



# Burial and Exhumation of Human Relics by the Wakiyoso Ethnic Group in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania: Revisiting the Ritual and Its Relevance

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**Abstract:** This study assesses the burial and exhumation of human relics practised by the Wakiyoso ethnic group in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, and looks for the relevance of this practise, namely rituals. It employs multivariate technics qualitative and constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) employing interpretivist paradigms to study the population. The criterion sampling was employed to select respondents by, age and social status, the study involved 80 respondents with age range of 50 to 100 years old. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), direct observation, and a questionnaire. The collected data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively through narrative description. The findings indicated that rituals of burial and exhumation evolved with time and were common to the Wakiyoso ethnic group. It was further found that exhumation was relevant economically, psychologically, ecologically, and ontologically. The study recommends that this practice be formalised and extended, especially to urban and highly populous areas, in order to mitigate burial land scarcity. The practise is not only economically vital, but it will also improve health and aid in environmental conservation because of the straightforward burial followed by exhumation. It will limit the number of burials and free up land for other lucrative uses. It was also suggested that more research be done on the introduction of burial and exhumation practice in both publicly owned and religiously affiliated cemeteries.

**Keywords:** Burial, Death, Exhumation, Human relics, Rituals, Wakiyoso

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this study was to examine the rituals of burial and exhumation to show its relevance. This research focused on the Wakiyoso, a Chagga sub-ethnic group in Moshi. This is a rural tribe that, despite having embraced other religions, mainly Christianity and Islam, continues to practise traditional rites and rituals and is noted for ancestor veneration, which includes the exhumation of human relics (Hasu, 2009). Burial in this study will be used to mean putting the human corpse or the dead in the hollow,

ditch, or hole made in the ground. It is also proper by "depositing in the earth, a grave, or a tomb, by consigning to the water, or by exposing to the elements or carrion-consuming animals according to a given geography, religion, and social system, as all these influence burial practices (Gorlinsk & Lotha, 2018). On the other hand exhumation which is derived from the Latin word "exhume", which means "from the ground," refers to the removal of human remains from any place of burial (Humayun, Khichi, Chand, & Khan, 2010). It is a phenomenon that has not been preserved in north European cultures but that can, in the light of treated bones or

incomplete skeletons in the graves of the Bronze and Iron Ages, be assumed to have at one time existed even in Estonia. In cultures where exhumation has remained a living practise up to the present the Greek culture, the rituals was accompanied by laments (Arukask, 2011). Human relics in this study means human remains or leftovers after burial. Remains may be found in many forms. At the most basic level, a relic is a material object that relates to a particular individual and/or to events and places (Walsham, 2010). Specifically in this study it means human body remains.

Every aspect of life has its own rituals, which make them relevant in every culture, including death (Joseph, 2011). The rituals related to death are intricate when one wants to define the concept of death because there is no one accepted philosophy. Aristotle described death as the soul being released from the body. The Greek word *κεκμηκοτες* (*kekmēkotes*) as used by Aristotle denoted that the dead are "the ones who have completed their labour" (Pritzl, 1983). Contrary to his master Plato, Aristotle maintained that "the soul, being a form of the living body, perishes with the organism at death".

The soul's separation from the body feels like an escape from a place where it is only capable of understanding the greatest truth or knowledge. When a person passes away, their soul is freed (Begum & Mushtaq, 2016). The freed soul, according to Plato and his master Socrates, is in a condition of apprehending the whole truth, as there is no more use of the senses of the body. This is echoed in the Pauline theology in 1 Corinthians 13:12. The Apostle Paul says that our knowledge now is like that which we see when we look at an object far away, with a fuzzy and indistinct form. When this dispensation is over, we shall see a man as you see a man when you stand before him (Ellicott, 1897). Because the soul is a part of the composite, death only kills the body, not the soul. Consequently, the soul cannot be destroyed by death if it is included in a composite, since it is indestructible (Jeff, 2006). The Old Testament (OT) uses the Hebrew word *māwet* 150 times to refer to death, the natural end of human life.

It was, and still is, in Judaism and Christianity that death is God's judgement. In the New Testament the Greek term *thanatos* is used in the scripture to signify, firstly, the separation of the soul from the body, rendering the latter functionless and decomposing into dust (Vine, Unger, & White, 1984). See John 11:13; Heb. 2:155:7; 7:23. Secondly, *thanatos* means the separation of man from God. The separation from God took place immediately after Adam disobeyed God. In this sense, the offspring of Adam are born in the state of death, which is to be separated from God (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12, 14, 17, and 21). In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, death is "viewed as the penal consequence" (Vine, et. al.1984). Among the Bantu-speaking people, there are both physical and moral

deaths. "Death can be of the body because the soul is no longer there." A person as a whole is dead when he no longer has good relationships with other ontological members or principles. "Moral death occurs when a person acts contrary to what is believed to be obligatory" (Mwacha, 2013). In this study, an emphasis is placed on physical death, which means the body stops functioning and needs further actions, including exposing it ritually.

Since burial and exhumation are mere rituals in the rite of passage to death, the term "rituals" refers to what is done during the rite of death. It employs all burial and exhumation ritual series. The rituals of burial and exhumation in the context of the present study mean that the two concepts are deliberate and linked together to form a compound concept, which makes the research problem, remain indivisibly one. It means that after burial rituals, everything stays at the threshold of exhumation rituals. Therefore, to do with the process of mortuary and post-mortem apprehensions, exhumation is obligatory.

The rationale of studying rituals cannot be over emphasised, it is a study of a crucial phenomenon recognizing that disowning rituals serve to isolate a person from themselves and others (Joseph, 2011), the Wakyiwoso, like most other Africans, are communally connected practically by a series of rites and rituals that mark their human development or milestone.

While medical, legal-medical, and archaeological practises of exhumation are common in many societies in the world, this study aims at a rather novel type of exhumation after the burial that is associated with mortuary and post-mortem rituals. When rituals of exhumation as a fulfilment of the burial process are not popular, on the other hand, there are many examples of medical-legal or forensic exhumations undertaken in the world.

## 2. Literature Review

This section reviews literature related to burial and Exhumation practice from around Africa. It starts with theoretical analysis and ends with the burial and exhumation practices.

### 2.1 Theoretical Analysis

The purpose of this theoretical review was to examine the corpus of theories that have accumulated regarding an issue, concept, theory, or phenomenon of ritual. It helps to establish what theories already exist, their relationships, and to what degree the theories have been investigated (USC Libraries, 2019). However, for many years, the search for ritual explanations remained in religion and theology. No religious ritual theory is complete without a philosophical explanatory framework. The analytic philosopher's demands for rigour, clarity,

comprehensiveness, and systematisation have yet to be met (Sokol, 1980). It may be examined using semantics, which this study acknowledges may not resolve all philosophical issues. Even if a theory could analyse the contextual meanings or abstract forms of ritual activities, theories of semantics or syntax would fail to account for the dynamism and effectiveness of ritual activity (Kreinath, 2005).

Staal (1979), first proposed the notion that ritual has no more than semantic meaning. In his 1979 essay "The Meaninglessness of Ritual" According to Staal, an expert in Indian rituals, if we wish to know the meaning or theory of ritual, we should not confine ourselves to practising rituals; after all, we have learned that it does not pay to ask elephants about zoology or artists about the theory of art. Let's take a look first, though, before we ask anyone else. Staal (1979), on the researcher's view, has the stand that, as an elephant in the zoo who knows nothing about zoology because it is just living in it, the ritualists, or those involved in the ritual, do not know what they are doing. They are just performing it because they feel like having to do so for no reason. If this is admitted, it will place humans on the same level as irrational beasts. Note his words:

I shall not bother about these differences. My view is that ritual is for its own sake. To say that a ritual is for its own sake is to say that it is meaningless, without function, aim, or goal, or that it constitutes its aim or goal. It does not follow that it has no value, but whatever value it has is intrinsic value (Staal, 1979).

The study argues that to understand the development of rituals of burial and exhumation, one needs a theory that is broad and complete and has the ability to account for the two phenomena at hand. Secondly, if there is no such theory, there should be one for the first phenomenon and another for the second phenomenon. Hence, there is a need for a theory or a model that explains the ritual of burial and the exhumation of human relics and their dynamism. The model needs consider the philosophical and environmental issues of both phenomena.

According to Sokol (1980), theories are developed to explain certain classes of phenomena, but what about phenomena that need accounting for? The intellectual route taken to account for them largely depends upon the questions the theoretician asks himself as he sets out on his inquiry. Sokol (1980) calls this "question-dependence" (Sokol, 1980). The phenomenon in this study is one "ritual" with two minor phenomena, namely *p1* (burial) and *p2* (exhumation). According to this study, research questions are more crucial than existing theories in philosophical inquiry since all theories are derived from questions, but not all theories can address all questions. This is partially represented in Sokol (1980). According to Sokol (1980), a theory is lacking if it does not address all

pertinent queries regarding the phenomena it claims to explain.

For example, a theory established, *t*, which adequately answers *q1*, but not *q2*, or *q3*, is a satisfactory account of *p1... pn* only for *q1*, but not for *q2* and *q3*. This is true if there are, for example, three relevant sets of questions, *q1*, *q2*, and *q3*, which may be appropriately posed about a range of phenomena, *p1... pn*. Despite being successful in addressing *q1*, *t* is not a complete (or even appropriate) representation of *p1... pn* if there are reasons to think that questions 2 and 3 must be addressed before *p1... pn* can be entirely (or even adequately) accounted for. As a result, the concerns that a theory must address in order to be complete dictate its final form (Sokol, 1980).

### **Burial and Exhumation as Ritual and Practice**

The scope of this subsection is limited to the extent to which it may cover the global development of the practice of burial and exhumation, as the rituals are different, not from one nation to another, but from one ethnic group to another. Bearing this in mind, the researcher selects a few cultures from around the world to rummage through the historical development of the rituals of burial and where applicable, exhumation of the human relics. In Europe exhumation was mainly for legal medical purposes. The study by Breitmeier, Graefe-Kirci, Albrecht, Weber, Tröger, & Kleemann (2005) was carried out not as a ritual per se but as an attempt to determine how long pathological findings persist after burial and which factors play a role in the decomposition of a corpse. According to Garcia, Perez-Sales, and Fernandez-Lina (2010), they have been classified into four categories: collective genocide (Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, and Peru, to name a few), individuals detained and disappeared as a result of government policies (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Paraguay), Collective aggression (Venezuela, Mexico, and Panama) and Selected executions in democratic regimes (Ecuador and Honduras). On the other hand, the native people had a ritual associated with the exhuming of human relics. A study was carried out by Millaire (2004), which highlighted the dynamic nature of Moche mortuary activity while stressing the important role of those in charge of manipulating ancestors' remains. In New Zealand, according to Hera (1995), exhumation occurs one or two years after the first burial among the *Aotearoa* (the Maori term for New Zealand) (Hera, 1995); while in the Roman Catholic Church Exhumation is in the core of sainthood process.

## **Burial and Exhumation as Ritual and Practice in West Africa**

According to Humayun et.al., (2010), once the body or remains have been entered or cremated into the ground if there is any reason to require an examination, removal, or disturbance of the remains, an exhumation licence or order will be required. Burial followed by exhumation was performed in few countries in exceptional circumstances. Exhumation was carried out for forensic and legal reasons in Nigeria (Nnoli, Nwabuko, Ebughe, & Omotoso, 2013). Though exhumations were conducted were not directly related to this study and the ritual used was profession dictated with medical and legal principles. However, it revealed the concern Africans accord to their deceased ones. Also, it indicates that there are circumstance where the dead are allowed to exhume.

## **Exhumation as Ritual and Practice in East Africa**

In Rwanda, exhumation was carried out in Rwanda to pay tribute to individuals who died in the genocide as well as for forensic considerations (O'Brien, 2011). Indeed, international tribunals and international justice have been characterised as requiring two key elements: the power to apprehend perpetrators and the ability to get evidence against them. Without *prima facie* evidence that there is a case to answer, indictments and trials do not go on (O'Brien, 2011).

In Burundi, (Purdeková, 2017), looks into unofficial memorial activities, interactions with memory sites, and the fate of the materiality of memory—mass grave sites and their remains—in the context of Burundi's stalled transitional justice process. The report looks at three specific instances of violence in Burundi. The study concludes with observations on recent events, particularly whether the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2014 signals a decisive break with the past.

Equally, studies have made significant contributions since they are based on a very close environment, being African by nature, and demonstrate the very African concern for the deceased and filial bonds valued beyond physical life. These investigations, however, are among the few extensively disseminated scholarly publications on exhumation in the continent. The studies, however, show that exhumation was undertaken for legal purposes rather than a common practise of rituals as employed by Wakiyoso.

## **Exhumation as Ritual and Practice in Tanzania**

Literature in Rituals of Burial and Exhumation of Human Relics (RBEHR) can be found in Tanzania in the fields of

forensics, archaeology, and rituals. Brown & Migliaccio (2012) investigated exhumation in the context of archaeological discoveries at Songo Mnara. Being purely archaeological study, it informed this study that the exhumation was legal in Tanzania not only for rituals of ethnic groups but as well as for other purposes. Only a few studies known in Tanzania that deal with RBEHR to name the more recent ones are those by Kessy, (2002) and Mwacha, (2013). However, the studies did not cover the relevance issues. Kessy (2002) was concerned mainly about burial liturgy of the Christians to integrate the traditional burial rituals, while Mwacha (2013) was concerned about the state of man after physical death.

This study is aware of different cultures where post-mortem rituals include burying in certain styles but without exhuming. Saying "different culture" does not mean everywhere and all-time, as in human history, rituals of burial have been practised from ancient times by different cultures with different perspectives. Questions about whether these burial and exhumation rituals have any relevance or hold in modern society, that is, questions about their scientific merit, are worth pursuing in and of themselves.

## **Modern Rituals of Burial and the Ecology**

According to (Plenke, 2016), tens of millions of the world's 7.4 billion people will die each year. Some will be burned, while millions will be buried beside tonnes of steel, wood, and poisonous embalming fluid. As the world's population rises, so does the population just beneath its surface, rendering the ground unfit for fresh growth. The chemicals used to embalm the bodies are hazardous, and they find their way into underground water and subsequently into drinking water sources. "Embalming fluid is enough to fill a tiny swimming pool in a standard ten-acre cemetery" (Blakemore, 2016). Tonnes of cement, concrete, and plastics are poured into the ground every day. One of the consequences is that the land becomes unusable for development. Agriculture cannot be carried out on the graves, and natural vegetation is extinguished for centuries.

The food chain is broken by modern burial, which is a Western tradition. A food chain is a sequence of organisms that eat one another in order for energy and nutrients to move from one to the next, according to Khan Academy. If you had a hamburger for lunch, for example, you might be a member of a food chain that looks like this: grass to cow, cow to human. But what if your hamburger came with lettuce? In such situation, you are also a part of the following food chain: lettuce to human (Khan Academy, 2006).

In social environment, the modern burial has made a paradigm shift that the burial is slowly shifting from the

hands of the family and the kinship to the religious institution and now unto burial or funeral industry. The new trend has increased the burden to the family as the funeral costs are accelerating high from day to day. Some families are left with debts or with nothing for subsistence.

The problem of the modern burial (which is termed traditional in the West) has been well felt as an environmental and economic catastrophe. Giving an example Doughty, (2011-2022) asserts:

... Americans traditionally bury each year: "The deceased family is burdened by 4.3 million feet of wood, 4.3 million litres of embalming fluids, 1.6 million tonnes of reinforced concrete, 17,000 tonnes of copper and bronze, and between 64,500 and 90,000 tonnes of steel" (greenburialcouncil.org, 2011). Cremation has been proven to have negative environmental consequences... (Doughty, 2011-2022)

Doughty refers to it as "an environmental horror story," with the incineration process producing numerous poisonous compounds such as dioxin, hydrochloric acid, sulphur dioxide, and climate-changing carbon dioxide. These are detrimental to society and the environment (Doughty, 2011-2022). In Ghana, Potonik (2017) discovered that, due to the impact of external causes, death rituals with their rich cultural legacy in traditional Ga culture and the environment are in imminent risk of being lost, but that some of them have been adapted and maintained within the new rites. The case study of Jamestown was used as part of his research project due to the numerous variances in ceremonies across the Ga subgroups. He has expressed worry for the environment, stating that post-mortem actions, particularly burial, might be harmful to the ecosystem, which is also pertinent to the current study. Both studies have aided the researchers in comprehending how Africans have similar ideas and thoughts about the post-mortem phenomenon. (Potočnik, 2017).

### 3. Methodology

This Study employed multivariate techniques both qualitative and constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) research approaches. It involved 80 participants.

Qualitative approach was used due to the fact that the phenomenon in question is based on the assessive mode, which means it is partially reliant on the judgement of the responders. To be considered mathematically, values, beliefs, and ethical assumptions are difficult to quantify or enumerate. As a result, it accepted the paradigm of the Post-Positivists, who valued interpretive and pragmatic ideologies. Positivism is a philosophy of inquiry that differs from positivism, which is the conventional philosophy of inquiry in the scientific knowledge.

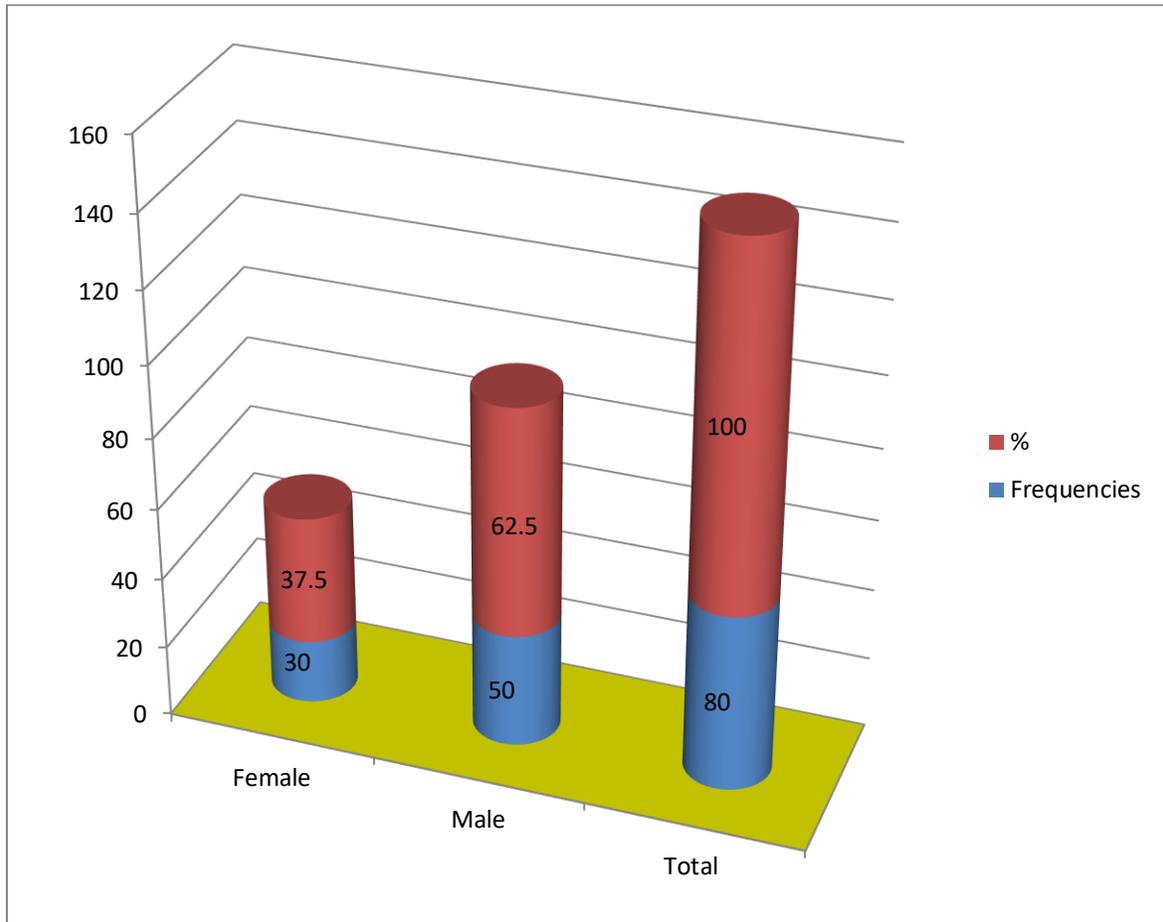
Due to the nature of study, it adopted descriptive design for this study because firstly it wedes both pragmatism philosophy and the GT design. Secondly because the RBEHR phenomena are linked to the cultural and ontological network of the ethnic group. Only people under the study can articulate not only the processes of particular behaviours, but also the meaning tied to such behaviours of what they imply. According to Kumar (2011), a descriptive research aims to provide a systematic description of a situation, problem, or event, as well as information about a community or views towards a topic A descriptive study is one in which the focus is on description rather than examining correlations or associations.

The criterion sampling was employed to select respondents by, age and social status. According to 2013 population figures, Kilimanjaro and Moshi, in particular, have more elderly people than the rest of Tanzania, with 7% of the population over 65 (URT, 2013). Therefore, participants in the study ranged in age from 50 to over 75. The population was 1,801,050 (2017 projections), with a 1.8 percent annual population growth rate and a 4.3 average household size. According to the 2022 National Census Kilimanjaro has 1,861,934 while the region leads for the elderly 60+ by 7.3% of the entire population (URT , 2022).

### Respondents' Characteristics

The respondents came from diverse backgrounds of the ethnic group to make sure the data collected would represent the ethnic group that was the case study as much as possible. The needed characteristics were gender, age, and education.

## Respondents' characteristics after genders

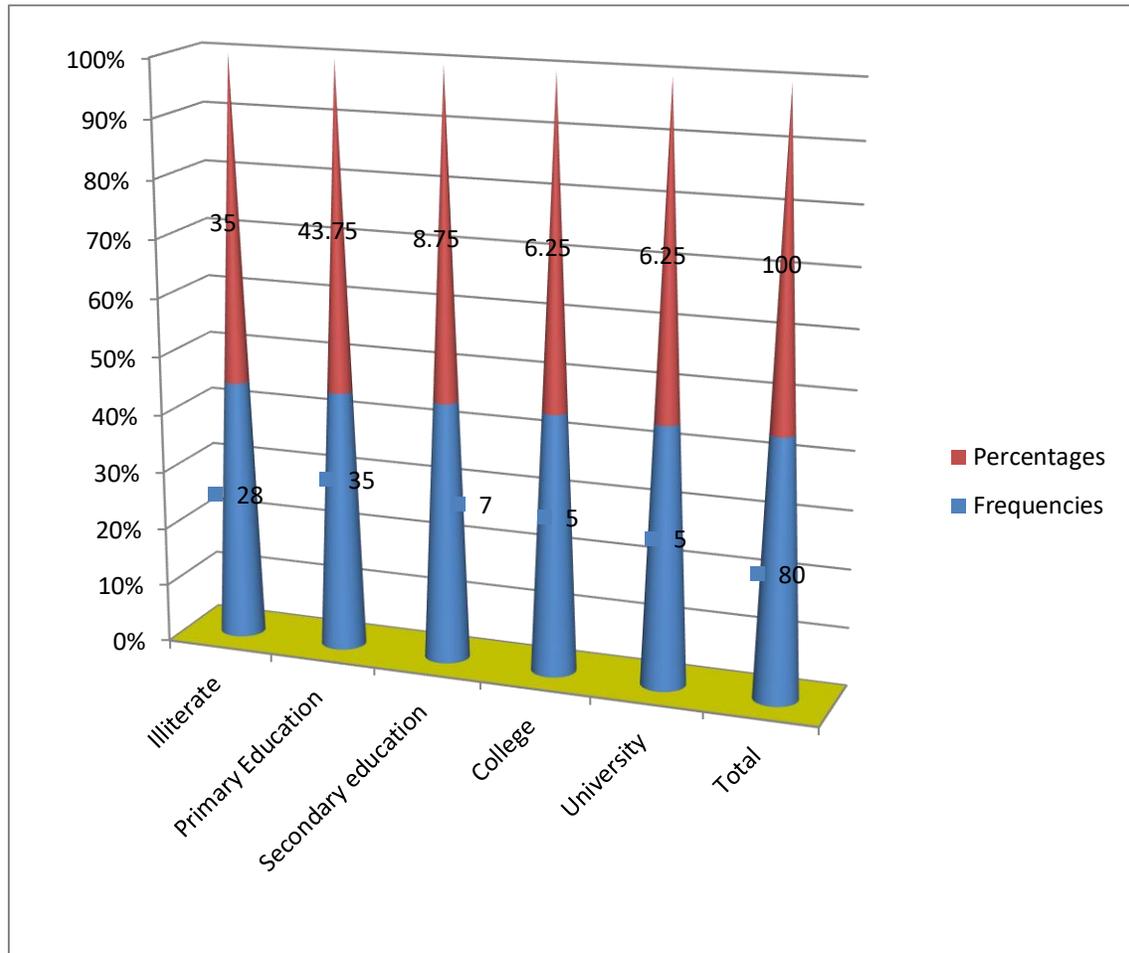


**Figure 1: Respondents characteristic after genders**

Source: Field Data 2020

The respondents were intended to be equally represented based on the gender, age and education. This was important as the general knowledge and social life of Wakiyoso indicate that some rituals differed between males and females. However, the inclusion was further determined by the availability and criteria used to elect the sample. The following are the characteristics of the respondents after their gender. Further, the classification of respondents by gender shows that males made up 62.5 percent of the sample (N=80), whereas females made up only 37.5 percent of the overall sample. This was one sign that men were willing to join and were free to spend their free time in the evenings to engage whereas the majority of women were either busy with household duties or reluctant to participate out of fear of breaking established taboos and disclosing the circle's secrets (Mwacha, 2013).

## Respondents' characteristics after their education levels



**Figure 2: Characteristics of respondents after their Education levels**

**Source: Field Data 2020**

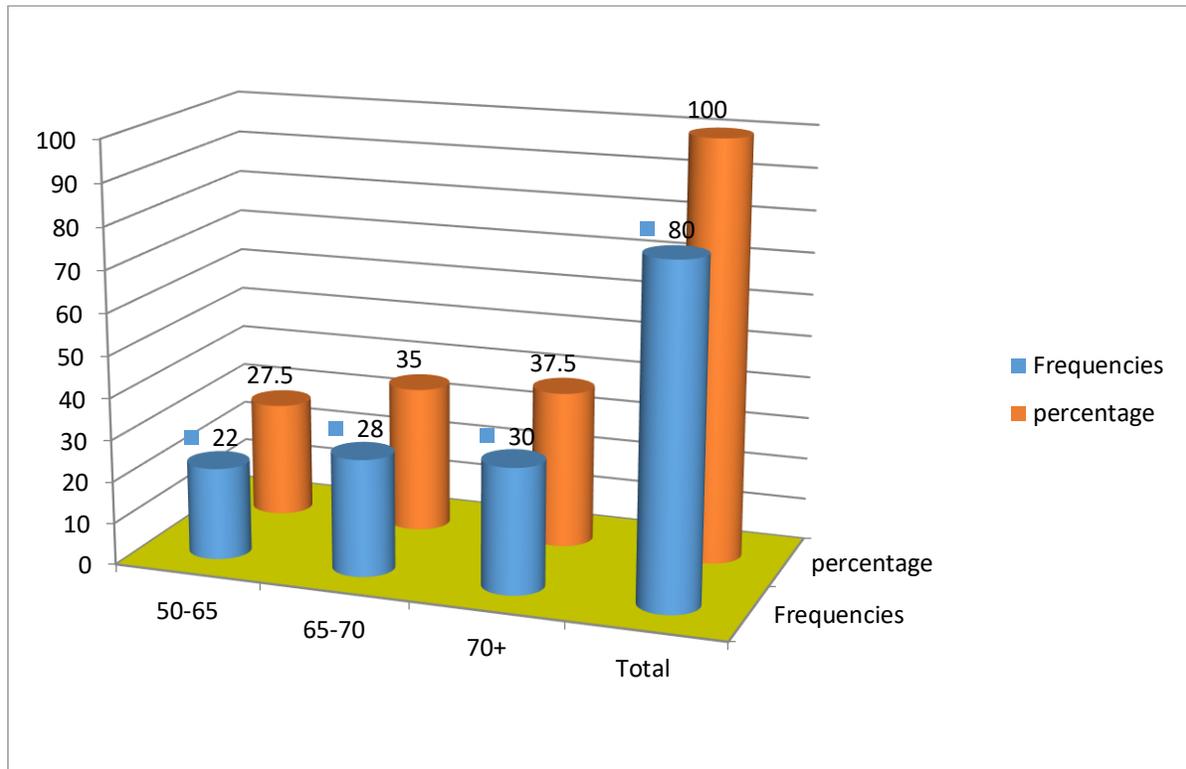
Figure 2 above shows that illiterate respondents accounted for 28 percent (N=80), while primary education participants accounted for 35 (43.75%) percent, making them the majority of all responses. Secondary school education respondents accounted for 7 (8.75 %), with college and university education accounting for 5 (6.25%) apiece. When most illiterates were proficient in Wakiyoso traditions, those who had more exposure to contemporary education had a broader understanding of modern influences and were not as reclusive or conservative as those who refused to answer some questions due to taboos. See figure 3 below. When

conducting this investigation, the respondents' educational backgrounds were also considered. Education was not specified when the age criteria were, but it was planned to include all levels of education. The respondents to this study are shown in the following table after their age range.

## Respondents' characteristics after their age range

Respondents were analysed after their age range. Age was one of important criterion in determining the suitable

respondents for this study. The following figure presents participants of this study after their age range.



**Figure 3: Characteristics of respondents after their age range**

Source: Field Data 2020

## Primary data collection methods and tools

### Semi-Structured Interviews

The data was gathered using a semi-structured interview style. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for a variety of activities, especially when multiple open-ended inquiries necessitate follow-up questions (Adams, 1936). The data was recorded using note-taking and audio-recording devices. Within a few hours, the material was transcribed, coded and processed on the computer, with the goal of weaving the story together like a mosaic picture drawing.

### Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The data was gathered using a semi-structured interview style. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for a variety of activities, especially when multiple open-ended inquiries necessitate follow-up questions (Adams, 2015). The data was recorded using note-taking and audio-recording devices. Within a few hours, the material was transcribed and processed on the computer, with the goal of weaving

the story together like a mosaic picture drawing, a total of 40 of the 80 respondents were adequately covered. The study aimed to learn more about women's rituals by including more women in later sessions, as some women had refused to answer several questions about women's rituals in prior sessions, stating that it is taboo in their clans and social standing. The number of people who took part in the interview was divided into four groups: 4+5+5+6=20. The purpose of employing this method, as also argued by (Wilkinson, 1998) was to gain access to participants' language, conceptions, and concerns, as well as to encourage the generation of more completely articulated narratives and to witness the communal sense-making process in action (Wilkinson, 1998). Interviews took place at neighbourhood taverns, residences, and church grounds throughout the evenings. Depending on the replies, the debate lasted anywhere from 40 minutes to an hour. The focused group conversation lasted between 80 and 90 minutes in two cases. When it was discovered that certain responders had participated in prior sessions, the group had to separate them from the new list so that they would not be tallied twice. Those that attended more than one session were able to add to their previous

contributions, which were annexed to their original or first-hand knowledge.

## Secondary Data Collection Method

The study employed data from scientific publications, including articles from journals published by Nnoli, Nwabuko, Ebughe, & Omotoso (2013); theses and dissertations; reports from Mwacha, (2013) and (Kessy, 2002); reliable books; and crucial references, including religious texts and dictionaries like Vine, Unger, & White (1984). These were crucial because they clarified some of the relevant academic literature and provided information on exhumation and burial customs, their practises, and the context in which they are relevant.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The results presented here emerge from the questions of the study. This study looked at burial and exhumation rituals, which meant it looked into the relevance of rituals as well as the symbolic content of qualitative data. It was a set of methods and procedures by which the study progressed from qualitative data to some type of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the persons and situations studied. As a result, the presentation took the form of themes and tales, with a few quantitative data points offered in numerical form when describing the respondents' attributes. A study procedure was meant to give a study precision and accuracy.

### The Ritual of Burial and Exhumation of Human Relics among the Wakiyoso

The respondents concurred that once someone has passed away, they are unable to perform any actions utilising their actual body. A traditional post-mortem examination included checking the heart, lungs, and temperature, as well as feeling all five senses and consuming any available air, water, or food. This is known as non-functionality. All actions are done to the deceased primarily not for the dead but the living ones. When the bees dispose the injured or dead of their hive they do it for healthy of the living and to keep them from their predator/scavenger who would pursue the injured or the cadavers. Since the smell of a dead monkey would cause necrophilia - attracting their predators to their habitat the disposing of the dead body was taken as a preventive action.

The findings indicated that Wakiyoso were of the universal idea that death is *inevitable* because all living things have a beginning and an end, including humans. Both nature and the gods cannot promise that a person will live an eternal life in the natural body; death is inevitable. According to the study, there can be only one eternal life if

the life that began at birth ends. The majority of respondents 98 percent (N = 80) believed that everyone would eventually die. On the other hand, 85 percent of respondents (N = 80) agreed there was no remedy for someone who had already passed away.

The rituals of death and exhumation by Wakiyoso, on the other way show that death is *irreversible*. Despite the fact that none of the family members are willing to let their loved one go, nobody has the power to bring them back to life (in the body). This was shown among the Wakiyoso by the ritual of the wife inheritance. Not just the wife, but also the assets of the deceased (in the case of the deceased male). The wife was obliged to send his husband away as it was narrated that the soul was still around the homestead. In order to send her late husband's soul on its path, the widow was needed to join her brother-in-law, who was the closest person as known in Kyikyiwoso language as *mnama-wo kiwiri*, ideally meaning the covenant brother in the *kitunda*-ritual casting after the burial. Eating the special roasted meat, which was symbolically a chunk of the brother-in-law, was part of the ritual. The new couple dined by the river or creek bank as the fore right leg of the ram or lamb was grilled. The deceased's walking stick, or the stick he used to represent his authority, was broken and set ablaze in the middle of the pathway going to the rivulet crossing. Their first sexual act was enjoyed in the deceased's bed as the ritual's culmination.

Though the humans and some small mammals share some behaviours of interaction with their dead of their conspecifics, only human transcend all as they associate the end to causality. For the Wakiyoso, there must be cause for every incidence of death. This was demonstrated among the Wakiyoso by the tradition of consulting oracles to know what the source of death was. Even though the hospital pathologist who carries out autopsy may establish the cause of death, that would be taken as secondary, but the family members need to know the ultimate cause. One respondent associated her late father in-law's death with his own late mother whom he withheld desired food, it then happened that near his death he could not take in any food or water. The mediums revealed that it was his late mother who choked him to starve him to death as a revenge (FGD, 28/11/2020).

Prounisa & Shields (2013) asserts that organisms interact with the dead in a number of ways. *Necrophobia* (the avoidance of dead or injured conspecifics), *necrophoria* (the removal of dead conspecifics from colonies), *necrophilia* (the attraction to the dead), and *necrophagy* are only a few examples of these interactions (the process of feeding on carrion). Insect research has shown that several species exhibit complex *necrophobic* and *necrophoric* behaviour. These behaviours both in humans and small mammals are necessary for ecological balance. The

humans exhibit both *necrophobic* that make them to avoid the dead conspecifics. (Prounisa & Shields, 2013).

Rituals of exhumation after the burial of the Wakyiwoso are for the living ones—the community, rather than the deceased, have been practised from immemorial not only by the Wakyiwoso but by most of the Chagga ethnic groups. However, from 2015 onward, the Catholic Church, which seemed to be tolerant, joined their counterparty Pentecostals to ban all traditional rituals, including traditional burial and exhumation of human relics labelling them as pagan and irrelevant.

Interview schedules and FGD were used to collect data on this subtopic. In addition to these tools, observation was used to triangulate the data for more reliability and confirmability. The study found that the Ritual of Exhumation of Human Relics (RBEHR) was one of the common features of human post-mortem among the Chagga of Kibosho. In this Study, the context is limited to Kibosho in four wards namely Kibosho Mashariki, Kibosho Kati, Kibosho Okaoni, and Kibosho Magharibi.

According to the available data, the ritual of exhumation was a continuity of the ritual of burial. It is an episode in the series of the death rite or post-mortem. As asserts one respondent:

*The ritual of exhumation is a very special ritual of the rite of passage performed for the dead to free him or her from the prison of loneliness. It is a festival for the men and women with full respect, mature, fruitful and respected by the living community. This is performed by exhuming the relics of the buried person from the grave.* Female (c.80 yrs., 28/11/2020)

The sage above notes that the person thought dead was in a situation of imprisonment in that, this ritual is the key for his release or freedom. Though it was not clear that the Wakyiwoso think that in the grave the bodies were tormented, or the spirit were disabled by remaining in the grave. The concept can raise two fundamental metaphysical questions: first, what relationship is there between the soul/spirit and body in the ontological post-mortem? In his *Phaedo* Plato conceives that the spirit of man preceded his or her birth. He further argues that the soul of man was in prison while in the body, dying would logically mean that the soul, like a bird in hostage has been freed. In this view Plato differs sharply from the Wakyiwoso who thinks that even after death one is not free until exhumed.

Now thinking about exhumation of human relics in the Platonic is not clear since at death already the freedom is assumed. Analogically, the Greek myth that the souls have existed before they assumed these bodies and that on their way coming into birth must cross the river and drink of its water, which makes the souls enter oblivion henceforth to

forget all that they had known, may have some hold in the series of rituals of burial and exhumation though it may be vice versa of the Platonic.

One respondent held that:

*Once the burial has taken place, the soul of the deceased must go away by performing some ritual, the inheritor or successor must lead it to the river. There the soul must remain until it is fetched again for its permanent shrine in his kiyamba (banana grove) Female, (c.72 yrs.05/12/2020).*

Respondents suggested that in order for the inheritor to assume his new position as the head of his brother's family successfully, he must send the soul of the dead away and breaking his walking stick ashore on the river cross. Can this suggest that the soul forgets the past as it gets to the river? Would this mean that as were the Greeks, the Wakyiwoso once believed that the spirit came from abroad crossing the river and after death, it should be escorted to return to its abode? Why should they bother to send the soul where they think it does not belong? Why not to be sent back toward wilderness, forest or somewhere other than the river? The questions have no conclusive answer than what one sage suggests.

*We do not know all the meanings of the rituals and why they should be performed somewhere and not anywhere, but the river is a mystic object, source of life to all creatures, and it is used as boundary between people of one place and another. The souls can live in waters and they will not cross the waters easily without some rituals (c. 68 yrs. 05/12/2020).*

The dead is not forgotten by the family members but the family now has a new head of the family who protects and cares for family affairs in the influence of the diseased who is now a living dead (LD). The time comes when he will return home.

## **The Relevance of Exhumation**

What is the significance of modern developments in burial and bereavement rituals in general, which are visible in the context of the Wakyiwoso yet are disregarded in both research policy and practise? It was asked whether these rituals of burial followed by exhumation were relevant to the Wakyiwoso socially, spiritually, or economically, which has so far yielded no answers. However, the same burial followed by exhumation, though not new to people like the Wakyiwoso, so they may feel attracted to conducting inquisitions, is novel to most Tanzanian societies and some other cultures, and this creates the puzzle that attracts scholars' attention, who will want to see their relevance. In Ancient Egypt, for example, burial

rituals held a significant place as they initiated the dead into the new world. (Assmann, 1989).

Therefore, burial followed by exhumation is what makes the two concepts go together as one compound concept; this is because the observation shows that the two concepts are not separated in the minds of a member of the Kibosho ethnic group; they are twins like fire and heat. If p, then q. If there is an exhumation, there must have been a burial, and if the exhumation is done today, there must have been a burial. In the mind of a Kibosho person, the ritual of burial is pregnant with the ritual of exhumation of the relics.

Rituals performed after death are directly related to human nature. Only human adults appear to comprehend all four aspects of death—namely, inevitability, irreversibility, non-functionality, and causality—despite the fact that other beings, such as flies and monkeys, can instinctively rid their swarms or flocks of the dead. To put it another way, while some animal species exhibit *necrophobic* behaviours, humans require a higher level of cognitive functioning to fully perceive and mourn the loss of another person.

This higher level of cognitive functioning enables the survivor to feel an emotional bond with the absent other, or a bond with the dead (Shimane, 2018). Humans are exceptional not just because they bury their deceased in ritualistic ceremonies, but also because other species have no the ability to think metaphorically, which allows them to transcend the present, recall the past, and see the future. It enables human imagination, creation, and environment modification in ways that have major environmental effects (Madison, 2018). Up until the time this report was being written, the literature suggests that only humans were associated with ritually exposing their deceased, as opposed to a simple "burial".

### **Economic Relevance**

*Exhumation was conducted to make space for crops cultivation and human habitation, hence economic relevance. Observations indicated that there were no old graves. The old graves were from the clans who were not allowed to perform exhumation for either sex (male or female). For many years the land of Wakiwoso was able to accommodate a rapid growth of population. "If our forefather had to burry permanently without maruo (exhuming) the land would have been full of graves and there would be no room for food growing." (Male c.80 yrs., 20/12/2020).*

The above statement reveals that, exhumation has been inexpensive for the Wakiwoso as it was giving more room for agricultural production. The narrow land could produce as the dead did not occupy permanent land space as they

stayed there for a while. The same land could serve as both habitation and grave yard. Using the same plot as a grave yard the soil would easily trap nutrients from the dead making it ever fertile. For this reason the practise of exhumation was economically relevant.

### **Environmental Relevance**

The exhumation of the human relics after burial was environmentally relevant. It kept the environment clean, giving both animals and vegetation room to grow together. One respondent makes it clear:

*The ritual of exhumation was meant to leave the land as healthy as it was before exhuming everything that was buried with the dead. Since the living were aware of burial, they buried their dead without concrete or any solid objects and without the pillage of stone mounds. Burial was a serious issue, but methods of burial were simple and friendly. We never built graves; we also did not use flowers, candles, or caskets. The marks of masale were enough before exhumation. After exhumation, the relics were stored according to the rules of the clan. It was very important that the skull be specially preserved in a special place, while the rest of the skeletal parts were humped together under the chosen point, and the Msesewe or Mduka trees were preferred according to clan traditions. (Male c.88 yrs., 16/12/2020)*

The environmental relevance here, according to the respondent, is that there were no pollutants introduced into the soil before or after exhumation. The buried body would have enriched the soil, and after exhumation, the relics were still around the vegetation to nourish other organisms. The Msesewe tree (*Rauvolfia caffra*) and Iduka (*Albizia schimperiana*). Both Msesewe and Mduka trees are totems of several clans among the Wakiwoso. Placing the relics around these trees increases the attention of humans to other creatures like trees and shrubs, including Masale. This makes people afraid to fell trees carelessly. "Indigenous people have responded to ecological and development challenges by using the cultures and knowledge systems transmitted through their indigenous languages" (Ekoss & Mandillah, 2018).

### **Psychological Relevance**

In the old days, children were not exposed to the dead bodies, this was to protect them from trauma.

*I remember that when my uncle died, he was buried immediately. But I was shocked at how anxious I was. For three months, I could not cross to his grave, even my parents warned us not to go to the place of the dead. But after some years (I can't remember exactly how many years elapsed as I was a minor), the grave was opened and his relics removed. This was the end of my fear, as I did not see the grave, so I did not remember him again (Male, c. yrs., 16/12/2020).*

The permanent graves are a reminder of the loss of the lovely one. The absence of them made children not know or think of the beloved dead. But what about the relics? The relics, especially the skull, were believed to represent the dead, giving them hope that he was in their midst and maintaining the bond. The death of a parent or sibling may cause trauma for some children. Some children show serious emotional disturbances at one year and two, with 19% and 21%, respectively. Among the effects caused by trauma after the death of a close person (parent, grandparent, or siblings) are social withdrawal, social problems, and lower self-esteem (Worden & Silverman, 1996).

### **Epistemological Relevance**

Exhumation advanced biological knowledge about the human being that a human can change unto soil and that other organism were also depending on the human decomposition as when they could find the roots of a healthier plantains and nearby trees scabbling for the relics. Exhumation helps the ritual participants to understand the spiritual nature of a human that he/she is more than a mere body. The perfection of a human lies in the spiritual realm than the temporal realm. Indigenous knowledge and African traditional epistemology stem from oral traditions, riddles, proverbs and mostly in the ritual practices. Rites of initiation and rites of transition are all aspects of indigenous epistemology or knowledge.

### **Post-mortem Ontological Relevance**

It was ontologically relevant as the practice considered the living beings as the ones who are in need of resources as ontologically the souls abode did not require a physical body. Having the spiritual body makes the need for a spatial dimension unnecessary therefore exhumation was the means to utilise their narrow *shyiamba* (banana grove plots). They used the same plot for centuries without any saturation with graves because of grave tenure whereby the dead remain in the grave for calculated time and the same grave point was used for others.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

Though other small mammals exhibit necrophobic behaviour that causes them to avoid the dead bodies of their conspecifics, only humans transcend the temporal state in which they hold the present, recalling the past and postulating the future. The post-mortem ritual is done not in the name of the deceased but for the sake of the living. When thinking and arguing about the rituals, the reason must follow some model that will not cause a contradiction, and it was suggested that the study use both stipulative and assensive modes of thinking and exposition. Stipulative here means that the study's argument and analysis would be contextualised within what has been stipulated or ordered by the authorities. Religion and spirituality fall into this category. On the other hand, an assensive approach puts a phenomenon (data or concept) under assessment in an abstract way to reach logical or philosophical conclusions rather than empirical, which requires rigorous scientific methods that are mainly universal. According to Wakiwoso, the relevance of exhumation is that it serves economic, psychological, and epistemological purposes. The practise of exhumation was relevant to the Wakiwoso as it made more space for agriculture and other human activities. Through the practise of exhumation, the small piece of land served to bury dozens of bodies, as there were no permanent graves. The absence of graves relieved trauma for both children and their close relatives. It was ontologically relevant as it demonstrated what Wakiwoso believed about the nature of *m'ndu* (a human), that the human being was still identical in the spiritual world even without the flesh. (Hillar, 1994). It was revealed that the exhumation of human relics never affects the living dead; therefore, it is ontologically relevant. The study established that burial followed by exhumation was more ecologically relevant than any other means of disposal of the dead.

### **5.2 Recommendation**

Since the study is relevant economically, psychologically, and epistemologically, to name a few areas, the study recommends that:

1. Although burial followed by exhumation for some ethnic groups has been taboo, the study has shown that if well organised and given good policies, it is relevant not only to the Wakiwoso ethnic group but also to others; therefore, it should be encouraged by relevant authorities and religious institutions.

2. In order to exhume the simple burial, Simple burial practices are not only economically relevant but also healthier, as the process would not require harmful chemical injections. The burial followed by exhumation is

urgent and simple, avoiding harmful preservation chemicals that eventually drain into underground water to the sources of drinking water, which are highly poisonous and degrade the ecosystem.

3. Simple without caskets, nylons that come with flowers and decorations, and waxes from candles. Without building concrete, tilled walls, and marble-topped graves that halt oxygen, water, and nutrient circulation,

4. Also, it would help to control the expansion of the grave sites not only in Kilimanjaro but even in the rapidly growing cities in Tanzania and elsewhere.

5. This study also recommends that more research be done on how burial and exhumation could be applied alongside leading religions in Tanzanian society. New studies should be carried out on other ethnic groups in post-mortem rituals to understand their perceptions of the exhumation.

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