion. This is expressed in the socio-cultural influence of Islam on the Babukusu, where "change and continuity" in the beliefs and practices involved was realized. Therefore there was the process of indigenizing Islam and Islamizing indigenous cultural practices with the dawn of Islam among the Babukusu. As a result, many Babukusu Muslims practise syncretism by mixing indigenous beliefs and practices and the Muslim rules.

Having examined the socio-cultural influence of Islam on the Babukusu, we now turn to the factors leading to the

persistence of the religion among the people.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERSISTENCE OF ISLAM AMONG THE BABUKUSU

#### 4.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we examined the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu. Our research findings demonstrated the ease with which the Babukusu converted to Islam. It was also revealed that there were conflicts and harmony when the Babukusu indigenous religion merged with Islam. Due to this, most Babukusu Muslims practise syncretic Islam, which has persisted upto-date.

This chapter analyses the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. This is guided by the premise that the "interrelationship between faith and practice, and "Da'wah" are some of the factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. This will help us to explain the millieu in which the religion thrived and blossomed among the people todate.

#### 4.1 Factors facilitating the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

##### 4.1.1 Da'wah

Islam is a missionary religion. Max Muller quoted by Arnold (1961) defines a missionary religion to mean one "in which the spreading of the Truth and the conversion of

unbelievers are raised to the rank of a sacred duty by the founder or his immediate successor... It is the spirit of truth in the hearts of believers which cannot rest, unless it manifests itself in thought, word and deed, which is not satisfied till it has carried its message to every human soul, till what it believes to be the Truth is accepted as the Truth by all members of the human family".

It is such a zeal for the Truth of their religion that has inspired Muslims to carry with them the message of Islam to the people of every land unto which they penetrate, and this places their religion among missionary religions. The spread of Islam over a vast part of the globe has been due to the unremitting labours of Muslim individuals. With the prophet himself as their great example, the individuals have set themselves for the conversion of unbelievers (Arnold 1961:3).

The duty of missionary work is no after-thought in the history of Islam, but was enjoined on believers from the beginning, as may be judged from the following passages in the Holy Qu'ran as quoted here below:

Summon them to the way of thy lord with wisdom and with kindly warning, dispute with them in the kindest manner (Surah 16:125).

For this cause summon thou (them to the faith), and walk uprightly therein as thou has been bidden, and follow not their desires, and say, in whatsoever books God hath sent down do

I believe ... God is your lord and

our lord ... God will bring us together and to him shall we return (Surah 42:15).

Say to those who have been given the book (Ahl-al-Kitab) and to those who are unlearned, Do you accept Islam? Then if they accept Islam, are they guided alright; but if they turn away, then thy duty is only preaching; and God's eye is on His servants (surah 3:20). Also see Surat 3:99-100, 10:99, 24:52, 34:07, 45:13, 64: 12, 73:10-11).

Thus, Islam has been a missionary religion from its inception both theoretically and practically. Prophet Mohammad's life exemplifies this, and the prophet is the leader of Muslim missionaries who won an entrance for their faith into the hearts of unbelievers.

The concept of missionary activity in Islam is subsumed under the Arabic word *Da'wah*, whose basic meaning is "to call" "to summon" "to invite". *Da'wah* thus becomes "a call" or "an invitation and in specialised usage, "missionary activity", (poston: 1992:3). In the Quran, the concept appears in Surah 16:125, thus - "invite (all) to the way of thy lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. For thy lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance".

For the case of Babukusu Muslims, they have widely used *Da'wah* to enable them prosper in the area. Oral interviews showed that *Da'wah* among the Babukusu has taken various dimensions. First, Muslims move from place to place inviting people to their religion. This is usually in the form of "medical caravans" which are carried out in rural areas every December. During these caravans, the Babukusu Muslims preach Islam to all people who come for treatment after which they offer free treatment to the people and advise them on the way to live. This has helped the Babukusu Muslims get more converts during these medical caravans and hence this has enabled the religion to grow and persist in the area (Qassim, O.I, 8/6/98).

Hand in hand with the medical caravan is public proselytization of the faith by a group of Muslims from Tanzania - who are said to have a "magic boy". This is a young boy who is a genius and therefore explains in width and breadth the religion of Islam to people. This group preaches Islam quoting both the Holy Quran and the Bible while talking to Christians, give the explanation of the text and later invite questions which are answered satisfactorily by the magic boy. After this, they invite people to Islam, an issue which has yielded good fruits. This has enabled the religion to persist among the people because more and more people are discovering it is the right religion for them (Qassim, O.I, 8/6/98).

Musa (O.I, 15/5/98), observed that *Da'wah* among the Babukusu also takes the form of meetings which are held by Muslims at the Mosque fortnightly. During these meetings, both Muslims and non-Muslims are invited and the leaders preach to them. They pray for each other and remind each other about their faith - what is expected of them as Muslims. They also strengthen each other during the five daily prayers by reminding each other that Islam is the universal religion for all humankind and therefore they should hold fast to it. Most non-Muslims convert to Islam at these meetings. They also visit each other in their homes to remind each other about their faith and encourage each other to stick to the religion of Islam. This has enabled them to persist in their faith.

In line with the above, Khurshid (1961) argues that *Da'wah* can work only as an active, dynamic, progressive force or it is not *Da'wah* at all. He insists on a much more direct approach in *Da'wah*. Thus one must verbally communicate the message of Islam to specific individuals and/or groups. A Muslim is to invite, to call, to reason with, and to exhort others with the objective that every individual eventually submits to the will of Allah.

On the other hand, Babukusu Muslims hold Christian - Muslim dialogues where Christians and Muslims come together to discuss religious issues, after which each individual is free to choose the religion to follow. It

was discovered that in most cases Christians cross the floor to Islam after getting the truth about Islam. Together with this is the use of video - cassettes where Muslim teachers preach and explain their faith using both the Bible and the Qur'an (Amin, O.I, 15/5/98).

*Da'wah* is also carried out by the Muslim youth organisations where Muslim youth from different Mosques visit each other to discuss religious issues and remind each other what the religion expects of them. At times they hold public discussions especially on Fridays after the congregational prayers where people of all denominations are invited to attend. This has helped the Muslim youth who are the future propagators of the faith to understand their faith much better and hence stick to it.

The above forms of *Da'wah* have helped Babukusu Muslims to remain steadfast in their faith while at the same time winning more and more converts to the religion.

This explains why though few in number, the Babukusu Muslims have persisted in the faith todate.

*Da'wah* is therefore meant for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslims have been enjoined to invite all people to the Truth (Surat 2:52, 3:19, 3:99-100). To confirm this Poston (1992:6) notes that *Da'wah* is never limited to the calling of non-Muslims exclusively. Ismail-al-Faruqi

cited in Poston (1992) argues that all humankind stand under the obligation to actualize the divine pattern in space and time. He observes that this task is never complete for any individual hence *Da'wah* is necessarily addressed to both the Muslim and the non-Muslim. *Da'wah* is addressed to the Muslim in order to encourage him or her press forward to actualization, and to the non-Muslim to join the ranks of those who make the pursuit of God's pattern supreme. The Holy Qur'an states:

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting all to that which is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity (Surah 3:104; also 41:33-54).

#### **4.1.2 Interrelationship Between Islamic faith and Practice**

Faith in Islam is not by any means something nominal or mere formality. Faith is a state of happiness acquired by virtue of positive action and constructive conceptions as well as dynamic and effective measures. The Holy Qur'an and *Hadith* define these required measures and establish the standards which build up a meaningful faith (Abd-al-Ati 1975:25).

The very meaning of faith makes Islam penetrate deeply and constructively into every aspect of life. According to Islam, true faith has an effect on the spiritual and material lot of humankind, and also on their

personal and social behaviour as well as their political and financial life. The Holy Qur'an describes true believers as follows;

They are the true believers whose hearts feel submission and humble when God is mentioned, and when the revelations of God are recited unto them, they (revelations) increase and strengthen their faith; and who trust in their lord, establish the prayer (as enjoined to them) and spend of what we have bestowed on them (in the cause of God). Those are they who are in truth believers. For them are (high) grades (of honour) with their lord, and Pardon and bountiful provision (Surah 8:2-4, 9:71-72, 49:15).

Besides the Qur'anic reference, a prophetic tradition goes:

None of you can be a true believer unless he loves for his fellow believer what he loves for himself. (Forty Hadith)

Three qualities are the sign of sound faith and one who acquires them can really feel the taste of faith. They are; "to love God and His messenger most of all, to love fellow human beings for the sake of God alone; and to resent and resist returning to disbelief as much as he does being cast into fire". (Surah 49:14).

Abd-al Ati, (1975:24) corroborates with the above when he states that faith without action and practice is a dead end as far as Islam is concerned. When faith is out



of practice, it quickly loses its liveliness and motivating power. The only way to enliven faith and make it serve its purpose is practice . Practice provides faith with nourishment, survival and effectiveness. In return, faith inspires man to be constant in his devotion and persistent in his practice. This is because the interrelationship between faith and practice is very strong and their interdependence is readily understandable. A person who confesses faith but does not practise it is a self-deceiving person and in fact has no faith, in which case he/she is no more than a helpless straying wanderer. Islam does not recognise any kind of separation between soul and body, spirit and matter, religion and life. It accepts humankind the way God has created them and recognises their nature as composed of soul and body. Hence the interaction between true religion and meaningful life is vital. This is why Islam penetrates into all aspects of human life.

Most Babukusu Muslims have internalized true relationship between faith and practice though we have a few nominal Muslims. For those who have held tight to the rope of Allah (Surah 3:103), Islam is not simply an abstract ideal conceived just for nominal adoration or stagnant idol to be frequented by admirers every now and then. To them, Islam is a code of life, a living force manifest in every aspect of human life. Islam demands faith to be effective and permanent, to light every corner

of humankind's heart and prevail in every aspect of his life. The Babukusu Muslims therefore adhere to the major articles of faith as laid down by God. These are shahada, prayer (salah), fasting (saum), Alms-giving/charity (zakah) and pilgrimage (Hajj). They are encouraged to keep these pillars of Islam and exhibit them through faith and practice. Other requirements of Islam such as modesty and Islamic etiquette are also enjoined. The way Allah has enjoined these articles of faith makes them serve all spiritual purposes and satisfy human needs and make the whole course of life with a divine touch. This is because faith, coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity and from indulgence in appetites and strict priority must lead to final success (Fatuma and Mariam, O.I, 8/6/98).

Mere lip profession of faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life. The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances in individual life and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put Allah above self (Surah 29:1-27).

Naomani's (1969) work on Islamic faith and practice reveals that in order to be a true Muslim, three things are necessary: Faith in Allah and His prophets, Action in accordance with that faith, and Realization of one's relation to God as a result of action and obedience.

According to Naomani, faith consists in believing that Allah alone is worthy of worship and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and in bearing witness to the above statement. On the other hand, action is the manifestation in actuality how far one is a true servant of God. Action is based on rules and regulations according to which the believer organises his/her individual or social behaviour called the Shar'iah. Lastly, realization of humankind's relation to Allah is a spiritual aspect called *Ihsan*. Realization was well explained by prophet Mohammad in a Hadith as follows:

You should worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for He sees you though you do not see Him. (Forty Hadith).

This realization is regarded as the basis of true devotion. It signifies humankind's identification of his will with the will of Allah through the divine will.

The above three aspects are well expressed by the Babukusu Muslims in their exercise of faith and practice.

The interrelationship between faith and practice by the Babukusu Muslims has made them very strong in their faith.

They cannot be easily moved in matters of faith and this has enabled Islam to persist among the people todate. Their communal living in Muslim estates has also helped them to grow as this reduces outside interference to the faith.

#### 4.1.3 Muslim Library and Madrassa/Schools

The Muslim library in Bungoma town (Kanduyi division) has played a major role in enhancing persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. There are books on Islamic religious Education in Kiswahili, English and Arabic in this library. The availability of these books enables people to read for themselves and understand what their religion is all about and what is expected of them as Muslims. People often go to this library on Fridays after congregational prayers and over the weekends. This partly explains why though few in number, the Babukusu Muslims have held tight to their faith to-date. This has helped them to strengthen their faith day by day. Most of the books are donations from Pakistan and Arabia, while a few have been bought by Muslims themselves. There is also an upcoming library in the Jamia Mosque in Webuye town (Webuye division) (Hussein and Hawa O.I, 25/5/98).

The presence of Muslim library in Babukusuland is in line with the Qur'anic injunction of all Muslims irrespective of sex to seek knowledge. The first verse of the Holy Qur'an is "*Iqra'a*" - meaning "read" and therefore all Muslims should be educated about their religion. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 96:1-5 states:

Proclaim! (or Read) in the name of thy  
Lord and cherisher who created man out  
of a (mere) clot of congealed blood;  
proclaim! And thy Lord is most  
Bountiful - He who taught (The use of)  
the pen - Taught man that which he

knew not.

A prophetic hadith states that:

Seek education from the cradle to the grave. Seek knowledge even though in China, seeking education is obligatory on every Muslim male and female (Sheikh al-Amin bin Ali al-Mazrui).

Besides the Muslim library, the presence of *Madrassa* (schools) at each Mosque has enhanced the growth and persistence of Islam in Babukusuland. The *Madrassa* students are taught how to recite the Qur'an, the major tenets of the Islamic faith and how to speak, read and write in Arabic. This is meant to make them understand the Qur'an in width and breadth and hence inscribe it on their hearts. This makes them well equipped with the Islamic knowledge thereby making them see no other religion but Islam as the true and universal religion. This is why they have never been swayed by Christianity, and other religious influences. However, there are no registers of Muslim converts the way we have registers of believers/converts in other religions and hence there is no document to show the exact number of people who get converted by reading in the library or attending *Madrassa* lessons.

The *madrassa* students are taught in Kiswahili and Arabic. This is done by the Imam or Alims. Most graduates of these *Madrassa* schools proceed for further education at the coast, India and Iran, while some go to the Islamic university in Uganda. Since most Babukusu

Muslims have attained western education, they are able to read and write and therefore give religious guidance to those who are illiterate. With the Islamic knowledge they have acquired these graduates on their return give a new impetus to the religion thereby enhancing its persistence. This has helped them to prosper in the faith (Amina and Abu Bakr , 0.1, 25/5/98).

It should be noted here that Islam does not make a distinction between the sacred and profane, life and religion. Islam is a way of life and therefore people live it and not practice it. In this case, the Muslim Educational programme based on the Holy Qur'an covers all aspects of life be it religious, moral, cultural, social, political, economic and modern technological development.

Therefore, Islamic education equips persons in all aspects of life including modern technology. Whoever has acquired Islamic education therefore must fit perfectly in the modern technological age. Islamic education should not be looked down upon as weak in equipping people for the emerging competitive technological age.

Murambi (0.1, 25/5/98) observed that the construction of an Islamic court in Bungoma town (Kanduyi division) with a chief Kadhi to deal with Islamic issues is the hallmark of the persistence of Islam in Babukusuland. He noted that this opened a new chapter in the Islamic faith with more people joining the religion. This is because

they feel secure in Islam and also they feel recognised by the government. According to him as long as the Islamic court still exists in Bukusuland, then Islam will persist till the end of time.

According to Zainabu and Zaida, (O.I, 25/5/98) Islam has persisted and will still persist among the Babukusu because more people are joining the religion. In the words of Zainabu:

Edini ye Busilamu niyo edini ya ng'ali.  
Kwako efwe fwesi khuli Baslilamu khukhwama  
khale khulondekhana na bakuka befwe. Edini  
ye busilamu mu Babukusu eli ye chinyanga  
choosi.

Islam is the true universal religion. All of us are Muslims from the beginning exemplified by our forebearers. Islam among the Babukusu therefore is for all times.

This has prompted the building of more mosques. Today there are 25 Mosques in the three divisions with 3 major ones and 22 upcoming ones. The two respondents also stated that though Babukusu Muslims are few in number, they are very strong in their faith and they will remain strong. Therefore, this is an indication that the faith of Islam will persist among the Babukusu come what may.

The progress and hence persistence of Islam among the Babukusu can be seen from the Islamic communities which multiplied in the 1940s and after independence. This resulted in the construction of more mosques. However,

the first great achievement was the construction of the Jamia Mosque in Kimilili division in 1922. It is the mother of all other mosques in the study area. Today, the Babukusu Muslim population in the study area is 1800. It has been increasing over time. This became the symbol of Islamic influence on Babukusu culture.

#### **4:1:4 Muslim Unity/Brotherhood**

Babukusu Muslims have also been able to persist in their faith because of Allah's command that all Muslims are brothers and therefore one nation. This has helped them to hold together in all aspects of life, encouraging and strengthening each other in the faith. The Holy Qur'an states:

And surely this your religion is one religion, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty unto me (Surah 21:92, 23:52).

In Surah 3:103-105, the Holy Qur'an states:

And hold fast, all of you together, to the covenant of Allah and do not be disunited. And remember Allah's favour on you; when you were enemies, then He made friendship between your hearts so that you become brethren by His favour, and you were on the brink of an abyss of fire and He did save you from it... And you be not as those who became divided and disagreed after the clear proofs had come unto them; and there it is that shall have grievous punishment.

The Holy Qur'an warns Muslims against disunity and discord, and invites them to fraternity, drawing for them



the picture of the tragedy resulting from controversy and fratricide. It warns them of the painful fate of weakness, cowardice, divisions, loss of power, and other dangers as in the case with idolators and those who distorted the word of Allah although the proofs had been clarified to them. The Qur'an directs Muslims to gather around the word of monotheism, *Tawheed*.

Thus, because of the above command, the Babukusu Muslims are a unified *Umma* which recognises that the Almighty is one and that their aim is to worship Him in His pristine unity. They have also learnt that the objective of religion is the straight unwavering path and conformity with the good nature created in humankind by Allah. They have directed their energies in the "call of Islam," invite people towards goodness, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and carry the message of Allah to all humankind.

The Holy Qur'an's teaching has drawn the Babukusu Muslims' attention to the main cause of discord and guided them to the principal solution. Thus, the Babukusu Muslims have learnt that any legislative and intellectual dispute should be referred to the Qur'an and *Hadith*, so that these disputes do not cause divisions, controversy, and hostility among them. Similarly, they have come to understand that questions that are of political and social nature are practised by the lawful God-fearing ruler who

should be obeyed and referred to so that the mass opinion and attitude may not differ. The ruler should keep the precepts of the religion and pursue the interests of the Muslims. Therefore, the road to unification of the *umma* is wide open before the Babukusu Muslims. The enforcement of Muslim brotherhood as stated in the Qur'an is the greatest social ideal of Islam. Islam cannot be completely realised until this ideal is achieved (Surat 3:103; 49:10).

Islam teaches that men should always pray together in the Mosque unless under unavoidable circumstances. This has united the Babukusu Muslims in teaching each other their faith. It has also enabled them to enforce the right and forbid the wrong thereby facilitating the persistence of Islam among them. This is coupled with the *hotuba* given in the Mosque on different religious issues just before prayer. In this *hotuba*, the Babukusu Muslims are reminded of their religious ideals and the consequences thereof should one fail to adhere to the faith. For example, they are taught the punishment for not praying and judgement after death, just to mention but a few.

#### **4:1:5 - *Halal* (Lawful/Right) and *Haram* (forbidden/wrong)**

According to Musa and Fatuma, O.I, 8/6/98, Islam among the Babukusu has persisted due to their enforcement of *Halal* (lawful) and prohibition of the *Haram*

(forbidden). The Babukusu Muslims have been able to enforce the *halal* and prohibit the *haram* through several ways.

First, the Imams, Alims, Kadhi and Sheikhs in Babukusuland have endlessly taught the *Mu'imneen* the punishment prescribed for offenses committed especially if one engages in actions declared *haram*. The Kadhi teaches the Islamic ideals at the Islamic court. The Imams, Sheikhs and Alims teach the *Mu'imneen* at the Mosque and in the *Madrassa*. This is mostly done on Fridays during the congregational prayers which bring together Muslims from different places.

The teaching of the *halal* and *haram* as stated by Hawa O.I, 8/6/98, begins at the family level. The man who is the head of the family ensures that the Islamic principles are adhered to at home by the family members. He teaches the children religious obligations and activities. He guides children to take religious activities while they are still young so that they can grow up in the path of Allah. He introduces children to prayers and other activities in the Mosque by the age of 7 years. He makes sure children at this age practise religious tenets by half. For example in fasting, children are encouraged to fast for half a day. As the children grow up, the father instills and inculcates in them religious ideals. At the age of 10 years, children who do not adhere to Islamic

tenets are caned in order to make them obey and practise the Islamic religion. The father canes for the children in order to instil discipline and make them understand that it is an obligation for them to adhere to the religious tenets, failure to which they will be punished by Allah.

This will help the children to grow up practising the religion and hence keep in the path of Allah. A prophetic hadith states:

Prescribe prayers to your children when they are seven years of age, and punish them (if they do not perform them) when they are ten years of age, and separate their beds (at that age) (Ahmad Von Denffer).

Besides leading children in the path of Allah, the husband and wife teach each other about the religious teachings. Both adhere to the religious ideals as enjoined in the *Hadith*. A prophetic hadith states:

The most perfect of believers is the best of you in character; and the best of you are those among you who are best to their wives (Ahmad Von Denffer).

While at home, the Muslim woman is the first teacher to all the children. In Islam, a Muslim woman is expected to function first as a mother. The role of the mother in the family is crucial. She is considered as the first educator of the child, for her laps are considered the first school of the child. As one who nurtures the children in the family, which is the basic unit of

society, she herself has to be very educated, be it formally or informally. The Holy Qu'ran enjoins all Muslims irrespective of sex to seek education. The first verse of the Holy Qu'ran is "Iqra'a", which means "Read". This is clearly stated in *Surah* 96:1-15. They are enjoined to seek education from the cradle to the grave. A prophetic *Hadith* goes:

Seek knowledge even though in China,  
seeking education is obligatory on  
every Muslim, male or female (Sheikh  
al-Amin bin Ali al-Mazrui).

Therefore, the role being played by the Babukusu Muslim family and religious leaders in enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong as enjoined in the Qur'an has enabled Babukusu Muslims to remain steadfast and persistent in the faith to this day.

#### **4.1.6 Articles of Islamic Faith**

Mariam, O.I. 8/6/99, observed that the articles of faith taught to the Babukusu Muslims have done them a lot of good. These articles include: believe in Allah, believe in Allah's angels, believe in Allah's prophets, believe in the day of Ressurrection and Judgement, believe in the books of Allah, and belief in the divine destiny. These articles of faith have helped to enlighten the people about their religion. This has helped them to stick to their religion. In line with these articles of faith a prophetic hadith states:

... Then tell me about *Iman*. He said:

It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the last Day, and to believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof (Forty Hadith).

#### **4:1:7 Adab/Manners**

The teaching of *Adab* (manners) both by the Imams at the mosque and family members at home has enabled Islam to persist among the Babukusu. The most important aspects of *Adab* are: Being with Allah all the time, greeting and salutation, sitting and walking, company and friendship, Dress and clothing and cleanliness. The Holy Qur'an and the prophetic *Sunnah* not only elevated the scale of world morality and religion, but also taught the ordinary rules of social, moral and etiquette observed in the society.

##### **(i) Being with Allah all the time**

Amin, O.I. 15/5/99, observed that all activities of a Muslim's life and all his worldly pursuits should be based on the unity of God and the remembrance of Allah. That is why the Muslims are described in the Holy Qur'an as remembering Allah in the midst of all worldly affairs and they are all fully conscious of divine presence everywhere and in every condition, such as standing, sitting or lying on their sides. Thus a great objective which Islam sets before its followers is to conquer the self by remembrance of Allah. For this reason, Muslims are told to leave the assembly where Truth or the message of God is derided. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 3:191 states:

Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth; our lord, Thou has not created this in vain. Glory be to Thee! save us from the chastisement of the fire.

In Surah 4:140, the Holy Qur'an States:

And indeed He has revealed to you in the book that when you hear Allah's message disbelieved in and mocked at, sit not with them until they enter into some other discourse, for then indeed you would be like them.

**(ii) Islamic greetings**

The greeting of a Muslim by another Muslim is "Asalaam - Alaikum", meaning; "Peace be upon you". The implication here is that "Be sure that your life , property and honour are safe in my hand". The general reply is "wa - Alaikum Asalam", meaning "Peace be also upon you" and implying that "you are secure in my hand, respecting your life, property and honour".

This Muslim greeting guarantees the mutual sense of security and peace at the very first meeting. Therefore under sincere mutual assurance of security and peace, there can be no ill-feeling and malice. The greeting is also to demolish the sense of vanity of the high-class gentleman and to raise the position of the lowest. Thus the social distinction, if any, is buried deep and a true and real brotherhood exists among members of the Islamic *Umma*. The greeting is completed by hand-shaking and

embracing which are signs of love, affection and etiquette. The hand-shaking is a *sunnah* of the Holy prophet Mohammad. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 4:86 states:

When a courteous greeting is offered, you meet it with a greeting still more courteous or at least of equal courtesy: Allah takes careful account of all things.

### (iii) Sitting and Walking

Amin, O.I. 15/5/98, observed that sitting cross-legged or sitting by resting hands upon palms is allowed. Sitting in the midst of an assembly for a late-comer is disallowed for the sake of decorum and etiquette. If anybody keeps something in his sitting place and then goes out for a call, none should sit there. It is not lawful to sit between two men or friends, so as to make separation between them or to create any sort of disturbance in their private talk. All should sit in such a manner that room should be made for others. It is not allowed to a new-comer to sit in the midst of an assembly over-stepping others who have already taken their seats. Muslims are also prohibited from sitting on the roadside and gazing at the passing people. Walking should neither be too fast nor too slow. It shall not also show any sign of pride and self-conceit. The middle course is always the best. This has taught Babukusu Muslims how to behave while on the path of Allah so as not to stray. This is stated in Surah 31:18, thus:



And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men,  
Nor walk in insolence through the earth: For  
Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.

**(iv) Friendship and Company**

The Babukusu Muslims have been taught to avoid companionship with drunkards and fornicators. They have been also taught to entertain guests. Even in the case of previous bad treatment from a host who is now a guest, good treatment should be meted out on him. The host should bid the guests with a smiling countenance and a sweet conversation. When they go away, the host must accompany them at least up to the door of his house. In Surah 5:55-57 states:

Your (real) friends are (No less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) Believers - those who establish regular prayers, regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship) (Surah 5:55).

As to those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Messenger and the (fellowship of) Believers - it is the fellowship of Allah that must certainly triumph (Surah 5:56).

O ye who believe!. Take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport - whether among those who receive the scripture before you, or among those who reject faith; But fear ye Allah, if ye have faith (Indeed) (Surah 5:57)

In Surah 9:71, it is stated:

And the believers, men and women are friends one of another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay Zakat and obey Allah

and His Messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is mighty, wise.

While in Surah 60:8-9, it is stated:

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For Allah loveth those who are just (Surah 60:8).

Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for your (faith) and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong (Surah 60:9)

This teaching has inculcated friendship and companionship among the Babukusu Muslims, an aspect which has helped them combine faith and practice. The Holy Qur'an thus states that even with non-Muslims, unless they are out to fight and destroy the Islamic faith, Muslims should deal kindly and equitably with them following the prophet's Sunnah. This has ensured the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu to-date.

#### **(v) Dress and Clothing**

According to Khadija and Abu Bakr, O.I. 8/6/98, dress and clothing are a necessity of life. Dress is essential for covering the private parts of the body, (between the navel and knee for a man) and the entire body for a female

except the face and the hands as far as the wrist), and to protect the body from heat and cold. The wearing of dresses that expose private parts is quite unlawful in Islam. According to Islam, the dress should be neither too thin or too course. Moreover, it should be simple and not costly. One should have the clothing of piety - one that guards him or her against evil. Humankind should dress according to their riches, without squandering and without being a miser. They should wear neat and clean dress, and the dress should not go towards extravagance and pride. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 7:26 states

O children of Adam, we have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and splendid vesture, but the raiment of restraint from evil, that is best (Also Surat 7:22, 24:30-31).

#### **(vi) Cleanliness**

In Islam, "cleanliness is half of faith". Cleanliness contributes towards the preservation of the health of body and mind. It is compulsory to bath before prayer in case of impurities, and wash of all exposed bodily limbs before each prayer. According to the Holy Qur'an, the major aspects of cleanliness are: Ablution, *Tayammum*, Cleanliness from calls of nature, and bath. This is explained in Surat 2:222, 4:43, 5:6, 8:11, 9:108, 74:1-4.

Ablution is compulsory before prayer, without which prayer is void. *Tayammum* technically means to intend to purify oneself with pure earth. *Tayammum* is to be done

afresh before each time of prayer. It is allowed only when water is not available, when the touch of water injures health as in illness, when one is on a journey and water is not easily available.

Urine or stool shall not be passed in water, hardground, paths and shades, and under fruit trees. Bath becomes compulsory after sexual intercourse, after menstrual discharge and after stoppage of blood at child birth.

The teaching of cleanliness has not only helped Babukusu Muslims to maintain their bodily and mental health, but it has also enabled them to be steadfast in prayer thereby receiving the rewards of prayer from Allah.

Due to this, the Babukusu Muslims' faith has been strengthened, an aspect which explains the persistence of Islam among them.

**(vii) Food and Drinks**

Bakusuland is blessed with good soils which produce a variety of foods. The Babukusu people eat a variety of foods and drinks. However, there are some general principles regarding food which should be observed by every Muslim. The first condition is that it should be lawful (*halal*) which carries the double significance of being earned lawfully and not being prohibited by law. The food should be good (*tayyib*) or fit for eating, not

unclean or such as offends the taste. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 2:168 states:

O you people! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and good; And do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy (Also Surat 2:57, 5:88)

There should be moderation in what one eats or drinks. Underfeeding affects the build-up of humankind, so does over-eating. Moderation also requires that no food should be used to excess. Denying oneself food which later causes sickness is denounced in Islam. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 5:87 states:

O you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, But commit no excess; For Allah loveth not those given to excess.

Flesh is allowed if the animal is slaughtered in the name of Allah. Game of land and sea is allowed with one exception that it is slaughtered in the Islamically accepted manner and it is lawful. Inter-dining with non-Muslim is allowed. One may eat in the company of others or separately. Intoxicants especially alcohol are prohibited.

A Muslim is taught to start eating with the mention of the name of Allah, and to give thanks to God after having finished it. One thus feels the Divine presence when satisfying his physical desires. This is clearly stated

in Surah 5:3, thus:

Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that of which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah; that which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by wild animal; unless you are able to slaughter it (in due form). And that which has been immolated unto idols; forbidden also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows, that is impiety. (Also Surah 5:1-5).

This teaching about food and drinks to the Babukusu Muslims by Imams, Sheikhs, and family heads at home has to a great extent improved their health. It has helped them avoid the prohibited food especially carrion and beer (*Kamalwa*) and therefore kept them on the path of Allah. This is one factor which has facilitated the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.

#### **4:1:8      Role of the Islamic Court**

##### **(i) Punishment**

The Islamic court in Bukusuland just like any other Islamic court tackles different issues. One of them is enforcing punishment to individuals for mistakes committed. In prescribing punishment, Islam tries in the first place to purify society from circumstances that may lead to crime. After taking such precaution Islam prescribes a preventive and just punishment which may be inflicted upon persons who have no reasonable

justification for their crimes. Islam holds the balance of justice in the right manner and insists on examining all conditions and circumstances connected with the offence; the view point of the criminal and that of the community against which aggression took place.

The major crimes for which punishment has been ordained are: murder, rebellion, theft, adultery among others. The punishment prescribed for theft - the cutting of one's hands and flogging one with a hundred stripes in case of adultery are so bad that they have disciplined many Babukusu Muslims.

In the case of theft, the general opinion is that only one hand should be cut off for the first theft, on the principle that If your hand or your feet offend you, cut them off, and cast them from you. This is explained in Surah 5:38 which states:

As to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands: A punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: And Allah is exalted in power, full of wisdom.

For the case of adultery, the offenders are punished if there are four witnesses to prove their offence. The Holy Qur'an in Surah 24:2 states:

The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication flog each of them with a hundred stripes; let not compassion move

you in their case, in a matter prescribed

by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.

In order to avoid such punishment, the Babukusu have strived to enjoin the right and avoid the wrong. This partly explains the persistence of the faith among the people to-date.

#### **(ii) Trade, Commerce and Wealth**

As earlier on stated in chapter two, Babukusu Muslims learnt the art of business from the Muslim traders who ran several businesses in their land at the dawn of Islam. As a result, most Babukusu Muslims today run businesses ranging from wholesale shops to hotels, butcheries, jua-kali shops, sale of second-hand clothes, and charcoal. Islam being a way of life, the law regarding trade, commerce and wealth has to be enforced. The Babukusu Muslim businessmen and women have striven to learn the Islamic principles regarding the economic system. This has been mostly enforced by the Islamic court where the *Kadhi* with the help of Imams and Alims have ensured that the Babukusu businessmen and women abide by the law.

Some of the major rules and principles they have learnt are: resources provided by nature can be utilized freely and every one is entitled to benefit from them to the extent of his needs; it is not fair that natural



resources be taken possession by anyone and kept in an idle state - *Surah* 5:87-88, 7:10; Islam recognises the right of ownership which one may acquire by permissible legal means is to be honoured under all circumstances; Islam has forbidden all forms of activity which tend to damage or harm the rightful interest of the individual or society; the hoarding of goods in order to raise their prices, profiteering and monopoly of essential means of production by an individual or groups which lead to the deprivation of the majority, are all forbidden; exploitation of all kinds is absolutely disallowed (*Surah* 4:29), the institution of interest or usury has been declared unlawful in Islam - *Surah* 2:275-276; All games of chance including lotteries and horse-racing have been prohibited - *Surah* 5:90 and Islam demands that in all contractual participation, the profit as well as the risk should be shared by both the contracting parties.

The Islamic court has also ensured that the Babukusu Muslims adhere to laws of inheritance. In this case, both the individual right of disposing of one's wealth and collective right of those to receive must be simultaneously satisfied. First, the obligatory distribution of goods of a deceased person among his close relatives, and second, a restriction on the freedom of bequest through wills and testaments. It has also been ensured that Babukusu Muslims adhere to the taxation rule (alms-giving, *zakah*) as enjoined in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

Non-observance of these rules deprives a Muslim of his rights to be located as a member of the brotherhood of the faith.

Seeking wealth is sanctioned and enforced in the Holy Qur'an and honesty is the secret of success in trade and commerce. Traders should be strict and impartial with regard to weights and measures. The *Kadhi* in the Islamic court has also ensured that Babukusu Muslims doing business do not engage in things declared unlawful in trade. These include Muzabanah - the sale of unknown quantity for unknown quantity of price, Muhaqalah - sale of corn in exchange of a similar quantity of wheat by conjecture, Munabazah - Sale by throwing a stone at the commodity of sale and Hablul-Habalah - sale of the foetus in womb.

The Islamic court, the Mosque and the family have played a major role in enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong among the Babukusu Muslims. This explains why Islam has been able to persist among the Babukusu since its dawn and it will still persist as long as the Babukusu Muslims continue with this zeal and remain on the path of Allah.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

This chapter sought to identify and discuss factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu. We

have adduced evidence to the effect that *Da'wah* and the interrelationship between faith and practice are the two major factors that have enabled Islam to persist among the Babukusu. In addition to these two, other factors like the Muslim library, *Madrassa* (schools) and the Islamic court have made Islam not only more understandable and appealing, but also strengthened the faith of the already existing Muslims and calling for more converts from the local people. Therefore, Islam took sufficient root in the society and enriched the Babukusu religious experience. This gave rise to a new religious culture among the people which still persists to date. This confirms our premise.

The legacy of Islam among the Babukusu by 1998 is reflected in the existence of 25 Mosques and 25 *Madrassa* (schools) in the study area. It is further evidenced by the institutionalization of the Friday prayer, observing *Ramadhan*, following the *Shar'iah* rules of inheritance and generally striving to combine faith and practice in all aspects of life. This reveals that the contact-situation between Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion was one of "penetration" and not "conquest".

The Babukusu Muslim Population has continually increased over time. Though few in number, the Babukusu Muslims have been steadfast in their faith. They have held tightly to the rope of Allah (Islam) and therefore

Islam is growing and will continually persist among them.

Though Babukusu Muslims have internalized the tenets of Islam and persisted in the faith, there are a few of them who still combine the indigenous practices with those of Islam. This is widely expressed in the socio-cultural practices, an aspect which depicts "change and continuity" in the indigenous Babukusu beliefs and practices. This is a setback to the persistence of Islam among the people.

Islam has also persisted among the Babukusu todate due to their enforcement of halal (allowed/lawful) and forbidding the haram (forbidden/unlawful). This has been achieved through the efforts of the Babukusu Muslim religious leaders, that is, the Kadhi, Imams, Alims and the family institution. They have unreservedly taught the Umma the ideals of Islam. They have been in the forefront in enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong among the Babukusu Muslims. This has helped the Babukusu Muslims to persist in the religion.

Lastly, for Babukusu Muslims to maintain the Islamic zeal and persistence of the religion among them, they should sacrifice their time, energy and wealth at the alter of Islamic education. They should fortify their children with true Islamic knowledge and inculcate in them the noble virtues of their *Deen*, so that they may become the living embodiment of the teachings of Islam. To

effect this, they should strive and work hard as enjoined by God for the benefit of humanity.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5:0 Introduction**

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

#### **5:1 Summary of the Study and Conclusions**

The penetration of Islam among the Babukusu was examined in the study because when the religion reached Babukusuland, some of its aspects received resistance from the Babukusu. At the same time, Christianity coupled with Western education came immediately after Islam and offered strong competition to Islam. The Babukusu were therefore

torn between Islam and Christianity. This made the apparent success of Islam faint, while Christianity flourished due its benefits to the converts. Despite this, few Babukusu embraced Islam and continue to practise it today. The continued persistence of the faith upheld by a minimal population among a restricted community located at the centre of vigorous competing Faith such as Christianity and indigenous religion are providing prompted the researcher to investigate the penetration and persistence of the faith among the Babukusu todate. As already stated in chapter one, Bungoma district which was our study area has a total population of 0.8 million people. Out of this, there are 4,000 Muslims and the remaining figure is shared amongst Christians, indigenous religionists, Hindus and Baha'i.

The study has endeavoured to give an analysis of the penetration of Islam among the Babukusu from 1904-1998. Basing our study on the religious experience of the Babukusu and encased under the conceptual and theoretical framework of "change and continuity" and "Islamization", we have adduced evidence to the effect that Islam among the Babukusu will persist forever.

It has been demonstrated in the study that the major agent of Islamic expansion among the Babukusu were Wanga Muslim administrators from Mumias. Though the general claim by earlier scholars states that Muslim traders are

the major agents of Islamic expansion in the interior of Africa, the research work revealed that the major agent of Islam expansion among the Babukusu were Wanga Muslim administrators from Mumias.

Our study has also shown that the type of Islam embraced by the Babukusu is *Sunni* of the *Shafi'ite* school of thought. This is based on the fact that *Sunni Shafi'ite* Islam dominated the East African Coast for quite a long time despite the influx of *Shi'ite* Persians and *Ibadhi* Oman Arabs. This is the branch of Islam that reached most of the interior.

*Sunni* type of Islam is the mainstream or majority branch of Islam which is also referred to as *Orthodox* Islam. Its adherents follow the *Sunna* of the prophet and recognize the four rightly guided caliphs: *AbuBakr*, *Umar*, *Uthman*, and *Ali* as the rightful successors of the prophet. They also believe in the authority of Allah alone over all creation, and follow the law as based on the *Holy Qur'an* and *Sunna* of the prophet. On the other hand, *Shi'ite* Islam is a branch of Islam whose adherents follow and accept the teachings of *Ali* the fourth Caliph and also recognize him as the rightful successor of the prophet and not *AbuBakr*. They also believe in the doctrine of the *immamate* and a promised *Mahdi* who is one of their *Imams* who will come at the end of time. They have some flexibility in their law, for example they



allow Mut'ah Union.

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

Our research work has demonstrated that the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu is reflected in the Islamic manner of dressing, greetings and Kiswahili language. The Islamic influence is also felt in other aspects of life like the Islamic monotheistic doctrine, rites of passage and the communal living in Majengo estates. At the same time, it has been shown in this study that conflict and harmony were experienced in the merging of Islam and Babukusu indigenous religion. This is expressed in the socio-cultural influence of Islam on the Babukusu where "Change and Continuity" in the beliefs and practices involved was realized. Due to the

absorptive nature of the religions, there was the process of indigenizing Islam and Islamizing indigenous cultural practices with the dawn of Islam among the Babukusu. As a result, many Babukusu Muslims practise syncretism by mixing indigenous beliefs and practices and those of Islam.

Though there are factors hindering the spread and persistence of Islam among the Babukusu as already stated, the religion has nevertheless taken sufficient root in the community to enrich the Babukusu religious experience and has contributed towards making a new religious culture among the people. We adduced evidence to the effect that *Da'wah*, interrelationship between faith and practice, the Muslim library, *Madrassa* schools and the Islamic court are some of the main factors behind the persistence of Islam among the Babukusu todate.

The legacy of Islam in our study area by 1998 is reflected in the existence of 25 Mosques and 25 *Madrassa* schools. Our study area has a population of 1800 Babukusu Muslims. The legacy is further evidenced by the institutionalization of the Friday prayer, observing Ramadhan, and generally striving to combine faith and practice in all aspects of life. The persistence of Islam among the Babukusu therefore demonstrates that the "Contact-situation" between Islam and the Babukusu indigenous religion was one of "penetration" and not

"conquest".

In our study, Bascom and Herskovit's concept of "Change and Continuity" and Bunger's "Islamization theory" encased our objectives. It was shown that the agents and factors behind Islamic penetration among the Babukusu, the socio-cultural impact of Islam on the Babukusu, and its persistence among the people are very much in consistence with the basic postulates of the conceptual and theoretical framework. Through them, we were able to explain the Pre-Islamic religion of the Babukusu, how their Islamization took place, the agents of Islamization, the form of Islam introduced among the Babukusu, and the contact-situation between the Babukusu and Muslims. The features of contemporary Islam, how, and why Islam among the Babukusu has taken the form it has taken are subsumed under the conceptual and theoretical framework. The concept of "Change and continuity" and the "Islamization theory" therefore seem to have encapsulated the objectives of our study.

Fisher's "reform" stage and Bunger's second feature (B) on the major groups introducing Islam in Africa failed to account for Islamic penetration among the Babukusu. Merchants, clerics and Muslim brotherhoods played no role in the Babukusu Islamization. Islam among the Babukusu is a brainchild of Wanga Muslims. Similarly, Islam among the Babukusu has not reached the complete reform stage.

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## GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC WORDS

Adab:

A term meaning manners

Adhan:

The calling of Muslims for prayer by the Muadhin.

Allah:

The name of God in Islam

Aqiqa:

The name of the animal to be slaughtered during the Muslim name-giving ceremony on the seventh day after birth.

Buibui:

A long muslin shroud that covers one from the head to the toes worn by Muslim women.

Da'wah:

To call, summon, invite people to the faith of Islam.  
Also used to mean a missionary activity in Islam.

Deen:

Means religion.

Fatiha:

The first surah of the Qur'an.

Hablul - Habalah:

Sale of the foetus in the womb.

Halal:

That which is permitted or lawful

Hajj:

The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

Haram:

That which is forbidden or unlawful

Hotuba:

Means speech

Imam:

One who leads prayers, hotuba and other religious meetings in the Mosque.

Jeneza:

A term meaning coffin or bier.

Ka'aba:

The building to which all Muslims direct their faces during prayer.

Kanzu:

A long-sleeved gown worn by Muslim men.

Karamu ya Hitima

A term used to refer to a communal meal to conclude a funeral ceremony.

Kusoma Hitima:

The Reading of the Qur'an for the benefit of the deceased after burial.

Madrassa:

A term for a place where Islamic Religious Education is imparted to people mostly children. It is also used to refer to a school.

Mahr:

A term meaning dowry.

Majengo:

Many rectangular and round semi-permanent houses built close to each other forming a kind of village in one homestead.

Matanga:

A term meaning funeral.

Mu'imineen:

A term to mean believers.

Munabazah:

Sale by throwing a stone at the commodity for sale.

Muhaqalah:

Sale of corn in exchange of a like quantity of wheat by conjecture.

Mualim:

A madrassa teacher.

Muzabanah:

Sale of an unknown quantity for unknown quantity of price.

Niyyat:

A term to mean intention.

Salah:

A term meaning prayer.

Sanda:

Sheets used to wrap a corpse before burial.

Saum:

The act of abstaining from food and drinks and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk in order to assist Muslims to fear Allah.

Sawaahili:

A term meaning "of the coast".

Shahada/Kalima/Tawhid:

The Islamic creed which outlines the oneness/unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad.

Sharia:

The Islamic law.

Tayammum:

A partial ablution using dust, or earth before prayer where there is no water.

Umma:

A Muslim community.

Veil/Hijab:

A scarf which is usually drawn over the head and shoulders to veil the Muslim women's body.

Waliostaarabika:

A term to mean "the civilised".

Zakat:

Alms-giving to the poor or needy people.

## GLOSSARY OF BABUKUSU WORDS

Esimba:

A term to mean a bachelor's hut.

Kamalwa:

A term meaning beer.

Kamatasi/Lulware:

Skin cloaks worn by Babukusu people before the introduction of clothes.

Khubachukha:

The act of giving small presents like fowls, money, eggs to an initiate after healing.

Khukhwiyalula:

The indigenous Babukusu feast of "coming out" after circumcision and healing.

Kumulembe:

A term for greetings. Also used to mean "absolute harmony and order" among people.

Lubukusu:

Bukusu mother-tongue/vernacular.

Luteka:

A bamboo tree.

Mulufu:

An indigenous Babukusu hair-showing ceremony after the burial of a relative as a sign of cleansing oneself of the impurities imparted after coming into contact with the dead.

Namwima:

An indigenous sacrificial shrine.

Omutembete:

The initiate who has gone through the healing process  
after circumcision.

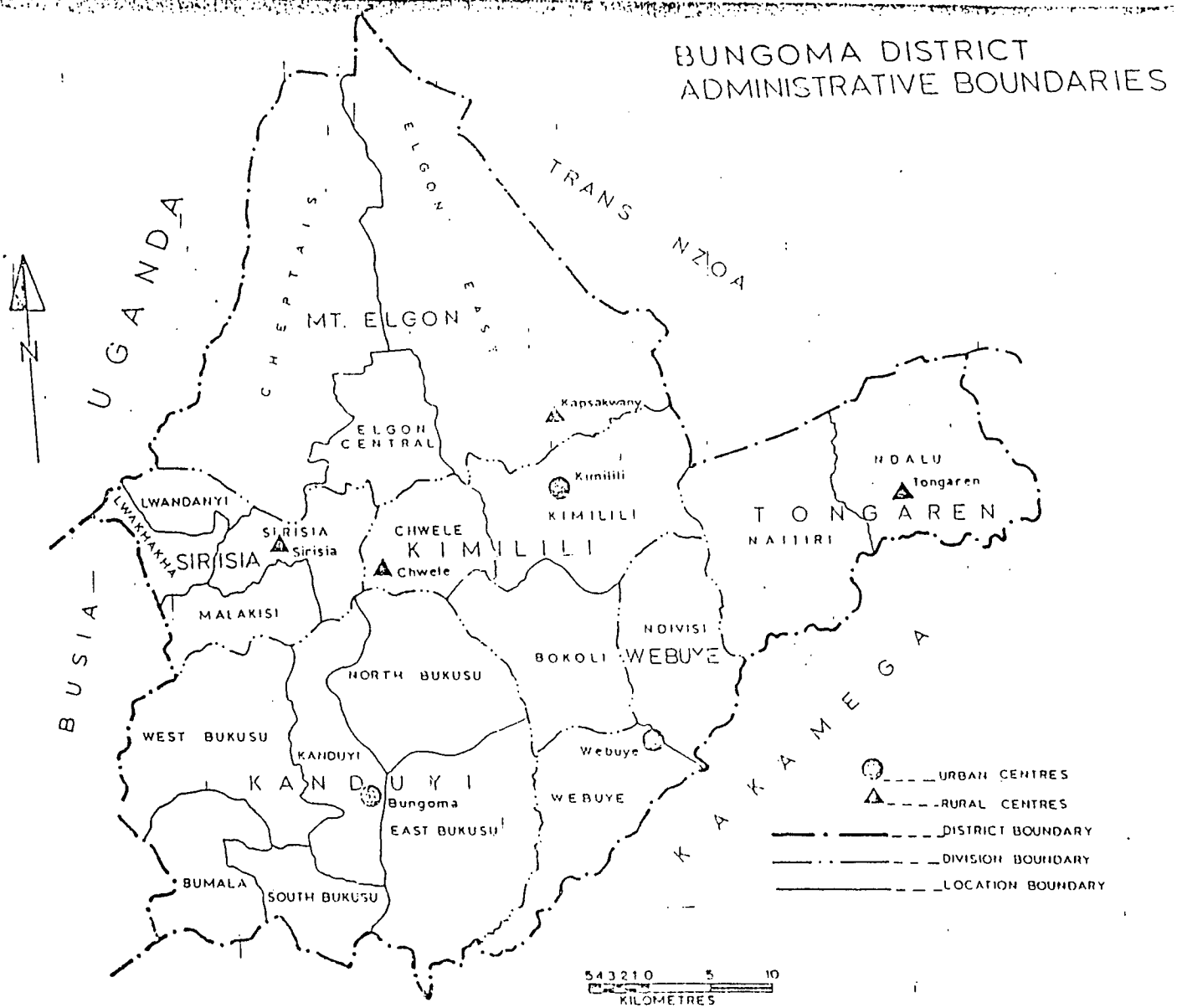
Wele:

The Babukusu Supreme Being.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1: MAP OF BUNGOMA DISTRICT SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA.



Appendix 2: LIST OF RESPONDENTS ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE

|    | NAME                  | PLACE OF INTERVIEW | AGE | SEX | DATE    |
|----|-----------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| 1  | Omari Murambi         | Kanduyi            | 85  | M   | 12/6/98 |
| 2  | Abdallah Mokaka       | Webuye             | 84  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 3  | Solomon Wakhisi       | Webuye             | 82  | M   | 11/5/98 |
| 4  | William Wekesa        | Kimilili           | 80  | M   | 11/6/98 |
| 5  | Salim Opwora          | Kanduyi            | 80  | M   | 12/5/98 |
| 6  | Sylvester Kisielo     | Kanduyi            | 75  | M   | 12/5/98 |
| 7  | Aruta Wekesa          | Kimilili           | 75  | F   | 15/5/98 |
| 8  | Lucas Kharemwa        | Kanduyi            | 75  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 9  | Anyisi Wakhisi        | Webuye             | 70  | F   | 11/6/98 |
| 10 | Sophia Muhammed       | Kimilili           | 70  | F   | 15/5/98 |
| 11 | Beliud Masindano      | Webuye             | 70  | M   | 11/5/98 |
| 12 | Sheikh Bakari         | Webuye             | 68  | M   | 9/6/98  |
| 13 | Mariam Muyoka         | Kimilili           | 68  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 14 | Loise Beliud          | Webuye             | 68  | F   | 11/6/98 |
| 15 | Mwanaisha Muhammed    | Kanduyi            | 65  | F   | 9/6/98  |
| 16 | Amina Nanyama         | Webuye             | 65  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 17 | Maalim Ramadhan       | Kimilili           | 65  | M   | 9/6/98  |
| 18 | Aisha Muhammed        | Kanduyi            | 63  | F   | 9/6/98  |
| 19 | Gallicano Kasili      | Webuye             | 62  | M   | 11/6/98 |
| 20 | Musa Masika           | Kimilili           | 62  | M   | 12/6/98 |
| 21 | Abdul Kundu           | Kimilili           | 60  | M   | 18/6/98 |
| 22 | Abu Bakr Omari (Imam) | Webuye             | 60  | M   | 11/5/98 |
| 23 | Margret Kisielo       | Kanduyi            | 60  | F   | 9/6/98  |
| 24 | Sophia Naliaka        | Kimilili           | 60  | F   | 9/6/98  |
| 25 | Ali Husein            | Kanduyi            | 69  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 26 | Julian Kasili         | Webuye             | 58  | F   | 11/6/98 |
| 27 | Zaina Nabwile         | Kimilili           | 58  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 28 | Zaida Nanyama         | Kimilili           | 58  | F   | 29/5/98 |

|    | NAME                | PLACE OF INTERVIEW | AGE | SEX | DATE    |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| 29 | Adamis Nekesa       | Kimilili           | 56  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 30 | Khamisi Wamalwa     | Kimilili           | 56  | M   | 11/5/98 |
| 31 | Jafar Ibrahim       | Kanduyi            | 56  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 32 | Sheikh Ayub         | Kanduyi            | 55  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 33 | Mary Wekesa         | Webuye             | 55  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 34 | Rehema Abdallah     | Webuye             | 54  | F   | 11/6/98 |
| 35 | Dr. Amin Juma       | Kanduyi            | 54  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 36 | Rashida Nanjala     | Webuye             | 53  | F   | 10/5/98 |
| 37 | Rajab Wanyama       | Kimilili           | 53  | M   | 9/6/98  |
| 37 | Farida Hamisi       | Webuye             | 52  | F   | 18/5/98 |
| 39 | Amina Jafar         | Kimilili           | 50  | F   | 12/6/98 |
| 40 | Jasmini Namalwa     | Kimilili           | 50  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 41 | Sofia Asman         | Kanduyi            | 50  | F   | 15/5/98 |
| 42 | Abdul Mohammed      | Kimilili           | 50  | F   | 9/5/98  |
| 43 | Maalim Mwazema      | Kanduyi            | 50  | F   | 9/5/98  |
| 44 | Maalim Ali          | Kanduyi            | 46  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 45 | Mohammed Abdallah   | Kanduyi            | 45  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 46 | Hawa Omari          | Webuye             | 45  | F   | 9/5/98  |
| 47 | Amina Ibrahim       | Webuye             | 45  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 48 | Zainab Kundu        | Kimilili           | 45  | F   | 5/5/98  |
| 49 | Zainab Mohammed     | Webuye             | 45  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 50 | Qassim Mukoya       | Kanduyi            | 42  | M   | 12/6/98 |
| 51 | Zawadi Quassim      | Kanduyi            | 40  | F   | 12/6/98 |
| 52 | Mohammed Rahman     | Kanduyi            | 40  | M   | 18/5/98 |
| 53 | Khadija Ali Athuman | Kanduyi            | 40  | F   | 9/5/98  |
| 54 | Mohammed Ramdhan    | Kimilili           | 40  | F   | 12/5/98 |
| 55 | Khalfan M. Abdallah | Webuye             | 38  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 56 | Yusuf Fwamba        | Kanduyi            | 35  | M   | 20/5/98 |
| 57 | Khamisi Ndeke       | Webuye             | 35  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 58 | Yusuf Nathan        | Webuye             | 35  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 59 | Abdallah Aslam      | Webuye             | 35  | M   | 20/5/98 |

|    | NAME            | PLACE OF INTERVIEW | AGE | SEX | DATE    |
|----|-----------------|--------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| 60 | Amina Jafar     | Webuye             | 34  | F   | 25/5/98 |
| 61 | Bakari Juma     | Webuye             | 32  | M   | 10/5/98 |
| 62 | Malik Mohammed  | Webuye             | 32  | M   | 9/5/98  |
| 63 | Saum Ali        | Kanduyi            | 31  | F   | 15/5/98 |
| 64 | Masudi Murwayi  | Kanduyi            | 30  | M   | 15/5/98 |
| 65 | Mohammed Asman  | Webuye             | 30  | M   | 11/6/98 |
| 66 | Asha Ali        | Kimilili           | 30  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 67 | Fatuma Kakai    | Kimilili           | 27  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 68 | Hussein Jafar   | Kimilili           | 26  | M   | 10/6/98 |
| 69 | Hussein Ibrahim | Kimilili           | 26  | M   | 12/6/98 |
| 70 | Mariam Abdul    | Kimilili           | 26  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 71 | Zubedah Ibrahim | Kimilili           | 25  | F   | 12/6/98 |
| 72 | Jemeelah Yusuf  | Kanduyi            | 25  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 73 | Rahma Juma      | Kanduyi            | 25  | F   | 10/6/98 |
| 74 | Rukia Yusuf     | Kanduyi            | 25  | F   | 10/6/98 |



- (ii) Who is supposed to inherit?
- (iii) Give reasons for your answer in (ii) above.
- 5. In what ways has Islam affected the indigenous religious beliefs and practices?
- 6. Give reasons why your people practise polygamy?
- 7. Briefly explain the Babukusu rites of passage enumerated below
  - (i) Birth and Naming
  - (ii) Initiation
  - (iii) Marriage
  - (iv) Death.

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IMAMS AND BABUKUSU MUSLIM ELDERS

- 1. When did the Babukusu people first come into contact with Islam? (probe)
- 2(a) In which place did the Islamic religion first get planted in Babukusuland?
  - (b) Describe the growth of Islam from your answer in (a) above to the rest of Bungoma.
- 3. What was the:
  - (a) Immediate response of the Babukusu to Islam?
  - (b) Subsequent responses of the Babukusu to Islam?
- 4. What factors or methods facilitated the spread of Islam among the Babukusu?
- 5(a) Are there aspects of Babukusu indigenous life such as

taboos, customs, still in practice today?

(a) Yes (b) No

(b) If Yes, give examples

(c) (i) Do they have an influence on Islamic beliefs?

(ii) Explain

6(a) Are there times when Islamic social and moral values are at conflict with the Babukusu indigenous values?

(b) What are the causes of the conflicts in (a) above?

7. Which role do you play in the spread of Islam in this area?

8. Which methods do you use today to facilitate expansion of Islam in your area?

9. Which new practices has Islam brought to Babukusuland?

10. In what ways has Islam had a long-term impact on the Babukusu society?

11(a) Do you think Christianity has played any role in hindering the spread of Islam in Bukusuland?

(probe) (i) Agree (ii) Disagree

(b) Explain your answer in (a) above pointing out the effects it has on the expansion of Islam among the Babukusu in this area

12. Explain the role played by the following indigenous beliefs and practices in Islamizing the Babukusu:

(a) Concept of Supreme Being (Wele)

(b) Polygamy

(c) Kumulembe

(d) Inheritance rules

13. Which other indigenous beliefs and practices played a role in the Islamization of the Babukusu? Explain.
14. (i) Is Islam as practised today the same Islam that was introduced at first? Explain your answer.  
(ii) Mention changes if any, Islam has undergone today in comparison to the time it was introduced.
15. Explain the state of Islam during and after the first and second world wars.
16. What was the effect if any of independence on the spread of Islam among the Babukusu?
17. (i) Explain the social influence Islam has had on the Babukusu people.  
(ii) Which cultural influence has Islam had on the Babukusu?
18. (i) Has Western education affected Islam in any way?  
(ii) If yes, explain the effect it has had on the spread and persistence of Islam among the Babukusu.
19. (i) Why do people still practise Islam today?  
(ii) Name and explain the factors that have enabled Islam to persist among the Babukusu.
20. Give any other general comments on Islam among the Babukusu.
21. Give your opinion on the future prospects of Islam among the Babukusu.



#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MIDDLE-AGED BABUKUSU MUSLIMS

1. Explain the Islamization process you underwent before becoming a Muslim.
2. Mention and explain the similarities and differences between your indigenous religious beliefs and practices and those of Islam.
3. Explain the role Christianity, Western education and other modern changes have played either positively or negatively in the spread of Islam in Babukusuland.
4. Which role do you play in spreading Islam in your area? Explain.
5. Which role does the madrasa and Muslim library play in the spread and persistence of Islam in your area?
6. What has enabled Islam to persist among your people? Explain.
7. How has Islam affected you socially?
8. Point out the cultural influence Islam has had on your people.
9. Is there any interrelationship between faith and practice among your people? (i) If yes, explain why. (ii) If no, what is the cause of such a scenario?
10. Explain the role played by *Da'wah* in enhancing the persistence of Islam among your people.
11. What is your general view of Islam among the Babukusu?