

The Traditional Social, Economic, and Political Organization of the Luhya of Busia District

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Abstract: Like many other African patrilineal societies, the Luhya had a culture where they shared customs, values and distinctive way of living that constituted them as a recognizably distinct human group or society. Through their culture, which was closely validated and regulated, social relations as witnessed in their social, political, economic and spiritual arrangement, they were able to perpetuate and develop their knowledge and their attitudes towards life. This was essentially preserved, propagated and transmitted from one generation to another. This article attempts to show the Luhya social, political, economic, political and spiritual organization. The study area was Busia District (currently Busia County). The study was based on both primary and secondary data collected for a period of two years. The study employed qualitative techniques of data analysis. The study found that all activities touching on social, political, education and economic activities were centered on God. These social structures gave them cultural unity and social cohesion and therefore a common world-view. It gave them a sense of common ethnic kinship, geographical unity and contiguity, a common historical experience and frame of political thought and economic mutuality.

Key words: Traditional, political, social, economic, spiritual, Luhya.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of African Traditional Religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians [7]. Traditional" refers to the customs, beliefs, and practices that the local people of any area consider to have been theirs in the past and not to have changed today from what they were in that past. It is a notion that is held by the people themselves, and not by outside observers. In this sense, a traditional society is one whose members see their lives and the future lives of their children as being essentially the same as those of their forebears, in spite of whatever changes may in fact have been made in the underlying structure of their society [9]. The traditional beliefs and practices of African people are highly diverse and include various religions [1]. Side-by-side with their high levels of commitment to Christianity and Islam, many people in the countries surveyed retain beliefs and rituals that are characteristic of traditional African religions. The continued influence of traditional African religion is also evident in some aspects of daily life [2]. Traditional African religion is based on oral traditions, which means that the basic values and way of life are

passed from elders to younger generation. These traditions are not religious principles, but a cultural identity that is passed on through stories, myths and tales. These traditions have been passed from one generation to the next. In traditional African religion the community is the most important part of someone's life. This community is made up of people who remember and share the same traditions. The individual only exists within the community and separation from it is sometimes worse than death. A believer's family still has influence over him or her even if they live far away [3]. The elders are the final authority and are trusted completely. African traditional religion refers to the indigenous or autochthonous religions of the African people. It deals with their cosmology, ritual practices, symbols, arts, society, and so on. Because religion is a way of life, it relates to culture and society as they affect the worldview of the African people. Traditional African religions are less of faith traditions and more of lived traditions. They are less concerned with doctrines and much more so with rituals, ceremonies, and lived practices. Unlike other world faiths, African traditional religions have no predominant doctrinal teachings. Rather, they have certain vital elements that function as core beliefs. African religions rely on the memory of oral stories. Thus, doctrine tends to be more flexible than it is in text-based religions, and it changes according to the immediate needs of religious followers [6]. Though many Africans have converted to Islam and

Christianity, these religions still inform the social, economic, and political life in African societies. Unlike other world religions that have written scriptures, oral sources form the core of indigenous African religions. These oral sources are intricately interwoven into arts, political and social structure, and material culture. The oral nature of these traditions allows for a great deal of adaptability and variation within and between indigenous African religions [4]. This is a religion that is based mainly on oral transmission. It is not written on paper but in peoples' hearts, minds, oral history, rituals, shrines and religious functions [7]. Africa, the place of origin of all humankind, is divided into numerous political and cultural regions, reflecting its diverse range of histories, ethnicities, languages, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Its various indigenous spiritual systems, usually called African traditional religions, are many. Every ethnic group in Africa has developed a complex and distinctive set of religious beliefs and practices. Despite their seemingly unrelated aspects, there are common features to these systems, suggesting that African traditional faiths form a cohesive religious tradition [6]. African traditional religion is inextricably linked to the culture of the African people. Religion, culture, politics, and society were part of a seamless whole and no part of it could stand on its own [8]. This article presents a comprehensive examination of the Luhya social structures before the coming of the Catholic missionaries in Busia District. The broad objective is to first, justify the fact that the Luhya had a social living arrangement influenced by their geographical setting; second, the article gives a detailed historical setting of the studied people; third, their social organization and traditional education; fourth, economic organization; fifth political organization and lastly their religiosity.

METHODOLOGY

The information contained here comes from two sources: first, library research, and second, field research conducted between March, 2001 and September, 2003. Primary data was derived from first-hand information through personal interviews, observation, and questionnaire and document analysis methods. Primary data was the core of our data, which was supplemented with secondary data from relevant library data gathered from published books, unpublished books, articles, government records, archival materials, and local dailies. Busia District in Kenya (currently Busia County) was our focus of study. The study confined itself on the Catholic Church as an agent of inculturation. Nine parishes were purposively sampled for the survey while systematic sampling technique was used to sample eighteen sub-parishes two from every parish. Non-probability sampling was carried out to sample (117) church leaders who included parish priests, assistant priest, catechists, deacons, nuns and parish council officials hence a total of (13) church officials from every parish. Simple random sampling was utilized to select five male and

five female (parishioners) from every parish. This gave us a total of ninety (90) lay members from the sampled population. Nine (9) youth leaders were purposively sampled to represent each parish in the district. Therefore, the total sample size came to two hundred and twenty nine (229) respondents. To obtain qualitative data for empirical analysis, qualitative methods of data collection, which included oral interviews, observation, focus group discussions, interviews and document analysis, were employed. Oral interview was done through structured interview that was employed on the key respondents and unstructured interview schedules were used on illiterate respondent. Observation method was administered through unstructured observation (participatory observation) and structured observation (non-participatory observation). Observation methods hence provided a detailed and comprehensive description of phenomena as manifested. Documents analysis method was used to gather data from church documents and archives. Finally, focus group discussions were designed to obtain participants' attitudes on a defined topic. The discussions were facilitated where six to fifteen people were brought together in a discussion. Qualitative methods of data analysis were employed to analyze the qualitative data. These were done by coding the themes topics, sub-topics and issues systematically, which were then described verbatim. The data was then systematically and logically compiled and presented through descriptive design.

The Historical Setting of the Abaluhya of Busia District

The Luhya of Busia District constitute of the *Samia*, *Marachi khayo* and *Nyala*. They are Bantu-speaking people of northern Bantu group/cluster. Other Luhya's are found in Kakamega, Vihiga and Bungoma Districts. The term Luhya has been claimed to mean 'fellow clansman'. Osogo explains that the word Luhya is derived from the verb *oluhya* (to burn). He further asserts that the Luhya used to hold campfires to establish their presence in a particular area. Wherever a stranger came through their camp, he would be asked to which *oluhya* he belonged, and in that way they would identify fellow tribes men from strangers. Thus the word Abaluhya literally means "those of the (same) fires" – a specific place in a field where clan members would gather to deal with official matters [27].

Osogo further gives 1940 as the date when the word Luhya was coined. He says, although the Luhya had a common language and a common culture to an extent they did not have a name embracing the whole tribe, so, in 1940, the Abaluhya Welfare Association was formed. The name Abaluhya quickly gained popularity, which was strengthened when Luhya language committee was established and formulated orthography [27]. However, Kesby [28] argues that, Luhya, like Kalenjin, is a term which became general in the 1960-4 period to denote a grouping of peoples who,

their politicians hoped would vote together in elections. Strictly, therefore, the Luhya are the peoples of the group in Kenya, and they do not include very similar peoples across the border in Uganda.

The term *Abaluhya* was used to cover all the *Baluyia* and forms like *Buluhya*, *Muluya*, *Luhya* after the formation of the North Kavirondo Central Association [29]. Huntingford [30] reports that the term *Luhya* is derived from (*O*) *Luhya* clan, so *luhya* means, fellow clansman. Nandwa [31] maintained, the word derived from *oluhya* the name of a specific place in a field where clan members would gather to deal with official matters. Central to the above arguments as stated by the said writers is the view that the present Abaluhya got their name from the word *oluhya*, which means coming together as one people. Therefore, Luhya means people of the same origin that brought them together as one. There are seventeen sub-Luhya dialects within the Luhya-speaking community. Members of this community perceive themselves as belonging to a single linguistic community the Luhya but only at distinct within it in terms of dialect and, to a much lesser extent, culture.

Osogo observes that the Abaluhya sub-tribes have it in their traditions that they came from Egypt (Misri). A few state that they came from Western Africa. From Cameroon in Western Africa, they travelled to Congo region where their first major dispersion took place. Many moved toward Uganda, others proceeded on and settled on the Islands of Lake Victoria. All these took place about A.D. 1000. By 1450 A.D many moved eastwards and reached the present boundaries of Kenya. Between 1500-1800 much of Western region of Kenya had been permanently settled. Here they came into contact with various other groups such as the Luo, Teso, Kalenjin and Masai. They intermarried and borrowed customs from these other groups. This, then, explains the variations in dialects and customs among the Abaluhya [27].

Osogo also notes that looking at the Luhya of Busia District, who are the: *Samia*, *Marachi*, *Khayo* and the *Nyala*, the *Samia* got their name from their ancestor, *Musamia*. They are divided into *Abasamia* proper, the *Abakhekhe*, *Abakangala* and *Abagwe*. Half of the *Abasamia* live in Kenya the other half lives in Uganda an adjoining territory. The *Abasamia* of Kenya live in one division called *Funyula*. They claim to have come from Egypt through Lake Albert area. Here, they split into several groups. Some went to Tanzania side of Lake Victoria, while others moved to *Busoga* in Uganda. Another group, (*Abakhekhe*) who descend from a man called *Akeki* crossed the lake by way of the Islands till they reached *Sigulu* and *Sumba Rudacho*, near Port Victoria. Another group (*Abakangala*) advanced from Lake Albert area across the northern province of Uganda. After going round Mt. Elgon, they

travelled southwards through the *Nandi* country till they came to *Kisa*. They finally reached *Samia* through *Ugenya* [27].

Bukhaya consists of many clans of different origin, others from *Ibanda*, *Samia* and *Bunyala*, some from *Bukusu*, *Bugisu* and *Wanga*, and quite a number from the neighbouring non-Bantu – *Iteso*. The biggest clan is that of the *Abaguuri*, who came from *Ibanda* on the Uganda shore of Lake Victoria. They claim to have come from Egypt through Sudan and Uganda to *Ibanda* where they lived with some Luo clans for several generations before moving to their present home. *Khayo*, from whom the name *Abakhayo* is derived, was their ancestor. The *Abaguuri* have three sub-clans, the *Abatsaami*, *Abakadiya* and *Abambomere*. The *Abakadiya* have acted as the ruling family in *Bukhaya* for a long time. A man of the *Abaguuri* clan is called *Omuguuri* while a girl is called *Nakhayo*. Among the remaining clans in *Bukhaya* are the *Abakhoone* who migrated during the war of *Ifunikho* in *Bunyala* around 1800 A.D. Others are the *Abadumbe* who are an offshoot of the *Abakhenye* swamp-dwellers and the *Abakhibe*. Then there are the *Abameenyi* who came from *Bukhekhe*, *Abade* and the *Ababere* who also came from *Samia*. Others are *Abakhaabi*, *Abamwaka*, *Abatsoye*, *Abatura*, *Abamaani*, *Abakhaala*, *Abasubo*, *Abatsoye*, *Abasikula*, *Abashibe*, *Abamukwe* and *Abamakunda*, among others [27].

The *Abamarachi*, as Osogo [27] alludes, are called so as a result of a nickname given to them by the Luo ‘*Marach*’ which means the “bad ones”. *Marach* is a mere collection of clans with different origins. The biggest and ruling clan is that of the *Abafofoyo*. They too claim to have come from Egypt, and are directly related to the *Abaguuri* of *Bukhaya*. They also lived for a time at *Ibanda* where their neighbours, apart from the *Abaguuri*, were the Luo hence their considerable Luo connections. Their leader was called *Mareeba*. *Mareeba* established the ruling family in *Marachi* and then he died. Some of his sons fled after his death to avoid trouble. For, example *Nambanja* migrated to *Bukhekhe* in *Samia* where he became the founder of the *Abafofoyo* there. The rest of the clans included the *Abonwe*, *Ababere*, *Abangayo*, *Abangaale* and *Abamulembwa*, all of whom are remotely of Kalenjin and Masai origin. Other clans who entered *Marachi* from *Samia* and *Bukhekhe* are the *Abasubo*, *Abamaleve*, *Abakangala*, *Ababirangu* and *Abasireku*. From *Bunyala* came the *Abakhone* and from the Luo country came the *Abageri*, *Abapunyi* and *Ababoro*.

The name *Abanyala* is applied to three sub-tribes of the Luhya. These are the *Abanyala ba Mayero* (*Kakalewa*) commonly known as *Abanyala ba Ndombi*, *Abanyala Abakabaras* and *Abanyala Be Buongo*. The first two groups are in Kakamega District; while the *Abanyala be buongo* live in Busia District. The name *Abanyala* did not originate from the name of a person as

in the case of most other sub-tribes in *Buluhya*. The word originates from the term *okhunyal*, which means to manage. The *Abanyala* are those who managed *Abakhone* a very powerful clan in *Bunyala*, which used to terrorize other clans. After the *Abaongo* had defeated the *Abakhone* during the *Abakhone* war of 1800, they adopted the name *Abakhone* who later on came back to stay in *Bunyala* as *Abanyala*. The *Abanyala* clans that settled in *Burambo* and *Buongo* are the *Abamatseke*, *Abangoma*, *Ababboro*, *Abakhone* and *Abamakhya*. The four clans arrived from Kadenge in Luoland. They originated from Masailand between AD 1650 and 1700. This group then settled in *Sangalo*, later they sojourned in Western Uganda before settling permanently in *Bunyala* [27].

In another book, Osogo [32] notes the *Abaongo*, *Abamaba*, *Abanyekera*, *Abasinyama* and *Abamulembo* later arrived between 1650-1700. The *Abamulembo* are the largest clan in *Bunyala*. Their (progenitor) was called *Mulembwa*. He came from Kaimosi in Tirikiland. The *Abakhone* always terrorized the other clans. For their survival these clans became allies against their common enemy, and called themselves as *Abaongo*. The *Abaongo* from *Kadenge* and *Igoye* invited some clans. Other clans in *Bunyala* include the *Abalwani*, *Abadecho*, *Abadebani*, *Abalanda*, and *Abamarere*.

Traditional Social Organization

The Luhya of Busia District divided themselves into several clans. Clans, which are clusters of kin who claim a single common ancestry but can rarely, if ever, trace the actual links of descent. Usually clans are exogamous units and may recognize various ritual prohibitions, such as taboos on certain foods that give them a sense of unity and of distinctiveness from others. Clans are typically segmented into constituent groups, with each group recognizing a founding ancestor more recent than the clan founder; these are known in the literature as lineages, one of the criteria for a lineage being that its members—patrilineal or matrilineal—can trace actual kinship links between themselves. These clans were made up of lineages, each claiming descent from a common ancestor. A clan usually has a totem, and, with a few exceptions, is named after the person who founded it [12]. Each clan had a leader who was vested with the responsibility of determining clan affairs.

Within the clan, were families with extended relationships either due to marriage alliances or due to migrations. Each family lived in one homestead surrounded with a euphorbia hedge. A homestead was the basic unit of a lineage. In some homesteads, there was more than one household each comprising of the husband, wives and children. The head of the family unit was the father who commanded all respect. He presided over family functions. He made decisions for the well-being of the family. Women had little say in

decision-making. In this system, all brothers of the father are called “father”, all sisters of the mother are called “mother”, all their children “brother” and “sister”. The traditional family consists of several nuclear units held in association by a common father. The traditional African family is a very broad concept which has challenging variations across the continent. These variations are caused by differences in tribal customs or culture according to geography, history, religion, external influence of colonialism, inter migration, political and economic structures and influences [13].

Before the coming of the missionaries in Busia District, the Luhya African family laws were closely knit and tradition was the dominating power of the family and the society as a whole. In the family the child acquired values and learnt skills and techniques, which were part of traditional cultural heritage. It was the family that played the primary role in the formal instruction given to the initiates during rites that prepared the individual to assume the status and obligations of manhood and womanhood in the society [27]. Initiation rites are a natural and necessary part of a community, as are arms and legs natural and necessary extension of the human body. These rites are critical to individual and community development, and it should not be taken for granted that people automatically grow and develop into responsible, community-oriented adults. Initiation ceremonies connected with clan taboos were encouraged. This helped in establishing the legitimacy of a marriage or birth, death, war, harvest, among others. All these together with customs, culture and the mode of living, constituted an important aspect of social environment of the growing child. Rites of passage play a central role in African socialization, demarking the different stages in an individual's development (gender and otherwise), as well as that person's relationship and role to the broader community. The major stage in African life is the transition from child to adult when they become fully institutionalized to the ethics of the group's culture

The process of initiation concerns undergoing a fundamental set of rites to start a new phase or beginning in life. It marks the passing from one phase in life to the next more mature phase. Initiation fundamentally has to do with transformation, and has been a central component of traditional African cultures since time immemorial [14]. Among the Luhya of Busia, initiation into adulthood was done by knocking off the six lower teeth. However, some communities such as the *Abamarachi* and *Abakhayo* combined both the removal of the six lower teeth and circumcision for male initiates. Thus without these, proper and requisite child's manhood or womanhood would not be recognized by the society.

Marriage, which is the backbone of the family, is an integral cultural component in every society.

Marriage rituals signify the betrothal of individuals to each other, to the lineage, and to the community [6]. In other words, the marriage rites are performed for not only the coming together of male and females to procreate and perpetuate life and the coming together of families; it is also an institution that helps both the husband and wife to best fulfill their mission and objectives in life [14]. An unmarried man (*Musumba*) is regarded as a peculiarity in the community. Marriage is important because it sanctifies the union whose ultimate purpose is to bring new lives into the world. When a young man wanted to marry, his father or family or relatives provided the bride wealth for him, and this wealth was transferred to the bride's family so that the marriage was a contract between the two families or groups. Marriage had to be approved by the parents of the prospective partners and sometimes by the community at large. This means that the parents who provided the wealth had a say as to who their son should marry. A girl with a child born outside marriage (*isimba*) could not easily get married. No one could recommend such a girl to be married to his or her son. Therefore, legitimate children were emphasized, as they still are today.

Sex roles were clearly defined. For example, in pre-colonial African society, women generally played the critical roles as agents of propagation of its genetic stock, preservation of its culture, cohesion of society and economic growth; through birthing and nurturing of babies, upbringing of children, exertion of collective moral coercive force for the common good, and partaking in socio-economic endeavors [15]. Women did most of the cultivation and all the domestic work such as fetching firewood and water, cooking, and basket weaving and keeping the home clean. Young girls had the same responsibilities just like their mothers in preparation for marriage. Men helped with the clearing of the bushes, house building, looking after cattle, sheep and goats. Boys assisted in the herding of the cattle. The old were an asset to the society because they possessed a wealth of experience, and consequently acted as a fountain of advice.

The social environment played a very important role in shaping the content of education. It had the objective of molding the individual into a cooperate membership of the society. He or she was, therefore, taught things such as decency of speech and behaviour, respect for his elders and older family members and sharing in common tasks in the field and the homestead. Education was referred to as a process of transforming a newborn baby into a mature responsible member of the community [33]. Through education, a child gradually acquired habits, attitudes, beliefs, skills and motives that would enable him/her to perform his/her duties as a growing member of the community. It was transmitted mainly through informal and formal methods of instruction. Oral instructions were given with the development of language. Through

traditional education, basic cultural traits were transmitted. Language, religious beliefs and technical skills were taught. These were passed on from one generation to the other. Education made an individual to learn and to accept the framework of social institution. It was meant to correspond to the needs of life. Further, education was used to emphasize the right relation with other people and to promote social integration within the society [33].

Education was transmitted mainly through informal and formal methods of instruction. Before the introduction of Western civilization into Africa, education in the continent was purely indigenous. Therefore, we see that education could refer to both the process of training and the product or result of training [18]. Among the informal methods of instruction were learning through play. Children engaged in play activities, which could be described as imitative, imaginative and symbolic. They enjoyed imitating their parents or other grown-ups and especially in activities, which would mold them in future years. Most communities were rich in stories, riddles, proverbs, poems, songs and lullabies. They were part of the oral literature reflecting every aspect of life and culture as well as giving much information on African beliefs and thought patterns. They were an essential aspect of education, for everyone had to know them, since they were learnt at home within the family circle.

Stories served both to entertain and to instruct, to give examples of good behaviour and disasters, which followed bad behaviour. Riddles were generally designed to develop children's memory and promote their language. Elders used myths to explain things that the young could not understand. Legends explained events that actually happened or existed. Folktales were based primarily on day-to-day activities. African traditional education put emphasis on practical learning and the young adult learned by watching, participating and executing what they learnt. The skills like carving, masonry, clay working, cloth making, building canoe making, cooking, and home management were insisted among the children in the community. These were the skills opened to all, as they consisted of the basic skills, knowledge and attitudes that enabled individuals to live and function effectively in their tribe. The knowledge skills and values that were imparted were relevant to the socio-economic activities of an individual. The learners learned the skills that were for immediate and long term activities. Indigenous African education was functional, the knowledge, skills and values that were imparted were relevant to the socio-economic activities of the individual [17].

Children also learnt through dance and folk songs. Music formed an integral part of their daily lives. Many of the rites, ceremonies, feasts and festivals were performed with the accompaniment of melodious music and dancing. Ceremonies and songs were also an

important source of teaching. These values were passed on from generation to generation within kinship groups. Through traditional rituals and practices of rites of passage, special lessons were given to the youth on marriage. The education was also an integral part of culture and history. The learners/recipients acquired communal attitudes rather than individual [17]. Formal methods of instruction included theoretical and practical inculcation of skills. Learning through apprenticeship, for example, was formal and indirect. Parents who wanted their children to acquire some occupational training normally sent their children to work with craftsmen such as potters, blacksmiths and basket weavers who would teach them formally.

Various African cultures have developed intricate sets of ethical customs, rules, and taboos. Many societies believe that their morals originated with God and the ancestors and were imparted to humans as elements of God's creation of the world. These moral values are thus embedded in the religious ethos and cosmology. In most traditional African cultures morals are of two classes—those that govern individual conduct and those that govern social and community relations. Morals that govern social conduct and community relations, and thus protect the group, tend to be rigorous, because the welfare of the group is highly valued. Fundamental human rights are often seen as important not for the sake of individuals but for the collective survival of the group. Community morals govern the family unit, from maternal and paternal relatives to extended families, clans, and lineages. Family members must adhere to specific roles, privileges, and rights. Because they regulate an infinitely larger number of relationships and personal interactions, morals governing the community are complex. To promote the welfare of communities, societies have established taboos and consequences for breaking them [6]. Strict code of morality existed to regulate the relations between sexes. Morally, a child was made to conform to mores, customs and standards of behaviour inherent in the clan into which he was born. To enforce morality, deterrence or inculcating fear in the children was encouraged.

Although African religions have not embarked on a systematic theology, the myths, rituals, and stories of the gods and ancestors point to a profound statement on moral justice. The gods and ancestors are guardians of morality. They profess habits of truth, justice, honesty, good character, and diligence. They reward good deeds and punish bad deeds. A number of the traditions talk about judgment, through which evil deeds are punished and good deeds are rewarded. Africans believe that punishment may be communal or may pass from one generation to another. Lineage or familial misfortune signifies punishment for the past sins of members of the lineage. Certain antisocial behaviors, such as theft, witchcraft, and sorcery, are taboo, and offenders may suffer punishment of death.

Because African religions focus on contemporary worldly salvation, Africans believe that bad character is punished in this world [6]. Failure to conform to the set morals led to severe beating or some form of inflicting pain on the body. Blessings and curses were used as a way of reward and punishment. Departed members of the family could bless or curse the living. Hence, sacrificial rituals, libations and prayers were performed as a way of making peace between the living and the dead.

Communalism was encouraged. The society, developed deliberate institutions and practices that ensured a communal and harmonious society. The case society also enables us to understand certain underlying issues in traditional communalism. communalism was a deliberately desired social structure which was established and zealously sustained by a people's Will and desire to survive under the most certain and tried conditions. At independence, the colonial era in Africa was seen to have eroded and corrupted the African culture, way of life and therefore identity. Communalism was a reality in traditional African societies and had a far-reaching impact on the African people and their societies, so much so that it continues to manifest itself in various forms in contemporary Africa. The reality of communalism in Africa, as it appears, lies not in its existence but in the fact that it was institutionalized, intensified and lasted longer in Africa than anywhere else and, thus, the impact it has had on the continent [11]. This included cultivation and house building. The activities were accompanied by drumming and traditional dances. Through communal work, families within the kinship group lived harmoniously with others, so maintaining peace. Human virtues such as courage, diligence, uprightness, obedience, justice, hospitality, humility, and impartiality were encouraged [27].

In conclusion, traditional socialization and education, embraced character building as well as development of physical aptitudes. The acquisition of these moral qualities, and, the acquisition of knowledge made an individual take an active part in social life of society in various forms, to fit in the community to which he/she was born.

Economic Organization

Economic life in African traditional societies centres around hunting, food gathering, shepherding or animal herding and farming [19]. In African societies and cultures social institutions and cultural traits are types of relationships which though operate at various levels, are closely interwoven. It is this single factor that is responsible for the survival of some elements of traditional economic practice in Nigeria and other African countries [21]. The inhabitants of Busia District are basically pastoralists and agriculturists. Food is grown for consumption. The main food-crops cultivated are millet, sorghum, maize, beans, sweet potatoes, and

pumpkins. The staple food crops are sorghum and millet. They provide all the essential ingredients in the form of porridge, ugali and traditional beer. The main cash crops are sugarcane and cotton, which are grown in *Bukhayo* and *Bunyala*. Others are groundnuts, simsim, and green peas.

Food-crops are cultivated on a limited basis. Shifting and mixed farming are also practiced [34]. Prior to the colonial era, land usage patterns never showed any evolutionary tendency toward individualized land tenure by farmers, which, combined with the notion that farming is required to satisfy needs and not to maximize gain, curtailed incentives [10]. Most of the rural inhabitants earn their living from land. With the introduction of iron implements, it became necessary that people acquire more land. Men did the clearing of bushes while women did most of the digging, weeding and harvesting. They were economically profitable as they helped in increasing agricultural production. Grain was processed for local consumption. The crops harvested were usually stored away in the granary (*esiaki*) of each family for future use. All families of the clan without any restriction freely and communally used grazing land, except when there were crops in the field. In theory the land, both for pastures and for cultivation was and in most instances continues to be held by a group as a whole, although individual ownership of fragmented strips of land was allowed within this group. In traditional Africa, women had recognized the vital roles in the economic well-being of their communities. Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, women were the major food producers and thus not only had ready access to land but also had authority of how the land was to be used and cultivated. Therefore, the value of women's productive labor in producing and processing food established and maintained their rights in the domestic and other spheres [16]. Therefore, the value of women's productive labor in producing and processing food established and maintained their rights in the domestic and other spheres [15].

Sheep, goats and cattle could also be exchanged for grain and other agricultural products in the distribution of food. There was very little distinction between the rich and the poor, in that wealth was shared with relatives in a typical African communal way of life. There were no social classes. Livestock keeping was viewed as a major source of wealth. This included the rearing of cattle, goats and sheep. Livestock keeping was magnified as it contributed to the payment of bride wealth. Therefore one who owned large heads of cattle stood a chance of marrying many wives. This increased not only the labour power of his homestead but also surplus food. Cattle also represented wealth and an index of social position. Further, cattle were the most vital aspect of the *Abaluhya* economy. From cattle, they obtained meat, milk and blood for food, while skins were used for clothing and bedding. Livestock was

used in performing rituals and sacrifices to the ancestral spirits. Animal sacrifice played a major role in the community rites. Prestige was attached to wealth measured in the number of herds of livestock that the individual had, or in the amount of foodstuff that his land produced, the amount of land that he had, and the number of wives and children in his possession, since wealth also meant that the individual was able to have many wives than his less fortunate neighbour because he was able to pay off bride wealth.

The use of iron tools, axes and hoes enabled the community to cultivate large tracts of land on which they grew sorghum and millet. Towards the end of the 19th century British European settlers introduced bananas, cabbages and potatoes to supplement for the already existing food-crops. The *Samia* boosted agriculture by supplying the whole of *Baluhya* land with excellent hoes, axes, spearheads, arrowheads and so on. A network of caravans connected *Samia* with the rest of the Province. Okafor [19] describes market in traditional economy as only a place for buying and selling; also used as judicial and communication centers. Ayithey [20] describes a market as a place where exchanges could be made more easily. According to him, where exchanges occurred regularly, a marketplace would develop.

Economic specialization in different fields was also observed among the *Busia* communities. Elaborate basketry and weaving, leatherwork, pottery, skin processing and different fibre materials were sewed. These industries flourished and their products were exchanged at the village level and local markets. Work takes place in familiar context of daily life, along with recreation, politics and religious worship. All of these articulate with kinship. Work and family life are not segregated in traditional work, as it is in modern organization [19].

According to historical traditions collected [33] it is evident that there was wide spread trading connections in *Busia* District. On the whole, there was local trade between neighbouring districts, which have different ecological conditions and specialized in certain forms of production including agriculturists and pastoralists. Barter trade was used to exchange goods. This system of trade was both external as well as internal, within the sub-tribes in *Busia* and others outside *Busia*. Later, the products formed part of the interregional trade between the *Luo* and other neighbouring *Luhyas* from other districts. The exchange of products was mainly confined to foods stuffs. There was no money used in the exchange of foods.

The sectors of economic activity include agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering; primitive barter trade is used instead of money; there is no sustainable excess (surplus) product; the social

organization in a traditional economy is represented by local family-tribal communities; while mobility is determined by herd run or soil fertility depletion. The next possible development of a traditional economy is a farmer's economy centered on stable agrarian production structures [22]. The Luo bought canoes from *Abanyala* and ironware from the *Samia* [35]. The *Abanyala* on the other hand, depended on their Luo neighbours for cattle, salt, hides, ghee, milk, fish, drums, baskets and poison. Through barter trade inter-tribal marriages were encouraged between the *Luhya* and their neighbours, to forestall economic linkages. Thus trade brought tribal cohesion with marriage as a cornerstone. A child had to learn the climatic features related to the physical surroundings. This dictated the nature of economic activities that were carried out which embraced cultivation, hunting, fishing, gathering, and pastoralism, among others.

Some communities especially the *Abanyala*, *Samia* and *Bahayo* practiced fishing extensively from Lake Victoria and existing rivers. Fishing was practiced to subsidize the economy as well as a source of protein to the majority of the people. Fishing in the district is done mainly in Lake Victoria on the *Marenga* and *Bukoma* beaches, and in River Nzoia and Yala swamps south of *Budalangi* Division. It is also done in other swampy areas in *Masira*, *Tangakina* and *Mayenyi* in Nambale, Sio River and *Munana* Valley in *Funyula* Division, which also provide excellent areas for fishing. Fish is sold to Marachi, Teso and as far as Kakamega and Bungoma Districts.

Political Organization

The early Kenyan societies were organized into communities of small clan or lineages of more or less equal status [33]. Similarly, Busia communities organized themselves into families, lineages and clans. They have a common background, common customs, speak the same language, though dialects vary from one community to the other. They used to have the same form of political unit. The smallest of such political unit was called "*Olukongo*", which literally means 'a ridge'. A ridge in this sense was a kind of fortress used for security purposes. Further, the extended family was the main starting point of a clan. This was a more or less closely – knit group of relatives comprising several groups of people, that is, grandparents or possibly great grandparents, with all their living descendants. At the head of each family was the father. Many families made up a clan, a group of people who descended from the same ancestor or share the same totem.

Africa had various/diverse forms of political systems before the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century. The Indigenous African political institutions were largely based on kinship and ancestry. Rules of procedure were established through customs and traditions. The indigenous political system had some democratic features. For example, succession was

regulated according to descent and merit in some cases [23]. Within the rest of the sub-tribes there was clan government, though in many places a number of clans banded themselves together and accepted the rule of the leader of the most powerful clan in the area. There existed many of the alliances in each sub-tribe, which formed the most effective political units. Each of these units had council of elders, which had, among other duties, the responsibility of looking after the land and settling disputes. Each village was run by a council of elders consisting of a group of older men belonging to the clan family. Wisdom was important as a factor in appointing a man as a member of the council of elders or as a headman. The membership of the council of elders was drawn from the older men of the clan who, by virtue of their age, were considered more experienced and wiser in matters of local government. The council of elders was responsible for legal matters embracing the observance of discipline and the adherence to traditional customs.

African religious leaders include the sacred kings and chiefs who often serve as both spiritual and community leaders [6]. After clan leadership was the *Omwami* who exercised control over all the clans as a sub tribal leader [40]. He was believed to have been chosen by the gods and spirits to rule people. He therefore became an unquestioned leader. *The Omwami* had the power to order people when to begin planting and when to harvest. He further helped his people in handling natural disasters. Sometimes, natural calamities would befall the community such as droughts and famine. When this happened; he organized and sent out caravans to friendly neighbours to get food. To strengthen good neighbourhood, marriage was encouraged between sub-tribes to enhance political cohesion.

Kingship is integral to African belief systems for at least two reasons. First, in the origin myths of several peoples, such as the Baganda of Uganda and the Edo of Nigeria, the first king or chief of the community was endowed with the sacred power of the Supreme Deity. At times rulers have been described as gods or as endowed with God's divinity. Second, the physical well-being of a king reflects the well-being of his people, including their agricultural and hunting life [6]. The organizational structure of indigenous political systems was generally based upon kinship, ancestry and survival. These formed the bases upon which groups and societies were built and have evolved into what we now refer to as ethnic groups. The affiliation of these groups is what is now referred to as ethnicity. Ethnicity provides a rallying point around which political systems were organized. The law within each ethnic group was homogenous, the cultural, religious and linguistic traditions are the same and binding on the members of the group [24]. Theoretically speaking then, there would be as many *avami* as there were clans. Practically, however, *avami* came from the bigger clans. Even if the

smaller clans may have had capable men who could lead, leadership was usually conceded to the men of bigger clans: “*small clans did not like to rule over the big clans*”. These *avami* were autonomous; there was no ascending order of *avami* [36].

As already stated homestead heads owed allegiance to *Omwami*. The powers of the homestead head over his wives, children, and relatives were great within the homestead, whereby his commands were law. His authority was reinforced by traditional religious prescriptions, which made it a taboo for family members to disobey, because the heads had the powers to curse. The authority of the homestead head was not however limitless. He was accountable in his activities to his ancestors and his immediate lineage relatives.

The role of *Omwami* was to settle cases with the help of a council of elders. This ‘council of elders’ were the advisors to the chiefs, and worked in tandem with the chiefs in governing the societies. A chief could not and was not customarily allowed to take unilateral decisions; he needed to consult and seek his advisers’ opinions first before taking any action related to the administration of the village. He could also not impose his own opinion on the council. He could attempt to make them see things from his own point of view, but if they did not agree with him, he could do nothing but to adopt the general opinion. The advisory council was usually made up of elderly men of good standing in the societies, headmen of the different wards or lineages making up the village, who were well respected. They acted as intermediaries between the chief and the village or tribe [20]. With their assistance the leader was able to maintain law and order and settle disputes among his subjects. His power depended considerably upon his own ability to settle disputes, and to lead or direct his people in war. His advice was backed by the magical powers, which his own lineage could provide if a dispute was not resolved peacefully. Although the *Omwami* did not go to war, he helped with the planning of raids [37]. He allowed the war leaders to go out on an errand and gave them his blessings. He also ordered people to build forts for defense against attacks from enemies.

Community leaders commonly known as *Omwami* received part of the harvest every year from their subjects. This was a gesture of appreciation for good leadership skills. For example, whenever the ruler had played a role in manipulating rain or had successfully fought off enemies. The *Omwami* was also rewarded for rendering certain services to his subjects. In settling disputes the *Omwami* acknowledged fines paid by criminals found guilty. These were normally in the form of beer, cows, sheep, goats and hens. Different crimes had different forms of punishment, with those of the likes of murder and treason being punishable by death at times. The procedure for reporting a matter to the chief for settlement would include notifying him

(the chief). This would be done by bringing gifts and other payments to the chief; otherwise he would not give audience [20].

For one to be *Omwami*, qualities such as bravery, kindness, respectability and faithfulness in marriage were required. However, before death, *Omwami* chose his successor from among his sons. If *Omwami* had no son, his brother could succeed him. When a ruler died before choosing a successor, the elders chose one from among the candidates to succeed him. This could be one of his sons or brothers. Therefore, the political life in a community revolved around this figure. His position was open to criticism if he proved ineffective, but if he served his community well he was looked upon as a kind of “*father figure*”. In pre-colonial African societies, governance was usually determined by existing systems of succession to power. Societal norms regulated these systems of succession to office and legitimacy was conferred through the respect accorded to these lines of authority. Despite the absence of the formulation of theoretical concepts, it does not mean that inherent values did not exist in the different political systems practiced in those societies. Within the pre-colonial African societies, there were checks and balances on the powers of the rulers. These were evidenced in some of the practices, traditions and beliefs of the different societies. The allegiance of the subjects could, for example, easily be transferred from one ruler to another if the ruler turned out to be despotic, cruel or a tyrant [25].

Currently, Busia District has two local authorities, Busia Municipal Council with eight wards and Busia County Council with twenty-one wards. The district is divided into voting constituencies, from each of which a representative is elected to “*stand for them*” in August house in Nairobi. The person so elected is expected to return to his area as often as possible to assist in developing the local development projects. The four constituencies are Nambale, Budalangi, Butula, Funyula, Matayos, Teso South and Teso North. Currently Busia has 6 sub-counties namely Busia, Funyula, Nambale, Butula, Teso North and Teso South.

Religion

Every human being that participates in a culture has three levels of conscious reflection about things. First, he has specific ideas about things, which are employed actively in daily living. These ideas direct his disposition to immediate matters, which constitute his worldliness. Secondly, his general belief or convictions, which is hereditary acquired and also directly affects his life. Finally, his metaphysical dream of the world, which constitutes his intuitive feeling about the immanent nature of reality, which makes him or her live harmoniously with himself and with the environment. It is the commitment to his or her religion that makes him lives harmoniously. Similarly, the commitment of Luhya to their religion made them live

in harmony with their environment [38]. The survey findings suggest that many Africans are deeply committed to Islam or Christianity and yet continue to practice elements of traditional African religions [2]. Religion in most African societies also supports moral order. It creates a sense of security and order in the community. Followers believe in the guidance of their ancestors spirits [3].

African Religion displays, or has been intended to display the meaning of life. Religion incorporates social, economic and political aspects of life therefore providing an individual with his form of existence in a society. It furnishes him with evidence of his own identity, and generally equips him with beliefs appropriate to the acceptance of his social condition and survival within an environment. In general, traditional religion in Africa is characterized by belief in a supreme being who created and ordered the world but is often experienced as distant or unavailable to humans. Lesser divinities or spirits who are more accessible are sometimes believed to act as intermediaries. A number of traditional myths explain the creation and ordering of the world and provide explanations for contemporary social relationships and norms. Lapsed social responsibilities or violations of taboos are widely believed to result in hardship, suffering and illness for individuals or communities and must be countered with ritual acts to re-establish order, harmony and well-being [2].

The *Luhya* are religious-oriented people. Therefore, religion is an important element in studying the *Luhya* way of life. Religion is so intimately woven in to their sequence of day-to-day activities that it provides a year-round schedule of rituals and activities and fills the days and weeks with specific things to do, either individually or in groups. It is therefore a very necessary element in maintaining community cohesion. Life is seen as a spiritual journey beginning with birth, child naming, initiation, marriage, death and life after death, that is, a kind of eternal life. Adults made desirable religious doctrines, practices and experiences available to the young largely through the medium of religious ceremonies and instructions arising out of such ceremonies. Traditional African concepts of reality and destiny are deeply rooted in the spirit world. The activities and the actions of the spirit beings govern all social and spiritual phenomena. There is a very close relationship between the spirit beings and the mystical or impersonal powers and forces described in the previous section. This realm of the supernatural operates mystical power, magic, witchcraft, sorcery and many others. The spirit world or the realm of the supernatural is, in a sense, a battleground of spirits and powers that use their mystical powers to influence the course of human life. These mystical powers can be designated as positive or negative, good or evil, which may bring blessings or curses [5].

There are spiritual leaders, kinds of priests or pastors in most traditional African religions. This person is essential in the spiritual and religious survival of the community [3]. The *Luhya* of Busia District believed in a supernatural power commonly referred to as *Nasaye* or *Were*. *Nasaye* or *were* seen as the Supreme Being, the creator and protector of all living things. The *Luhya* attributed all benevolent activities such as rain, nourishing his crops and grass for his livestock, the rivers giving him water, the sun providing him with light and driving away darkness to the Supreme Being the creator of all things, including man. Though the invisible, Supreme Being, is believed that He lives up in the sky, God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, the source of all people and creatures, and the source of all prosperity, wealth, success and good health. The same is observed in South Africa where although traditional African religion recognises a Supreme God, followers do not worship him or her directly as they do not feel worthy enough. They, therefore, ask the ancestors to communicate on their behalf. The Supreme Being is called upon in times of great hardship and need, like drought or epidemic that may threaten the entire community. The Supreme Being is the connection between people and their environment [3].

Among the *Luhya*, God is also considered to be “the source of all life including the fertility of women, that they might beget children who are regarded as his greatest single gift. That God can never die, he is immortal. All prayers for people’s welfare in all aspects of life were and still are directed to the one Supreme Being God. The worship of God co-existed with ancestor veneration. Ancestral veneration was associated with spirit worship. This spirits were known as *emisambwa*. The *emisambwa* could be spiteful if they had a grudge against a living person or a family. These spirits were referred to as *evihieno*, and were very much dreaded. This means that, dead members of a family continued to influence the activities of those living. Good spirits were offered sacrifices by family heads as a sign of gratitude for their protection. Evil spirits were also appeased with sacrifices. Ills and misfortunes were taken as the work of the evil forces.

The spirits or souls are capable of exercising their activities upon human beings and thus affecting their lives. Moreover, it is the Supreme Being that gives command that these forces should act the way they do in everyday life and in their relationship with people. They also believed in intermediaries as links between humanity and the Supreme Being, that is God. Spirits acted as intermediaries between living and the Supreme Creator, who exercised absolute power over all the people. Ancestor worship and belief is an extension of a belief in and respect for elders. Followers of traditional African religion believe that ancestors maintain a spiritual connection with their living relatives. Most ancestral spirits are generally good and

kind. The only negative actions taken by ancestral spirits is to cause minor illnesses to warn people that they have gotten onto the wrong path. To please these unhappy ancestors, usually offerings of beer and meat are made [3]. Were [40] summarizes the relationship between ancestral spirits and the creator as follows:

It would, however, appear regarded as influential and authoritative agents or media... For thought the whole religion, there was a vague belief in the power or the omnipotent creator who was in complete control of all life and the elements.

In defining the religious worldview of Africa, Mbiti stresses the fact that the spirit world of the African people is very densely populated with spirit beings, spirits and the living-dead or the spirits of the ancestors [39]. The spirit world is the most pervasive worldview. Contained within it are the spirits, the ancestors and the Supreme Being or God. The traditional religious worldview conceives of all spiritual beings in their hierarchical order. The Supreme Being is the highest and the greatest. The lesser beings, such as gods and divinities occupy a lesser position, but higher than the humans do [5]. The ancestral spirits acquired their powers from the omnipotent creator. It was believed that souls of men retain functional roles after death. That is why the living revered their ancestors in their religious practices. Many Africans practice ancestor veneration. Ancestors maintain a strong moral authority over the living [6]. These functional roles affect men who are still living. Therefore, many ritual practices are directed toward them. The ancestors are the intermediaries between living human beings and other forces in the universe, which watch over their descendants and if rightly propitiated, help to prosper and protect them. Ancestors, considered to be in the spirit world, are believed to be part of the human community. Believers hold that ancestors sometimes act as emissaries between living beings and the divine, helping to maintain social order and withdrawing their support if the living behave wrongly. Religious specialists, such as diviners and healers, are called upon to discern what infractions are at the root of misfortune and to prescribe the appropriate rituals or traditional medicines to set things right.

African traditional religions tend to personify evil. Believers often blame witches or sorcerers for attacking their life-force, causing illness or other harm. They seek to protect themselves with ritual acts, sacred objects and traditional medicines. African slaves carried these beliefs and practices to the Americas, where they have evolved into religions such as Voodoo in Haiti and Santeria in Cuba [2].

Traditional Africa has a host of specialists who are professionals in their various disciplines, such as priests, medicine men and women, diviners, mediums,

sorcerers, witches, wizards and midwives. Each profession has a set of beliefs, rules and regulations, practices and rituals. Each profession must be examined in terms of its theological foundations, practices, moral and ethical foundations [5]. Religious specialists like rainmakers, medicine men, soothsayers, diviners and surgeons also played a very significant role in the religious life of the community. They too accumulated their powers from the Creator *Nasaye*. These specialists offered specialized services to the community or individuals and were later rewarded for the services offered. The rewards given were in the form of animals such as cattle, goats, sheep and chicken. Magic also played an important part in the belief system. It was used as a means of manipulating supernatural powers to insure health, increase of livestock, fertility, increase of the productivity of the soil and crops or harm to an enemy. Thus there were professional experts in the field of medicine. There were sorcerers who dealt in destructive medicines or poisons and they could help their clients in destroying their enemies. There were also doctors who had protective medicines against spells. Herbalists treated various diseases using traditional herbs. Diviners and seers who possessed strong powerful spirits to enable them help their clients by telling them what was going to happen to them. The diviners depended upon the supernatural power in order to perform their duties.

Traditional customs in relation to birth, initiation, marriage, death and worship were strictly observed. These ceremonial rituals were performed to mark an important stage in one's life. This stage had to be accepted by the community as a whole as it transformed an individual from one stage to the other. There were taboos imposed upon the members of a family, a clan, or a tribe. Taboos were sacred interdictions laid upon the use of certain words, things or the performance of certain actions, or the eating of certain foods. The infraction of the taboos as established by the family, the clan, or the ethnic group by any of their members meant that the member or members involved would be automatically harmed in some way.

Rituals in Africa, just as in other parts of the world, utilize symbols to express and convey meanings, verbally and nonverbally. In traditional African societies, a firm stress is placed on the performance of rituals as customary, standardized, and symbolic social communication that is repeatable according to fixed patterns. All African societies have different age-linked rituals, and mark the passage from one to another, but not all have the same rituals, either in number or in kind. The following are typical: prenatal rituals (e.g. rituals to confirm pregnancy, for fetal growth, and for safe delivery); naming rituals; pre-pubertal and pubertal initiation rituals for the entrance into adulthood; betrothal and marriage; initiation into prestige-bestowing adult associations; rituals elevating

individuals to high office or to priestly functions; and funeral [26]. Sacrificial priests performed purification rites when need emerged. This was done either to cleanse or curse an individual and during funeral rites, birth ceremonies, initiation ceremonies and marriage ceremonies. Goats, cattle and chicken served as sacrificial animals. Usually, a black or white goat or hen was selected for ritual purpose.

The advent of missionaries in the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the unprecedented impact of Christianity on the African way of life. With the coming of missionaries, a new faith was introduced in the Luhya's life. Alien religious teachings rapidly replaced indigenous ones. People were urged to change their indigenous religion and adopt Christianity. The Luhya were introduced to new values at the expense of their own indigenous cultural systems. Given this spiritual view of the world, Christianity has to address the intrinsic meaning of African spiritualism and the dominance of the law of the spirit in the traditional African life [5].

With the coming of the Catholic missionaries, there was likewise the introduction of urbanization. This led to rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-urban and urban-rural migrations. Urbanization similarly brought serious effects on social, political, economic and religious life. For instance, the Luhya who stayed in towns were less controlled by their traditional beliefs and practices. Some were left with two cultures, to choose one or both, others decided to defend their cultural values, others dropped their cultural values while others were left in between the two cultures that is, accepting the two conflicting cultures which included religion.

Among the Christian missions introduced were the Catholic and the Protestant in late 1930's. However, other religions like Islam, found their way in Busia District. This religious transformation meant that people had to transform their traditional religious faith. Some joined Christianity; others embraced Islam, while others still appreciated their traditional religious values. In the coming chapters we shall see the impact of the Catholic Church on the Luhya's social life and development, hence social change. Although a large proportion of Africans have converted to Islam and Christianity, these two world religions have been assimilated into African culture, and many African Christians and Muslims maintain traditional spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, African cultural practices contain elements of indigenous religion. Thus, traditional African cosmologies and beliefs continue to exert significant influence on Africans today. The interaction between Western and traditional African religious traditions has influenced religious innovations in Africa, such as African Initiated Churches and Islamic mystical traditions (Sufism). As a result, Islam and Christianity have become Africanized on the continent, significantly

changing the practice of the two traditions and leading to a distinct African expression of them [6].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Luhya of Busia Districts social-political, economic and religious structures, gave them cultural unity and social cohesion and therefore a common world view. Social cohesion is a significant phenomenon in maintaining unity as Neibuhr [37] supports this view, when he asserts that, a sense of common ethnic kinship, geographical unity and contiguity, a common historical experience and frame of political thought, are a common area of economic mutuality and sometimes the fear of a common foe.

The foregoing is a short description of the Luhya religious beliefs and social structures prior to the advent of the European missionaries into Busia District. These social structures are still upheld in some areas. These structures were arranged for integrative function that is providing a solid moral code for holding together, the family, the clan, and the ethnic group and the entire society by providing the required religious, economic, social and political stability for the survival of the society at large. However, today some of these Luhya social structures are still being upheld, and practiced, others have changed with the coming of the Catholic Church in Busia District, while others have been modified by Luhya Christians and Christian missionaries.

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