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## Research Article

## Implications of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on the Stability of the Luo Cultural Funeral Ceremonies in Kenya

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**Abstract:** The paper reveals the circumstances that may cause change in the Luo cultural funeral practices. One such circumstance is the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 is a global issue however it has a great impact on the Luo cultural funeral ceremonies that were basically considered very extravagant and economically impoverishing the bereaved families. The paper therefore revisits some funeral practices world over that can give the community some insights into what can be adapted to ease this endemic burden. Therefore, the study clearly demonstrates that changes in cultural rites can be as a result of some causal factors such as disease pandemics, wars, infusion of religious customs and ancestral deeds among others. In this regard, changing the Luo cultural funeral ceremonies is inevitable.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus (Covid-19), pandemic, Luo, cultural funeral ceremonies

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### INTRODUCTION

According to the findings of a team of professional researchers released in March 2020 in a journal pre-proof version article of the *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents*, Gautret, Lagier, Parola, Hoang, Meddeb, Mailhe, Doudier, Courjon, Giordanengo, Vieira, Dupont, Honoré, Colson, Chabrière, la Scola, Rolain, Brouqui, and Raoult (2020) reveal that COVID-19 is an emerging global respiratory disease. The outbreak of COVID-19 is traced to Wuhan city in the populous country of China probably in December, 2019. By 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, the World Health Organization (henceforth referred to as WHO) declared COVID-19 as an epidemic. Since its emergence, the disease has spread tremendously in many parts of the world covering countries and nations far away from China. Now the disease is all over the world in Europe, Asia, America and Africa among other continents.

The disease has caused health practitioners and researchers sleepless nights in order to discover a lasting panacea to this menace. However, some current and credible antiviral research findings have revealed that chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine can probably be used as its medication (Touret & de Lamballerie, 2020). This is further corroborated by Gautret *et al.*, (2020) that results of an open-label non-randomized

clinical trial carried out in the month of March this year 2020 proved that if hydroxychloroquine is reinforced with azithromycin then there is a resultant reduction of the viral load amongst the COVID-19 patients. In the global discussions regarding its cure, many research findings have been pulled out from various scientific archives in an attempt to prove that extractions of some substances from black tea had been effective in the treatment of related viruses. For instance, *theaflavin* substance extracted from black tea has an antiviral activity against influenza A and B, human *rotovirus* of group A strains and poliovirus, and also neutralizes bovine rotovirus and corona-virus infections (Klark, Grant, Sarr, Belakere, Swaggerty, Phillips & Woode, 1998).

The disease has had a great negative impact not only to the economy of many countries but also to the political and social stability of their citizens. One of these countries is Kenya. The disease encounter was announced by the Cabinet Secretary of Health, Hon. Mutahi Kagwe in his press statement of mid March, 2020 and by 26<sup>th</sup> of the same month, the first corona-virus patient died. The patient had other underlying ailments and had travelled from South Africa via Swaziland. This death touched the seat and the heart of the President who convened an urgent cabinet meeting and later issued a statement loaded with orders and directives to help control the spread of COVID-19 in

Kenya. His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, gave a Presidential Address on the State Interventions to cushion Kenyans against economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.

In this address, the President informed his fellow citizens that the COVID-19 had spread to over 184 countries with many cases of infections reported. This therefore forced him to give a myriad of orders and directives to the citizens. Some of them were as follows: 100% tax relief for persons earning Kenya Shillings 24, 000 per month; reduction of income tax from 30% to 25%; appropriation of additional Kenya Shillings 10 Billions to the elderly, orphans and the vulnerable members of the society to cushion them from economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic; payment of pending bills; washing hands frequently with hand sanitizers or soap and water for at least 20 seconds; covering our noses and mouths when coughing and sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow; avoiding close contacts with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms; and also keeping social distancing. He further, directed that effective from Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, a daily curfew lasting from 7pm in the night to 5am in the morning be imposed and immediately followed within the territory of the Republic of Kenya with only movements allowed to persons authorized to do so. Such persons include medical professionals, health workers, critical and essential services providers who are the only ones permitted to operate between those hours.

The President concluded that the most effective way of limiting the spread of the virus is through the urgent change in behavior and hygiene. These orders and directives therefore informed the composition of press releases by governors of various counties and other state agencies on rules and regulations that county-folks must follow. For example, the Chief Executive Officer of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board within the Ministry of Health released a stern warning on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 prohibiting all pharmacies and chemists from dispensing chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine medicines that were reportedly being purchased in a hurry by many Kenyans to be used as a prophylaxis against COVID-19 disease. This warning was occasioned by the fact that further clinical trials on these medicines were still going on worldwide thus Kenyans were to wait for the final reports from WHO.

County governments also released rules and regulations that included immediate suspension of social gatherings such as weddings, sporting, night clubs, seminars, funerals and all places of worship. In regard to the suspension of social gatherings, many churches and denominations followed the order not

only in Kenya but also all over the world. In addition, a directive from The County Government of Kisumu enforced the immediate removal of deceased persons from the hospital and subsequent burial within 48 hours. Further, only close relatives approximately fifteen or twenty or less to be allowed at the burial site with no flashy funeral ceremonies that include serving food and drinks. Many communities that used to have night vigils before dispensing the dead were therefore forced to remove such bodies from the morgue and bury immediately the same day. One such community is the Luo of Kenya. This order has not only affected Luos in Kisumu County but also other Luo counties such as Homa Bay, Migori and Siaya.

These orders and directives to combat the spread of COVID-19 have had a great impact on the economic, political and social well being of many persons not only in Kenya but also world over. Therefore, this thesis intends to assess the implications the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the stability of cultural funeral ceremonies amongst the Luo community of Kenya. In order to accomplish this task, the work covers the following sub sections: the Luo community, a glimpse of funeral ceremonies in the selected nations and cultures in the world, the Luo cultural funeral ceremonies, and the probable implications caused by COVID-19 amongst the Luo community.

## THE LUO COMMUNITY

Luo is a tribe within the Nilotic group in Kenya. Members of this ethnic group speak Dholuo as a native language which is one of the Nilo-Saharan languages spoken majorly in the East African region (Tucker, 1994). The Luos inhabit areas along the Lake Victoria of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (Tucker, 1994; Odaga, 1997; Kokwaro, 1998). The ethnic group relates linguistically with other Nilo-Saharan language speaking communities in other countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad (McOnyango, 1997; Webb & Kembo, 2000). Current estimate indicates that over 12 million people speak Dholuo related languages in Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Tanzania (King'ei, 2010). Luos inhabit four main counties of Kenya: Siaya, Kisumu, Homa Bay and Migori. Recent Kenya's national census indicates that Luos are slightly over 5Million people.

Luos of Kenya are divided into four big clans: Jo-Kajok, Jo-Kowiny, Jo-Komolo and Luo-Abasuba (Tucker, 1994; Odaga, 1997; Kokwaro, 1998). However, the smaller sub clans include: *Jo-Gem*, *Jo-Seme*, *Jo-Karachuonyo*, *Jo-Yimbo*, *Jo-Kajulu*, *Jo-Ugenya*, *Jo-Nyakach*, *Jo-Mumbo* (*Kasipul and Kabondo*), *Jo-Kisumo*, *Jo-Asembo*, *Jo-Uyoma*, *Jo-Kanyamkago*, *Jo-Karungu*, *Jo-Kasgunga*, *Jo-Kanyamwa*, *Jo-Kwabwai*, *Jo-Kadem*, *Jo-Sakwa*, *Jo-*

*Alego, Jo-Kano, Jo-Kanyada, Jo-Kanyidoto, Jo-Kamgundho, Jo-Kamagambo, Jo-Ramogi, Jo-Chula/Jo-Abasuba, Jo-Kabwoch, Jo-Kanyikela, Jo-Kochia, Jo-Kagan and Jo-Kogelo* (Ayot, 1976-1978; Wikipedia, 2013). These sub clans have almost similar cultural beliefs with some minor modifications due to Christianity and also their geographical placements.

### **A Glimpse of Funeral Ceremonies In The World**

Funeral ceremonies are common practices amongst various communities world over. However, the degree of practice tends to vary especially with more private ceremonies in Europe and America as opposed to the public ones experienced in Africa. In this section, we intend to have a glimpse of some funeral ceremonies among the Jews, selected European nations and Africa in order to give us a clear foregrounding on Luo cultural funeral ceremonies. Gilad (2015) explains that earlier, the Jews used to bury the dead in the cemeteries with bodies lowered in the grave after being wrapped by a shroud without a coffin unless prominent personalities. However, under the influence of Greeks and Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Jewish burial became very costly and extravagant. There was also a group named '*Chevra Kadisha*' that was a non-profit making society that was voluntarily formed to bury the dead together with the close family members. The group was tasked with the responsibility of burying the dead while the other members of the community continue with their daily chores. The burial was very simple and the bereaved were supplied with food from visitors during the mourning period.

The Jewish burial was basically made as simple as the ones shown in various Biblical books. For example, the burials of Ananias and his wife Sapphira whose bodies were wrapped by some young men and buried immediately (Acts 5:1-11). Other burials in the Bible were also very simple and immediate. According to the Jewish Virtual Library (1998-2020), the Jews tended to burry immediately as a respect to the dead since this refreshes the soul of the deceased before admission to God's presence. This tendency can also be witnessed in the simple burial of Abel the son of Adam and Eve whereby the raven (a large bird of the crow family) showed them how to scratch away a spot on the earth surface where it had also interred one of its kin. There was also simple burial of Sarah the wife of Abraham (Genesis, 23), burial of Rachel and that of Isaac done by Esau and Jacob (Genesis, 35:19-29), and also the nil ceremonial burial of Jesus Christ (Luke 23: 50-56; John 19: 38-42).

According to Association for Free Research and International Cooperation henceforth referred to as AFRIC (2019), funerals in Europe and America tend to be private ceremonies while in many communities in Africa they are like public celebrations attended by family, relatives, community and others. The Europeans

and Americans have no loud cries, singing and dancing, and feasting during funerals. Burial is for the close family members and friends. The service is very short and burial may be either by cremation or interment in the grave. In West Africa, a country like Ghana, funeral ceremonies exhibit extravagant or very costly venture consuming about 15,000 USD to 20,000 USD especially for the affluent and famous families. The funeral ceremony is done basically on Saturdays to allow more mourners to attend.

Funerals are party-like in Nigeria amongst the wealthy families whereby there are singing and dancing. Heavy feasting is witnessed before and even after burial to signify a befitting send off. However, the Muslim community bury immediately with no expensive feasting. This tendency in Nigeria is also common in Cameroon. In South Africa and especially amongst the Xhosa tribe, there is normally a night vigil in the homestead of the deceased. During mourning period, a cow, an ox, or a goat is sacrificed and the meet given to mourners. After burial, friends and well-wishers visit again the deceased homestead where feasting celebrations are conducted. Funeral ceremonies take place immediately after the passing on of a member in the Northern African countries that are dominantly Muslims. Women and children are not allowed at the funeral service and the body is normally buried soonest.

In Kenya, very extravagant funeral ceremonies are witnessed amongst the Luo and Luhya communities. These communities still practice night vigils at the deceased homestead and enjoy elaborated feasting before and after burial. We have physically observed such feastings among the Luos and Luyhas who are neighbors of the Luo community. Kamba community also has funeral ceremonies (Penwill, 2005:23) though not as elaborate and expensive as witnessed in western part of Kenya. Other communities like Kalenjin, Turkana, Samburu, Kikuyu, Ekegusii and also the coastal dwellers among others comparatively have moderate funeral ceremonies unless it is a ceremony for the rich and famous. In many of these communities night vigils are minimized or not at all thus the body is removed from the morgue and interred the same day.

From this glimpse, we can conclude that funeral ceremonies in the west are very short, private and avoid feastings. However, African communities tend to have public funeral ceremonies that are flashy, full of prolonged feastings and having long services. This is normally so because African communities tend to consider each other as extended family and therefore a person's pain is shared by the whole community (AFRIC, 2019).

### **The Luo Cultural Funeral Ceremonies**

The Luo cultural funeral ceremony is basically public. In this regard, Luo burials therefore affect not only the family but also the entire community (Exploring Africa, 2020) just like any other communities in Kenya and Africa. The ceremony involves a lot of feasting however amount of food for feasting depends on the ability of the family of the deceased, friends and relatives (Kisiara, 1998). In addition, a successful Luo funeral is the one where there were many attendees and plenty of food (Kisiara, 1998). Because of this, the Luo funeral ceremony is considered the most extravagant of all and the dead is customarily honored on a lavish scale (Vasagar, 2004) despite the church leaders' and other stakeholder's persistent advice on this. Because of this extravagant nature, it is regarded as the largest and outstanding Luo ceremony lasting for days with provisions of food and drinks (Herbich, 2013). Luos generally bury to show respect to the departed (Frazer Consultants, 2019) just like other communities, and also because of fear of the wrath of the deceased who is therefore normally appeased during the elaborate flow of burial rites (Herbich, 2013; Exploring Africa, 2020). The funeral ceremony is normally attended by family, close relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbors, well-wishers, church and even passerby (Kisiara, 1998).

Though Luo funeral ceremony has somehow currently transformed due to Christianity and modernism, there are some key rituals that were performed and are still being embraced by other strict traditionalists. These rituals are espoused in the writing of Paul Mboya's *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* as: death announcement (*lendo*), night vigil (*budho*), grave digging (*kunyo*), burial (*iko*), accompanying the spirit of the deceased to the former battleground (*tero buru matin*), shaving (*liedo*), departure of mourners (*kee*), serving meal to the deceased and the family (*yawo dhoot*), going again to the former battleground with the spirit of the deceased (*tero buru maduong*), visiting the natal home (*tero chola*), dividing the belongings of the deceased (*keyo nyinyo*), remembrance (*rapar*), and serving a meal to the deceased by the close relatives (*budho*) (Shiino, 1997; Obura, 2019; Exploring Africa, 2020). However, with modernism and Christianity, a few rituals are currently followed such as announcement, vigil, grave digging, burial, departure of mourners and may be remembrance. Burial rituals generally depended on many factors such as the deceased sex and age, marital status, social status, religious beliefs, circumstances of death, the actions of the dead when still alive, ancestor's traditions and where the deceased lived (Frazer Consultants, 2019).

Mourning the dead in the Luo community is not a sin since other social experts for example Jacques Derrida (1998) as cited by Gunga (2009) had also revealed that generally the basis of friendship is

mourning and marriage between husband and wife is temporal therefore ends at death. Thus death is a feared occurrence not only among Luos but also in all cultures over the world (Gunga, 2009). Burial among the Luos was normally supposed to start at 2pm (Shiino, 1997) and ends at 4pm (Frazer Consultants, 2019). However, currently programs start early therefore one may be buried before these stipulated times or later in the evening. The burial program was well designed including among others the following: speeches about the deceased by parents, brothers, sisters, children and friends; small fund raising regarded as donations to cover expenses for lamp, oil, food and other items consumed during the occasion; political and administrative speeches; and finally interment of the body into the grave (Shiino, 1997). This donation or fund raising during funeral ceremony is not even equivalent to the treatment and burial expenses. Mourners were allowed in Luo funeral ceremonies to weep, dance and sing as a way of chasing away the spirits of death (Exploring Africa, 2020). Though, the ceremony looks expensive, other proponents of this trend tend to support the scenario citing various benefits. Therefore, Luo funeral ceremonies are deemed to have numerous benefits like sharing the meals bring people together and reintegrating the deceased to the next world (Kisiara, 1998).

### **Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic to Luo Cultural Funeral Ceremonies**

Archaeological reports have revealed that death has various impacts on cultures, behaviors, beliefs and attitudes (Gunga, 2009). In this regard, rites, rituals and activities surrounding death have tended to have various impacts: firstly, generating economic or material exchanges and social components as witnessed in singing, dancing, playing music and eating, and secondly, providing a good occasion for expressing feelings, telling stories, giving testimonies and speeches among others (Kisiara, 1998). Though we may get such listed benefits of participating in cultural funeral ceremonies, some unavoidable circumstances may inhibit the ceremony. A clear case is the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent orders, directives, and rules and regulations released from various leaderships and authorities. With the pandemic, Luos have tended to follow the orders whereby the deceased is normally removed from the morgue and buried immediately the same day against the cultural norm of having a vigil. This is a bitter pill to swallow by the staunch traditionalist of the burial cultural rites.

With the few Luo cultural funeral ceremonies witnessed during this pandemic and the imposed curfew, bodies are being interred immediately. We have not had any opposition from the more politicized and anti-agent of change council of elders like the Luo Council of Elders and the much listened to programs in the local radio stations teaching Luos on their traditions. These groups

have kept quiet because of the occurrence of unimaginable. Other Luo traditionalists and quasi religious persons are also following the trends without questioning. The trend is also a reprieve to quite a number of Luos we have talked to and even those who have been bereaved during this period. The interviewed have stated that it is their wish to continue with the same trend even when the COVID-19 pandemic is over. That is the trend of removing the dead from the morgue and burying immediately the same day with minimal numbers of attendees basically the close family, and without any flashy feasting. The main reason being that having night vigils before and after burial impoverish the bereaved family.

Some bereaved persons have indicated that they have been forced by their various clans to contribute a cow as a sacrificial animal to be slaughtered before the burial. This has forced some to sell pieces of land, rental houses and any other only remaining property to offset the funeral expenses. This trend is also elaborately castigated in a Kiswahili realistic novel titled *Paradiso* by Habwe (2005) in which he is trying to explain the condition the bereaved undergo in a fictional case in Budalangi. In this book, a character named Mango has just lost his first wife Apondi and without any show of sympathy Mango is told to bring some items for the funeral. The list include a cow to be slaughtered, a goat to be given to the bereaved father whose daughter has died, 20 kilograms of sugar, 5 litres of cooking oil and also Kenya shillings 5,000. This is a precondition to Mango before burial. It is unbelievable that the condition is plainly forced by Mama Selina who is an elder of the Budalangi Church of God. The trend happens also in the Luo community. Sometimes you may sympathize with the bereaved.

The current scenario in the Luo community of burying the same day the dead is removed from the morgue with minimal feasting is a wakeup call to the ardent adherents of this cultural practice. What could be silently boiling in the stomachs of many Luos is the fear of the unknown that if the dead is buried the same day and without feasting then what would happen in the future. This is because feasting during a Luo cultural funeral ceremony has been regarded as a way of appeasing the dead (Vasagar, 2004) and reintegrating the dead to the next world (Kisiara, 1998). There is also a belief that the dead changes to a very powerful and intelligent spirit after burial more than when he was still alive (Okoth, 2002). In addition, it is claimed that if the burial was not honorable especially without following the laid down burial rites that majorly included feasting then the dead may change to a dreaded evil spirit (*jachien*) (Okoth, 2002).

This evil spirit may therefore disturb the bereaved close family and the community around. From this context, it is very clear that Luo customs and

practices are majorly motivated by the fear of the world of spirit that has powers especially if anything good is not done to them despite the existence of the Supreme Being called God (Okoth, 2002). The belief is not only in the minds of the traditionalist but also in the minds of religious leaders and churches. That is the reason why though Christianity exists in the Luo community, the same Christians tend to practice syncretism whereby there is an adaptation of Christian beliefs on one hand and the Luo cultural beliefs on the other (Okoth, 2002). It will be noted that in many Luo cultural funeral ceremonies, the cultural practices tend to take place in broad day light in the eyes of the religious leaders. This is because religious beliefs among Luos are hybrid in nature thus combining traditional and Christian beliefs (Catholic, Protestants and Independent African Churches like Roho and Legio Maria) (Herbich, 2013). Even adherents of the rigid Euro-American Christian churches tend to maintain and or adapt the Luo traditional beliefs and practices except alcoholism and common witchcrafts (Herbich, 2013). In fact, some clergy normally ask if a certain cultural procedure has been performed before burial. In addition, instead of religious service taking a bigger percentage of time during burials, other unnecessary speeches from friends, relatives, political class and even administration take so many hours leaving the clergy with few minutes to the physical burial of the dead.

Quick burial due to COVID-19 has got a spiral effect even on the untaxed businesses of the so called catering service groups famously known as '*JoKata*'. Many women and men have formed small units to provide catering services at the homestead of the deceased. Therefore, with this condition, the trade is adversely affected. Remember, these are groups that have been demanding very high levies for the funeral ceremonies. In fact, the groups can be considered silently as the force behind the very extravagant Luo cultural funeral ceremonies. Some groups are paid up to about Kenya Shillings 300, 000 but depending also with the social status of the deceased. Other affected groups are photographers who used to have a market day during burials. There were also other small traders selling fruits, drinks, newspapers, and even cereals. The music providers normally referred to as '*disco matanga*' who used to entertain at a fee during funeral ceremonies have their economic gates shuttered. This could also affect the inheritors for they don't know what killed the deceased. It is also a big blow to the motorcycle operators who used to mint money from the mourners attending the funeral ceremonies. Political class is also affected because it is in such gatherings that they used to have their political attacks and propagandas and also lying to the congregation about unseen projects. The loitering groups that used to have feast day have their plans thwarted. Illicit brew sellers also have lost a market for their drinks that were properly sold during night vigils before burial.

It should not be considered as a time bomb of a curse from the dead that the Luo cultural funeral ceremony has not been properly conducted during this period of COVID-19. It is noteworthy to understand that cultural practices have changed from time to time not only amongst the Luos but also in other communities all over the world. A change in the Luo cultural funeral ceremony or rite is not the first to occur amongst the Luos. Therefore, changes of Luo rituals can be circumstantial that means that they occur due to circumstances that may be unavoidable. In this regard, there are many more cultural practices that have been accepted and life goes on as usual. Some are due to pandemics, wars, religious customs and ancestral deeds among others.

Disease outbreak like the COVID-19 has caused a change in the Luo cultural funeral ceremonies whereby the dead is buried immediately the same day after being removed from the morgue. This used to happen even during cholera outbreaks and other mysterious deaths caused by unknown pathogens. Historically, wars forced clans to migrate from one area to the other. In the process, the moving clan tends to adapt the new practice of the people in the new area while at the same time tends to drop or mould the old practice. For instance, there was war of expansion between Rachuonyo and the Wanga of the Luhya ethnic group that led to the movement of Rachuonyo from central Nyanza to the Southern Nyanza (Ayot, 1976-1978). A critical look at this shows that there are many cultural practices that the Southern Nyanza clans have adapted, for example, in-laws are allowed to enter into the homestead of the deceased mother or father in-law before he or she is buried something that is still prohibited in many clans in Central Nyanza.

Religious customs have also changed some of the Luo cultural practices. It is a noticeable fact and trend that many Luos have left the initiation of males by removing six lower teeth. However, some adherents of the Legio Maria church still practice this. Instead of removing the six lower teeth of the young male Luo, some Luos have resorted to circumcision as witnessed amongst the Johanna Owalo's Nomiya Church and also other Independent African Churches in the Luo community. Some religious denominations have also tended to infuse the Luo cultural funeral rituals into their religious practices. A case in point is the Roho Church that tends to follow the Biblical doctrines but also traditionalize them into the African context. For example, they have 'chier' or small harambee collected for the sake of the bereaved family, and also "suda" which is like 'tero buru' but in this case the worshippers go to holy place to chase evil spirits while putting on their Roho regalia (Shiino, 1997).

Ancestral deeds have a subsequent change of rituals. For instance, if an ancestor left out an item or something then the subsequent ceremonies also try as much as possible to avoid it. This was witnessed in Kanyamwa of Homa Bay county in which people stopped killing a cock during the procession of expelling spirit to the former battlefield (*tero buru*) because some forefathers forgot to carry one during the burial of one man called Oswago (Shiino, 1997). The Kagan people who settled in Kanyamwa also had an ancestor who was an ardent member of an African Independent Christian Church who died and his brother did not kill a cock during his burial because the church doctrines forbade this (Shiino, 1997). The practice was therefore discarded. This has influenced many more Luo sub clans.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has clearly indicated that circumstances cause a big change in the cultural practices. The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has a serious implication on the Luo cultural funeral ceremonies. The implication is for the economic good of the community by avoiding extravagant funeral expenses instead have an affordable funeral attended by a smaller congregation. The notion of a befitting burial should follow the practices like that of the Jews, burials witnessed in the Bible, and always try to allow the religious people to have final service to the dead then burial follows immediately. There should be minimal or nil feasting during funeral ceremonies. In addition, the paper has clearly proved that changes in Luo cultural practices is not a reinvention of the wheel but is an occurrence embraced and adapted. Some of the causal factors are disease pandemics, wars, infusion of religious customs and ancestral deeds among others.

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