

An Emic View of the Role of Circumcision Ceremony on Individual's Personality Development: A Case of Kipsigis Community of Kericho District

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Abstract

The main objective this study is to uncover the emic understanding of the function of the circumcision ceremony among the Kipsigis of Kericho District, Kenya. The circumcision ceremony has defied the ravages of modernization process due to the practical utility that the society still places on the ceremony. Through elaborate rituals and the symbolic meanings that accompany the ceremony, initiates are expected to show some specific personality traits to occupy their position as full members of society. However, members of the Kipsigis community who opted for the 'Christianity' are cynically viewed. Despite of the functional 'utilities' of the ceremony, it has been found to pose a number of negative socio-economic consequences. I conclude that although the Kipsigis still cherish the circumcision ceremony, the same needs be modified considering the educational, economic and health risks that it engenders. It is recommended that there is need for education of the community on the need to modify the conventional 'Christian ceremony' so as to produce the personality that the community expects of its members.

Key words: Circumcision, personality, Kipsigis

Introduction

Circumcision ceremony is one of the four stages of human life circle that the Kipsigis consider to be the most important stages in human development. The other stages include birth, marriage and death. Every male Kipsigis must undergo the ceremony in order to become a 'full functional' member of the society. Circumcision is a variant of initiation ceremony, a ritual that is practiced by different groups of people in many parts of the world. However, this practice varies greatly in the form of ritual connected with them and in their degree of elaboration among different societies. Other forms of initiation rites include among others, entry into a secret society, job, religious groups as in baptism, enthroning of a king, carnation of a bishop, consecration of a monk, nun or even a secret prostitution.

More so, the ritual range from baptism and confirmation in Christian churches, through the bar mitzvah in the Jewish religion, re-socialisation, to the infliction of pain and physical discomfort upon the initiate. The latter may, according to Encyclopedia Britannica

(1970), described as a transitory period, which includes whipping, bathing in ice-cold water, choking with smoke and killing a fierce animal. But more commonly, it involves a permanent marking of the body such as cutting the flesh to produce scars, knocking out front teeth or, most frequently, the mutilation of the genital organs such as in circumcision or sub-incision. Despite the difference, all are meant to introduce an individual to a different level of operation or lifestyle.

Circumcision, in particular, has been defined by most authorities as the removal of the male's genitalia's foreskin as part of the ritual concerning the *rite de passage*. The reason for this practice is mainly socio-cultural.

The age for the operation of the novice varies from one society to another. Among the ancient Egyptians, whom Herodotus claims were practising circumcision from the time immemorial, boys were generally circumcised between the ages of six and twelve years. Among the Ethiopians, the Jewish, the Muslims, and a few other people, the operation is performed shortly after birth, while among

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most of the Kenyan communities, the operation is performed at puberty. Whatever the age, the operation is regarded as being of the profoundest socio-religious significance (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970).

For the Jews, circumcision represents the fulfilment of the covenant between God and Abraham (Genesis 17:10-14), which was the first divine command of the Pentateuch, that every male child shall be circumcised. At whatever age and place the practice is performed, circumcision usually signifies the formal transition of the individual into his group or to the achievement of a certain status, as well as his social position, rights and duties (Hammerton, 1992).

There are numerous theories concerning the origin of circumcision but the following constitute a representative samples: it represents a blood offering to gods in order to maintain the individuals immortality and also to extend the life of this individual; it is a substitute for sacrifice; it is a dedication; a sacrifice of the part in order to ensure the welfare of the whole; cutting off and preservation of the part of oneself to ensure preservation after death and reincarnation; it represents the atonement made for the incestuous desires entertainment in childhood (Oedipal and Electra complexes); since the foreskin was believed to exert a constricting effect, it was considered magically to inhibit fertility, hence the necessity of its removal; finally, it has been suggested that it was practiced for purely hygienic reasons (Turner, 1967; Nypan, 1991; Hosken, 1978).

The practice of circumcision is prevalent in Kenya. According to Hosken (1978) only 15% of the Kenyan population do not practice this ceremony. This includes the Turkana, Teso and the Luo communities. For the communities that practice it (85%), just like other cultural practices, it has been handed down from one generation to another. However, due to socio-cultural changes that have taken place, this practice has been greatly modified. In the actual fact, some members of the Kipsigis community have totally revolutionised the practice and came up with what they call

Christian circumcision whereby the teachings and the expected personality results is based on the teaching of the bible. However, this has been met with total objection by some members who claim that the initiates have not gone through the actual societal teachings. Whether their claim is tenable or otherwise is a fact that calls for further research.

The feminine variant of circumcision is called clitoridectomy or excision. It used to be widely practiced in such places as New Guinea, Australia, the Malay Archipelago, Africa, Southern Europe, South America and by various Islamic people of Western Asia and India (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1971). Excision consists of cutting away the whole or part of the external genitalia (Nyansera, 1994). However, this practice has been a point of discontent among its practitioners and different agents such as the Governments, United Nation's Decade for Women Equality, Development and Peace, etc. In fact the former President, H. E. Daniel Arap Moi gave several Presidential Decrees against the practice during his 24 years of rule. This did not however stamp out the practice completely although it is not as widely practiced as the male circumcision. However, it is still sometimes practised in the rural areas of Bomet District among the Kipsigis community.

The unpopularity of clitoridectomy is due to a myriad of complications that have been associated with it. Infibulation in particular has been found to spread up the reproductive organs to the ovaries causing infertility. Precisely, it is reported that 25% of infertility in Sudan is caused by infibulation (Mustafa, 1966). On the other hand, research points that during childbirth, the scar tissue cannot stretch fully to allow free passage of the baby. So, episiotomy is needed, and if delayed or done by unqualified individual, it leads to stillbirth (ibid).

Other complications include difficult and painful coitus which can even result in divorce, reduction of the female sexual fulfilment and satisfaction, urinary disturbances, menstrual problem, growth of cysts, and keloid (Giorgis, 1981).

Why Circumcision Ceremony?

Circumcision is a very common cultural practice among the Kipsigis despite the fact that the community has undergone a lot of modernisation as a result of missionary and western influence, socio-economic transformation and education. The community holds this practice with high esteem because of its socio-cultural utilities which can be summarised as: making men out of children at the individual level; bringing about identity and solidarity among equals; acting as a source of instruction on customary behaviour; prerequisite to marriage and acceptance into the sacred rituals of the community; hardening the physical endurance of the novice through infliction of physical pain; invocation of fertility; casting of uninitiated uncleanness; an honour of being recruited into the rank of warriors; and finally, it acts as a link between the ancestors and the living through the shedding of blood (Mwanzi, 1977; Orchardson, 1970; Peristiany, 1939).

A closer look at some of this practical utility of the practice gives an insight into why this practice is still common. First, it makes men out of boys. Most immediately it is a transition into manhood, *murenik* (singular *muren*), those who were placed along the border as warriors when need arises. Infact, circumcision can not be understood without reference to recruitment into the warrior age-grade, a status that was entrusted with the military responsibility of the community. The other age-grades include childhood and elderhood. Circumcision therefore acted as a bridge between childhood and adulthood or a licence to inheriting property, marriage, participating in adult ceremonies and generally becoming a full member of the society. The community believe that the cutting and throwing away of the prepuce symbolises the throwing away of childness and ushering in adulthood while the permanent scar that results identifies the individual with the other members of the community. Teaching on the society's history, philosophy, folklore and secrets that run through the seclusion period further strengthens the identification issue.

Similarly, hardship of being operated, sleeping in a semi-open shelter and being barely dressed at night is intended to enable the initiate learn how to overcome difficulties and pain and to cultivate courage, endurance, perseverance and obedience. Thus it equips them mentally, physically and emotionally or morally for adulthood.

All the indications are that the initiations produce men better suited individually to the demands of the society. In fact, the situation in seclusion is like army basic training with universal conscription. Perhaps the goal is to develop skills and motivations appropriate to the military pressures on the society since cattle rustling with the Abagusii and the Dholuo were prevalent. Although this need has been completely obliterated, the training still emphasise military preparations.

The view of the initiate by the community as someone who is passive or even captive throughout the initiation, someone to whom things are done, whose own particular personal characteristics are irrelevant, someone who has to be taught the appropriate responses and who has to wholly internalise them so that such response patterns will continue after initiation in absence of any institutionalised powers to force compliance, are some of the immediate utilisation of the rituals in preparation of an individual for future functions.

Although the initiations does involve extreme pain and makes great demands on the initiates emotionally, these ordeals and tests are recognized as a control aspect of the experience and nevertheless there are many elements that seem to be means of reducing rather than increasing such strains. Thus, effort is made to ensure that the initiation is not unendurable physically and emotionally and that the initiate comes out confidently to face the life challenges.

The events preceding the operation, especially the ceremony in *kot ab tumdo* (house of the ceremony) leave the candidates very tired and hungry. Perhaps, however, this is the best state for any boy who may actually have trouble enduring the operations or whose mind has been dwelling on the crisis they face to get

courage and face the operation without fear – a sign that is seen as shameful to the community and more specifically to the boy's family.

The initiation is not simply a test of the boys ability to endure pain, but at each of the various stages a test of his self-confidence in his ability to become a man as defined by the Kipsigis customs, which is another way of saying that it is a test of his trust in man and what they will do to him. In this sense, the many false trials in *kot ab tumdo* and in later rituals can be seen as acts, which reinforce that trust. They are also meant to produce a disruptive shock that break his past perception in favour of the future. This is the time when oedipal revolt is diffused since isolation from the women serves to break an excessively strong dependence upon the mother and to ensure identification with adult males and acceptance of male roles. The mother or a close feminine relative who is present further disassembles the oedipal issues during the unveiling of the face. This means the mother is removing femininity from her son and setting in him masculinity.

Further during the seclusion period initiates are taught things such as, the suppression of hostilities between men, along with propensity to react violently in cases of theft or insult and solidarity among men of the same age-set. Generally, the initiation ceremonies are concerned with the teaching of the general values that underlie correct adult behaviour. Specifically the operation destroys the initiate's physical childlike behaviour. In the recovery period following the operation, the initiate is in an intermediate status, no longer a boy but yet fully knit into a man. This stage is marked by role reversal (the initiates are 'girls') and redefinition of common objects (*safari* ant referred to as sheep) etc. The practices combined with a great deal of false information that the initiates are given concerning what is coming next (which is always said to be worse than what they have already endured) can be seen as further disassembling of the initiates initial concepts in preparation for the internalization of the new personality ideals.

When the healing is complete, the initiates are ready to start learning to think as men and to think of themselves as men. The instructions start with the most basic in the *labet ab eun* (causing to do) ceremony when the initiates are taught to handle tools and weapons. In the following period they practice the physical skills of manhood by hunting and remaining very active at night as a sign of care of the community.

In the *tienjinet* (singing to them) ceremony, the initiates are instructed on how to handle social issues (what to do and what not to do), and the social qualities of manhood. These they practice though in a limited way in the following period of partial mobility and lots of singing sessions. Having acquired, and to some extent internalized these new definitions of manhood, they are given a final test and pass through *kimusangit* (passageway inside water in a river) in a classic symbolisation of rebirth since the water is said to wash away the childness. Finally they pass through a "gate" opened by their female relatives and are welcomed back into society in their new roles, with new names, and a new self-conceptualisation.

The new name with the prefix '*arap*' is very important. It is only after its acquisition that a person becomes "Kipsigis". The name Kipsigis is derived from the transitive verb '*sich*' which means to give birth to. The birth in this case is the symbolic immersion in water during the *Kayaet* ceremony. It is only after the immersion in water that the present relative of the initiate now gives the name of the initiate '*arap*'. This then qualifies him (initiate) to be a full member of Kipsigis community.

Almost the whole practice of the Kipsigis circumcision ceremony involves religious dimensions. Actually in each and every stage of the ceremony, ancestral intervention is sought by a solemnised *chat* (*kaberuret*) by the overall director of the ceremony (*boiyot ab tumdo*). Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the shading of blood is seen as a link between the living and the ancestors as well as binding them to their land.

Another practical application is the hygienic measure it engenders. The practice is said to be a deterrent for many ailments that may attack the male sexual organ. The community believes that a build-up of *meretik* (smegma), the lubrication between the glans and prepuce smells badly and can cause infection. So there is a need to remove this prepuce. Also, circumcision is said to reduce risks of HIV. Different studies have been done on this function. A good example of this is by two Australian scientists, John Steve and Pat Caldwell (1980) who thoroughly evaluated all the possible determinants of HIV epidemiology in the AIDS belt. They suggested that the practice of male circumcision might have a role to play in the epidemiology of HIV. They concluded that HIV prevalence rates were lower in countries where male circumcision is widely practised and predominantly in Muslim north and west of the Africa continent.

The circumcision and the practices that accompany it are therefore a symbolic representation of what the society expects to be done to the initiates so as to produce some specific personality since the richness of symbols and multiple meanings that are inherent in the ceremony is quite complex and needs a deeper understanding. A proper symbolic interpretation of the ceremonies, therefore leads one to considering it as a process of thought reform designed to alter the self-concept of the initiate and finally to fit the ideal model of manhood. The ideal model of manhood (personality) in this community is clearly captured by Chepkwony (1997). According to him, an adult Kipsigis man is expected to embrace three moral virtues, namely *aiyepindo*, *tolosiet* and *tegisto*, so as to function as a full member of this society.

The Kipsigis model of *aiyepindo*

Aiyepindo is an adverb from the noun *aiyep*. An *aiyep* person is generally one who is generous, hospitable, unselfish and kind. *Aiyepindo* is a virtue that each and every member of the Kipsigis community must endeavor because of the belief that everything

is God-given and generally sharing is the will of God who shows the same by providing all things willingly and freely to mankind.

Chepkwony explored the epithet of *aiyepindo*, *ngognated*. He says that *ngognated* or generally selfishness or meanness is the worst adjective that the Kipsigis will ever want to be called. This virtue is seen as a sign of ingratitude to both the human beings and to God as well.

An evidence of *aiyepindo*, is the tradition of eating at *kook*, (outside the house) and the idea of extra *kimyeta lakwa* (maize mash for a child). In the eating at *kook* practice, the rationale was for the passers-by to be spotted by those eating and thus be invited. *Kimnyeta lakwa* is the food that is kept by every household so that if unexpected visitor comes it is not necessary to cook again but he/she is just served with it. However, if no visitor comes, the food is given to children in-between the meals.

Aiyepindo does not end on food alone. Infact it penetrates into the entire life of the Kipsigis as seen in the assistance of the needy and poor which is commonplace. Similarly the reciprocal exchange of valuables in the conventional merry-go-round practice and cattle sharing are a clear indication that *aiyepindo* is highly preferred. Through *aiyepindo*, every member of the society is therefore assured of food.

During the circumcision ceremony, the initiates are instructed to be *aiyeb*. The practice of drinking together by all the initiates of *musarek* (fermented porridge) using one *moinget* (manger) during the *labet ab eun* ceremony and the pooling of food from all the families during mealtime are some of the ways through which this virtue is inculcated onto the participants.

The Kipsigis model of *tegisto*

Tegisto generally means respect. It is the most highly valued virtue that every member of the community strives to attain. A respectful person is seen as living as per the dictates and rules that govern good behavior.

More so, the Kipsigis are strict on where, when and to whom the respect is directed. However, it is mostly owed to some categories of people in the society. So, parents, religious practitioners, elders in general, and also one's age-set members are unconditionally accorded respect. *Aiyepindo* virtue is seen to encompass *tegisto*. Thus a person who is willingly sharing with others is respectful at the same time.

Tegisto is a relative term to social categories and situations. Therefore, it is owed to fathers, mothers, uncles and aunts equally especially during their old age. Failure to this is translated as a terrible curse, which might inflict the individual actor or his/her family with a misfortune.

Tegisto is also owed to people who matter during the circumcision ceremony. Hence, *motiryot* or *poyotab tumdo* (ceremonial elders), godmother and godfather etc are all accorded high respect. Elders and one's age set, in-laws, and relatives are all accorded respect as well. Also, depending on the situation, all members of the community are accorded respect.

Although *tegisto* goes hand in hand with *aiyepindo*, the training for the former starts much earlier in life with the socialization process in the family unit. It is then emphasized later in life during the period of circumcision. In this case the division of the seclusion place into *shamba* (exclusively for elders) and *tarime*¹ the domain for the initiates signifies the respect that the initiates accord their elders. Similarly, all the songs sung after *labet ab eun* generally emphasize the need for respect.

The Kipsigis model of *talosiet*

Tolosiet generally means politeness, kindness, gentleness and generally good behavior. Each and every member of the society is socialized to be *tala* (noun for *talosiet*). However, the *talosiet* which is taught is quite relative to situation/circumstances. Thus Orchardson (1970) observe rightfully that a Kipsigis is a

reserved person, but reacts violently wherever provoked.

The instruction on *talosiet* cuts across age and gender. Children for example are socialized to behave in a gentle manner to his/her peer group. Similarly, women are encouraged to become *tala* particularly to their husbands and his kinsmen. No wonder that (Orchardson, 1970:102) observes that during the marriage ceremony, a bride is told that '*...she must entertain guests without stint, particularly her relatives and relations -in-law, so that her husband will not earn the stigma of meanness*' (Orchardson, 1970: 102).

Tolosiet is a virtue that is keenly considered when choosing a prospective marriage partner. This, it is believed, that somebody who is *tala* (adjectives of *talosiet*) abides by all the rules of *tegisto* and because of these qualities, the person automatically becomes *aiyep*.

The above three moral concepts are infact mutually reinforcing. A person who is *aiyep* for example has *tegis* and at the same time *tala*. When he/she is generous (*aiyep*) for example, he/she gives out whatever is requested for at any given time. By so doing, he/she has demonstrated respect (*tegis*) for those who requested for it. Consequently, he/she shall have demonstrated politeness (*talosiet*) by heeding to the request. However, a person who is short of these virtues are seen as antisocial, scorned at and can never actually enjoy a normal social life. Similarly, somebody who fails to go through the circumcision ceremony is seen to be short of those virtues and therefore cannot operate as a full functional member of the society.

The influence of the circumcision ceremony on the formation of the above personality ideals cannot be under-estimated. Infact, the entire ceremony is '*... like a crash educational Program. This education is functional; it is designed to prepare a youth to be full adult member of his society. Society has certain rules of behavior and conduct; there are certain obligation and entitlements and there are prescribed penalties for breaking the rules*' (Kipkorir, 1973).

¹ Tarime is a town in Northern Tanzania where the Kipsigis believe that the Teriki people originally came from.

Are these personality constructs the outcome of the ceremony?

The word Kipsigis is a transitive verb of the word *sigis* that means to give birth to. To give birth in this case is to be immersed in water in the passage way of *kimusangit* (a table-like structure constructed inside water) in the last stage of *kayaet* ceremony. So a man cannot be a Kipsigis in the strict term of the community unless having undergone through the practice. Although any man can approximate to the above personality even without having gone through the process of becoming a Kipsigis, there are some cause-effect relationships through which the society checks if circumcision ceremony transforms an individual to expected personality.

One of this ways is the individual's understanding of the symbolism inherent in the practice. As mentioned earlier, the entire practice is shrouded with symbolic meanings that are only understandable to people who have gone through the practice. The understanding of the practice therefore is an indication that an individual is a full functional member who can act on behalf of the community and particularly on the initiate. Most of the symbols actually are about society's secrets. It is believed that the community until recently has been having bad blood with the Abagusii and the Dholuo, particularly on cattle rustling. Therefore the symbolism was meant to ensure that the outsiders do not understand the society's secrets since they could use it to attack the community. So once an individual understands these symbols they are said to embrace the actual personality constructs expected of him.

Going hand in hand with the symbols and the secrets are the oaths that the initiates take that they will never divulge the content of the ceremony and the secrets of the society under any circumstances. Therefore, a full functional member of the society will never talk about the ceremony to somebody who has not gone through the practice under any circumstance.

Finally, the initiated individual enters into the age-set system that is a functional social stratification that places an individual into a

particular class to perform some specific duties. There are seven age-set systems in this community. They are *kaplelach*, *korongongoro*, *kipyige*, *nyonge*, *maina*, *juma* and *sowe*. Therefore, unless an individual is placed in this context through the initiation rites, whatever personality trait he portrays is irrelevant.

Although the ceremony pertains to the above important personality development of the members of this society, they nevertheless pose a number of unintended effects on individual's adjustment to the current socio-economic situations as seen below.

Effect on the formal education of the initiate

The effect of circumcision on the formal education stems from the fact that despite the belief that currently all boys' initiations take place from early December to early January during the six-week school holidays, preparations start much earlier. Infact, in the home where the initiations will take place, farm works, schooling and all other activities are shelved or are only occasionally attended to as the people engage themselves in the preparation of the "great day" (*Betut ab tumdo*). Precisely the initiates start preparations about a month before the actual day. At this time (around November), the boys start constructing a seclusion house (*menjet*).

In the evenings, potential initiates converge at the home of one of the potential initiates where they practice songs to be sung on the day of the rites. When the actual day nears, the initiates-to-be travel far and wide inviting relatives particularly agnates.

Of all the preparatory activities, a party known as "*mallet ab kot*" (party of decorating house) seems to be the most significant. This party is so called because this is the day in which the inside of the house is decorated with pages of old newspapers and magazines while the outside wall is smeared with whitewash. On the whitewashed walls some messages and flowers are painted, some of the messages are about the ceremony while others are quite political. Some read "*ngot omochei chamyet*

otoret Rais Moi ak Kanu" (for peace and stability support President Moi and Kanu).

The actual circumcision starts immediately schools close. The rituals go on for a month after which the initiates graduate from seclusion. For the following days the *bogototik* (newly initiated men) visit the home of each other in turn. At every home, a day's celebration is hosted in their honor. Since each initiate's home must be visited, if the number of initiates is large the practice might extend beyond the school opening day.

Besides the poor timing described above as a factor affecting formal education, there is incompatibility between the training that the initiates receive during their seclusion period and the expectation of the formal education programs. This assertion is based on the instructions on customary laws where, among other instructions there is perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies through male chauvinism. Through these ideologies, females are regarded as inferior. This view is clearly testified by symbolic foisting of uncleanness on women during the *Kayaet* (causing to do) ceremony, and the designation of the initiates by names belonging to girls (*korkoni*) during the excruciating moments of operation and on subsequent days to signify that women bring troubles. When the initiates come out, they view females as inferior people who are viewed with contempt. This view makes the initiates have a hard time in coping with the school environment particularly when dealing with female teachers. In fact, Katam (1996) reports that among the Pokots, graduates view female teachers as women before thinking of them as teachers while normal work in school such as sweeping, washing the classroom, and toilets are seen as women's chores and indignifying. Therefore, some normally opt out of school.

Similarly, during the seclusion period initiates are instructed on the rules of the community. Among these rules is the order that the initiates should not utter even a single word using any foreign languages, preferably English and Kiswahili. In connection with this order is the total banning in *menjo* of any book

or mass media, which are, according to the Kipsigis, the vehicle of traditional culture erosion. When the members of the Kipsigis community go for the preparation of the ceremonies, their colleagues, particularly from Luo community, since they do not practice circumcision, flee the areas for fear of being forcefully circumcised.

Since circumcision is prerequisite to marriage among the Kipsigis, the young men can, for various reasons, marry while still going on with education. However, once the marital responsibilities fall on them, they drop out of school. All in all, most of the activities pertaining to circumcision, particularly during seclusion, can be said to be marked by role reversal and many other activities, which can be interpreted to mean a process of thought reform designed to alter the self-concept of the initiates and to fix an ideal model of manhood. Infact, the ordeals of *kot ab tumdo* (house of the ceremony) not only resolve and shock physiologically but they also violate the interaction patterns that the boy has been used to in dealing with every day's activities, including what is taught in school. This moment can, therefore, be termed the moment of intellectual stagnation for the initiates.

In Egypt, research by National Committee of female circumcision showed a direct correlation between circumcision and education. 69% of all secondary school educated girls were not circumcised while 89% of all girls with only primary school education and 90% of all illiterate women had been circumcised (Kahiga, 1994).

Effect on the economy of the families concerned

On the other hand, the circumcision also affects the economic endeavor of the families concerned. This assertion is attested by the fact that the circumcision ceremony among these people is a great social occasion through which people get together to rejoice and to make merry. Infact, towards the onset of the ceremony, it is common to hear in the villages people asking one another questions such as "whose home is the best for food and drinks?"

Likewise, it is true that the time for initiation is regulated by a number of boys reaching puberty and the abundance of grain, milk and vegetables. Consequently, the initiation usually starts at harvest time in order to allow the father of the initiate to lavish gifts, show off his wealth and entertain his friends and relations. As a result of this there is usually shortage of food for the family in the remaining months of the year before the next harvest. Similarly, it was reported that not only must the initiates be well fed but also large quantities of grains are required for malt food and beer to entertain the relatives and friends who come to the ceremonies from all parts of the Kipsigis land.

Drinking during this occasion is allowed to all people and includes all types of drinks, which the attendants can lay their hands on. It is common to see several people staggering along the roads and talking to themselves after swallowing traditional liquor.

Feasting during this ceremony takes several days during which men and women disappear from their homes for several days, a practice that has devastating consequences on the economic activities of the area. It is true that circumcision periods are occasions when freedom of movement is guaranteed to both husband and wife as they move freely to where they want to enjoy the feasting, but this freedom should not be misconstrued to mean freedom of promiscuity (Peristiany 1939).

When the day of ceremony approaches, farm work and all other activities are shelved as the people engage themselves in the preparation for the "great day". Tea industry is the most affected sector because the main employees in these farms are the Luo community. The fear of being forcefully circumcised makes them run away.

The moral virtues inculcated to the individuals are in most cases contrary to the spirit of entrepreneurship. This spirit requires the actors to be rational in the calculation of the investments (Appadurai 1986). However, the virtues of *Aiyepindo*, *Tolosiet* and *Tegisto* as explained earlier emphasize general reciprocity with strong social relationships that goes with

total hatred of commoditization of goods. Therefore the new personality ideals expected of a newly initiated individual is contrary to the spirit of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the Kipsigis view a child as a passive person who must grow out of childhood and enter into adulthood both physically and socially. This community considers the changes as from being passive (naive) to active membership with ideal personality models. Also, the initiation of the young is one of the key moments on the life cycle of an individual and it touches on every member of the society. Thus what happens to the initiate happens corporately to the parents, relatives, neighbors and the ancestors. Due to such nexus, circumcision is still a strong cultural practice that has defied the ravages of modernization. On the other hand, the personality traits it engenders is believed by the community to be the most ideal behavior that enables the individual to be a well adjusted member of the society.

However, despite the above utilities of the ceremony, it has a number of negative effects on the formal education of the initiates, the economic capabilities of the families concerned and posing potential health risks particularly if done by untrained persons and under unhygienic conditions.

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