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## **The Kinds of Traditional African Religious Family Values among the Marama Community of Kakamega County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract:**

*Religious family values in the traditional African Communities played a crucial role in the molding of respective families in the past with the view that life was communal. Some of the values that molded families included respect, sharing, unity, honesty, love, empathy, sobriety, togetherness, faithfulness, moral uprightness, procreation, hard work, hospitality, generosity, co-operation, belief in God, belief in life after death, belief in rituals and belief in spirits. The mentioned values among others knitted together individual families and the community at large, hence ensured harmony and development. In Kakamega County among the Marama Community, similarly they said values were prevalent in the past. This study was guided by the functionalism theory. The research design used was descriptive survey, whereby people's views, opinions, attitudes and suggestions were collected. The respondents were arrived at by using purposive sampling. Respondents used formed two categories. The categories were of community elders and religious leaders. It was established that the Marama Community of Kakamega, enjoyed the communal life which was spearheaded by the said traditional African Religious family values.*

**Keywords:** *Traditional religion, sexuality, related values, socio-economic*

### **1. Introduction**

African religious family values helped the society stand and operate firmly on communal issues. Such issues were peace, solidarity, and provision of livelihood, patriotism, culture and protection. The values that existed could be split as follow: 1. Traditional African cultural values. 2. Traditional African religious beliefs 3. Traditional African religious values related to health, life and death. 4. Traditional African sexuality related values and 5. Traditional African religious socio-economic related values. Their importance to the society can be perceived from the examples given such as respect, belief in God, love, faithfulness and hard work. As much as the said values created harmony, they were also used to help solve challenges affecting the society as well as it is evidenced today like diseases, poverty, security and harmony. In Kenya where the Marama community belongs, the government sought the application of values in helping to combat HIV /AIDS pandemic. In 1997 the Kenya government published a Sessional paper No. 4 on HIV/AIDS in Kenya. The paper urged that efforts be made to promote socio-cultural norms, values and beliefs that would help to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission (TIQET 1999). The researchers working on the Traditional religious family values among the Marama Community found it necessary to revisit the values that helped to hold families and communities communally. The Researchers concluded that as much as these values were useful to the traditional community they are still useful to the modern Marama Community today.

### **2. Kinds of Traditional African Religious Family Values**

#### **2.1. Traditional African Cultural Values**

Africans as a particular group among other races have their unique culture as compared to other races. In African culture a visitor can be received and attended to very well even when the visit was casual as compared to the European culture. In the European culture the visitor visiting a colleague ought to have communicated earlier about the visit and even the length of stay if he/she has to be served with meals according to (Walaba, 2003); (Osogo, 1969). Likewise, the Marama community acts as their fellow Africans in the aspect of receiving visitors. The study established that African cultural values included the following aspects as summarized up: social life, generosity, sacredness, and respect and good human relations

## 2.2. Traditional African Religious Belief Values

Many people in the African countries surveyed, strongly believe that sacrifices to ancestors or spirits could protect them from harm. This reaffirms what (Mugambi, 1976) says about African religiousness, that "Africans attach religious importance to everything that happens around them including natural phenomena and social culture" The following are the religious beliefs as briefly elaborated:

- a) Belief in God; Africans believe that God provides life. Hence, they observe the sun at sunrise and sunset as a symbol of beseeching God for life provision.
- b) Belief in spirits and the living dead; human relationship with the spirits and the living dead is too close to them. Various rites are performed to keep this contact, (Mbiti 1989),)
- c) Belief in life after death; It is by this belief that communication between the living maintains relationships with their departed living.

## 2.3. Traditional African Values Related to Health, Life and Death

The book of Genesis chapter 1 verse 27 states that God created man in his own image. According to creation account two God intended that man would live forever, had it not been for Adam and Eve to break God's directive and eat the forbidden fruit, man would have lived forever.

The following are some of the values associated with Health, life and death.

- Care for the sick: very commonly members of the African traditional society were taught on the elements and importance of taking care of the sick. (Mbiti 2003), says that in the Africa society, whenever things went wrong people would want to know what happened and who caused it. They would want to put right what has gone wrong by healing, curing, driving away evil or neutralize the use of mystical forces.
- Knowledge of medicinal herbs: It was paramount and customarily that all people know at least a few herbs that could treat various ailments. They were given knowledge about which part of the plant could be used whether it is leaves, barks, roots or seeds.
- Knowledge of the common diseases affecting the community: Andako Welinga (2016) a Marama elder narrated to the researcher about the kinds of diseases and how they were treated. He said there was a disease called "Inundu" which had common characteristics like HIV/AIDS of today. He also elaborated on the kind of treatment of Inundu. He added that, some complicated diseases caused by curse would require the efforts of the community elders for their treatment.
- Knowledge about death was inevitable: Death was accepted as inescapable in a person's life. Therefore, people were taught on the rituals related with death
- Food provision for good health: All people were taught on basic skills that could lead to food provision like hunting of animals for beef, fishing, cultivating land for cereals, harvesting fruits and honey.

## 2.4. Traditional African Sexuality Related Values

According to (Magesa, 1998), marriage and other forms of legal sexual unions are meant to ensure procreation and other forms of preservation of life. The following are some of the values that were taught related to the above subject.

- Boy/girl roles in the family: From childhood boys and girls were taught their roles by their parents or other adult persons. Boys' roles dealt with tackling issues like providing livelihood through hard work and girls learning how to do baby caring and domestic work.
- Graduating to adulthood: values taught boys and girls on procreation; on adult life and on sexual relations between boys and girls as well as sexual relations between man and woman. They were empowered to procreate and cause family and community continuity.
- Faithfulness in marriage: The society was taught on faithfulness in marriage. An act that could lead to peace in the family. This act could lead to trust and love for one another.
- Moral uprightness: This encompassed so many virtues like virtues of respect for other people, unity, harmony, peaceful living, and immoral abstinence.

## 2.5. Traditional African Socio-Economic Related Values

The socio-economic related values of the traditional African society were hard work, hospitality and generosity. These values seem to be changing as per their application in the past.

Socially in the past people were able to get time to interact with their kinsmen and friends in various ways of their carrying out routine duties, for example, tiling of land was done manually and collectively. In weeding and harvesting people still worked together. This built a sense of cooperation and togetherness.

- Therefore, hard work as a value ensured the come together of the societal members, and the generation of the livelihood in a collective form.

- The value of generosity was practiced in the aspect whereby, relatives or friends, shared whatever property they had with their kinsmen. This act helped to increase industriousness because for the recipient to reciprocate in the same manner, he/she was obliged to work hard.
- Hospitality was seen in the aspect of a person playing host to all people irrespective of who they were to one in relationship. Socially people were to visit one another. In the course of the visit, the visitor was supposed to be served with meals and any other facilities for example, if he/she was to sleep, had to be prepared for the boarding provisions. By so doing this could help to promote love, peace, harmony. No one was expected to be selfish.

### 3. Conclusion

Research findings revealed that the Marama community was very rich in traditional African religious family values and also appreciated their importance. Values like religiosity, respect and hospitality among others, helped to build a harmonious and stable society. This stability caused high cooperation between the Marama and the neighboring communities (Wanga, Kisa, Banyore, Batsotso) and also early visitors to Marama land such as the European missionaries and Indian traders. Butere Christian Mission came as a result of this harmonious and stable society (Osogo, 1965).

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