

**BRIDEWEALTH REVISITED: THE PRACTICE OF OKU JEZA AMONG THE  
LUGBARA CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE DIOCESE OF MA'DI-WEST NILE**

**JULIUS IZZA TABI**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

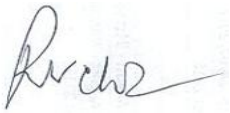
I, Julius Izza Tabi, declare that this work is my original creation and has not been submitted to any other university for an academic award.



Julius Izza Tabi  
RJ18P35/152

September, 2025

We affirm that this thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as supervisors



Rev. Can. Prof. Christopher Byaruhanga

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, late Severino Soyi Izza and Asianzo Catherine Izza; and my dear wife, Driciru Oliver Tabi, and my beloved children; Samuel Ushindi Tabi, Shamuel Upendo Tabi, and Shalem Tutuopidrisi Tabi.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

UCU: Uganda Christian University

DNWN: Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

URN: Uganda Radio Network

## GLOSSARY OF VERNACULAR TERMS

*Aje* - Aje simply means marriage. It is mostly used to refer to the marriage contracted by the payment of bridewealth. The church marriage is always commonly called aje.

*Ali* - Ali in this context means offense

*Ali baza* - ali baza is a sexual offense of customarily illegal sexual intercourse

*E'yoti ziza* - eyoti ziza is an item in the bridewealth which is meant to facilitate the opening of the negotiation meeting during *oku jeza*. It is simply a facilitation to motivate the party of the bride to allow the negotiation to begin and proceed.

*Ho'dia* - This is an item of the bridewealth paid at the entrance of the homestead of the bride's family to officially allow the groom and his party into the family and or clan of the bride. It may simply be referred to as a gate fee. Ho'dia may also be known as *jotile* in some Lugbara communities.

*Irindi a'diza* - This is the traditional practice of booking a lady by a gentleman where the man ties grass on the wrist of the lady to express his desire to marry the lady. It is similar to the modern-day marriage proposal by fixing an engagement ring on the middle finger of the lady. The item of the bridewealth paid for this cause is also called *irindi a'diza*.

'Ye - means arrow(s). Traditionally, they are part of the bridewealth and are paid in kind.

*Lugbarati* - Lugbarati is the Lugbara language

*Lugbara Kari* - Lugbara Kari is the Lugbara Chiefdom

*Odrijo* - or *odrojo* is the hut for bachelors or spinsters in a homestead. It is what one would refer to as a boys' quarter in contemporary homes. Unmarried ladies or gents in a homestead would have their independent hut called *odrijo* or *odrojo*.

*Oku jeza* - *Oku jeza* is the verb which describes the action of marriage through the payment of bridewealth. *Oku* is a woman or women and *jeza* means to buy.

*Suru* - *Suru* is a clan; it might also be referred to as a tribe or nation.

## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the tension between the customary Lugbara practice of *oku jeza* and bridewealth and its perceived negative impact on participation in church marriage within the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Utilizing the hospitality, conversation, and critical faithfulness; theological approach advanced by Swinton, the study identified bridewealth as a social practice of theological interest. Data was obtained using qualitative theological research methods and was subjected to the authority of the bible and the critical faithfulness of the researcher as a practical theologian. From the target population, the researcher interviewed 10 participants, conducted two focus group discussions with 8 and 7 participants respectively, and observed three *oku jeza* ceremonies. The study has established that the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile consider *oku jeza* and bridewealth as a core process in accessing church marriage. It has been found that the church would not proceed with arrangements for church marriage before receiving permission from the bride's family which usually is tied up to the customary requirements of *oku jeza*: the bridewealth. This study has discovered that the present practice of bridewealth harms church marriage in that very few Christians sign up for church marriage, resorting to cohabitation because bridewealth is increasingly becoming commercialized. The study concludes that instead of abolishing bridewealth for the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese, bridewealth should be re-oriented to Love Gift while serving its intended role among the Lugbara Christians without hurting church marriage. The study recommends that the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile should consider divorcing church marriage from bridewealth and focus on the banns of marriage other than relying on parental permission which is tied up on the customary requirements of *oku jeza*.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.0. Introduction

This chapter will provide the background of the study, the research problem and objectives, the justification for the study, and the methodology of the research. It will also highlight the methods of data collection and analysis, data verification, and the appropriate ethical considerations for the study. Further, the chapter will consider the topic of bridewealth, which is the main aspect of Lugbara *oku jeza* in the context of African culture in general and the Lugbara in specific. As a theological study, there is also a discussion on bridewealth in the holy scripture of Christianity and the general perspective of Christian scholars on bridewealth. The chapter shall conclude by describing the structure (chapter divisions) of the thesis and wrap up with a conclusion for the chapter.

The study's purpose is to revisit the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile (DMWN) with a view to developing pastoral and theological approaches in revisiting the practice in relation to church marriage. The Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile was chosen because the Lugbara people, a subject of this research, live in their indigenous cultures within the ecclesiastical boundaries of the Diocese. Although the Lugbara people can be found in large numbers outside of the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile for example, in Kakira, Lugazi, Kampala, Masindi, and other places, these are Lugbara in 'diaspora' whose cultural practices could have been greatly influenced by the predominant cultures among whom they now live.

## 1.1. Background of the study

The use of bridewealth in legitimizing marriage is a common practice in patrilineal societies. Historically, the ratification of marriage through the payment of bridewealth (also referred to by some scholars as bride price) is a very common practice in many cultures globally. 'The custom of bride price dates back as far as 3000 BCE. The ancient civilizations of Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Hebrews, Aztecs, and Incas all used bride price' (Quale cited in Anderson, 2007). The Germanic tribes, who date from 2000BCE and ruled western Europe from 600 to 1000 CE, required a bride price for a marriage to be legal (Hughes, 1985). Although bridewealth payment is practiced globally in various forms, it is widely found in Africa (Ferraro, 1983; Grosz-Ngate, 1988), where more than 80 percent of sub-Saharan societies traditionally made such marriage payments (Murdock, 1967). The Lugbara are one of the many cultural groups in Africa that give and take bridewealth at marriage.

The Lugbara primarily reside in the northwest of Uganda, with a significant number living in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are a 'Sudanic-speaking people. Linguistically, their nearest neighbors are the Madi to their east and the Keliko and Logo to their West' (Middleton, 1992, p. 1). Traditionally, the Lugbara are cultivators; however, most households also keep cattle, goats, sheep, and domestic fowl. Middleton (1992) acknowledged that the Lugbara lineage is patrilineal. Marriage among the traditional Lugbara was 'marked by the transfer of bridewealth from the minimal lineage of the bridegroom to that of the bride' (Middleton, 1992, p. 54), which was often negotiated between the kin of the bride and the bridegroom which traditionally

consisted of seven heads of cattle and several arrows.

Marriage by the giving and taking of bridewealth among the Lugbara is called *oku jeza* and has persisted among the Lugbara to date. The Lugbara Christian community equally offers and accepts bridewealth which often precedes church marriage. The practice of *oku jeza* in the light of church marriage among the Lugbara Christian community ought to be revisited because it has become a hindrance to church marriage. Many Christian parents charge several items in the bridewealth or would not grant permission for church marriage to their daughters until the bridewealth is fully paid. This often undermines the dignity of the girl child as it tends to commodify the girl child like any other commodity in the market to be acquired after the payment of a material good. Additionally, it also poses moral challenges to church marriage since many young men who cannot afford the overly charged bridewealth either elope with their brides, delay marriage until they get the required bridewealth or simply give up on marriage. It is against this background that the study has sought to revisit the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile with a view of developing pastoral and theological approaches to the practice of bridewealth and its associated link to church marriages (Ademiluka, 2021a); Pati, 2009).

*Oku jeza* is an age-old practice among the Lugbara that predates the introduction of Christianity to the Lugbara people. As is the case with many other practices, there is an intended role of *oku jeza* in the customary marriage among the Lugbara. Based on the literature review, the research presumed that there are good intentions in the practice of *oku jeza*. As such, despite embracing the Christian faith, Lugbara Christian

communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile continue to undergo *oku jeza* before they present themselves for church marriage. Considering the value Lugbara Christians place on *oku jeza*, the research has sought to inquire how the bridewealth can be revisited and practiced in the context of the Christian faith while preserving its intended role.

## **1.2. Research problem**

The Lugbara of Uganda in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile charge bridewealth for their girl children at marriage. This customary practice of marriage at which bridewealth is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family is referred to as *oku jeza*. *Oku jeza* has largely become a precondition for church marriage among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Consequently, a prospective groom who fails to raise the bridewealth for *oku jeza* cannot proceed with a church marriage. The present practice of *oku jeza* seems to undermine the dignity of a Lugbara girl child, reducing her to an item of trade like any other commodity in the market. Despite the challenges of *oku jeza* on church marriage among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile, there is limited scholarly work addressing this problem. The question is, how can the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile be revisited with a view of maintaining its intended role in the Lugbara Christian community?

## **1.3. Research Objectives**

The study has been guided by a primary (main) objective broken down into three specific objectives.

### **1.3.1. Main Research objective**

The study has sought to analyze the challenges of *oku jeza*, a practice among Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile on church marriage and frame theological approach to revisit the practice while maintaining its intended role.

### **1.3.2. Specific research objective**

- i. To describe the various aspects of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara.
- ii. To assess the challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.
- iii. To develop a theological approach to the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

### **1.4. Research question**

The study has premised on a major research question which has been broken down into three specific research questions;

#### **Main research question**

The main research question is: How can the practice of *oku jeza* by the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile be revisited with a view of maintaining its intended role among the Lugbara Christian community? This research question has been broken down into three sub-research questions

- i. What are the various aspects of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara?
- ii. What are the challenges of the present practice of *oku jeza* by the Lugbara Christian community to church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile?

- iii. What theological approach to the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile should be employed to revise the practice while maintaining its intended role in society?

### **1.5. Justification of the study**

Recent studies on bridewealth in Africa have shown that bridewealth has remained a highly valued marriage custom and that there can hardly be a marriage without the payment of bridewealth in many African communities (Ademiluka, 2021a; Atekyereza, 2001a; Chitakure, 2021). On the other hand, some studies reveal that the practice undermines the dignity of the girl child and is associated with social evils such as child brides and sexual gender-based violence, and that it fuels male dominance over women. As such, many researchers have advocated for the abolishment of bridewealth despite the high cultural value attached to it. The researcher has been so much prompted to the study after having observed how *oku jeza*, as practiced by the Lugbara, impacts Christian marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The study presupposed that being a highly esteemed customary practice among the Lugbara of Uganda, *oku jeza* can be revisited to maintain its intended purpose in the Lugbara Christian community without undermining the girl child and the ideals of church marriage. This research, therefore, has been conducted to establish how the highly valued custom of bridewealth among the Lugbara Christian community can be revisited with a view of maintaining its intended role in the Lugbara Christian community. The findings in this research have been used to develop a theological approach to the practice of *oku jeza* that does not undermine church marriage among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of

Ma'di-West Nile.

### **1.6. Scope of the study**

This study covered a period of the era of Christianity among the Lugbara and it is strictly delimited to the Lugbara Christian communities of the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile who are resident in the present predominantly Lugbara districts of Maracha, Terego, Arua, and Arua City. Christianity was introduced among the Lugbara in 1918. Therefore, the 1918–2018 period of 100 years is regarded here as the period of Christian influence among the Lugbara. At this period, the study presupposed that the practice of *Oku Jeza* could have been greatly impacted by Christianity. More so, as it is the study's main objective, this is also the period at which the practice of *Oku Jeza* is exerting influence on Christian marriages among the Lugbara. Nevertheless, as a background and comparison, the study will provide sufficient information on the pre-Christian practice of *Oku Jeza* among the Lugbara. It is important to study the practice of *Oku Jeza* during this period as this will provide an excellent background view regarding the practice.

### **1.7. Literature review**

There is considerable literature on the present topic by scholars from various disciplines with unique focuses on bridewealth. Some scholars agree with the practice while others argue against it. The purpose of this literature overview is to present a description of recent debates on the subject to place this study in context and provide the locus of the study. The payment of bridewealth at the contraction of marriage is widely practiced among many African communities including those in Uganda. This literature review has also delved into the general practice of bridewealth globally and narrow

down to the practice in Uganda and the Lugbara people of West Nile. It has also focused on the present debates regarding the practice of marriage contraction through the payment of bridewealth to place the study in the wider scholarly work relating to bridewealth.

The contraction of marriage involving the payment of marriage gifts (material goods) known as bridewealth, bride price, or dowry has been and remains a global practice. Jack Goody discusses the different forms of transmission of property from one party to the other in marriage as practiced by different societies globally. In marriage, there is a creation of “rights and duties of the spouses in each other and in their offspring, and transfers existing rights between the groom and the bride” (J. R. Goody, 1970, p. 37). Goody (1970) mentions the following rights transferred at the contraction of marriage: the rights to the status of spouse, parents, and affine; rights to relatively exclusive sexual access; rights relating to kin group membership of the offspring; rights to economic services; rights to domestic services; rights of spousal removal; and rights over material objects. The transfer of existing rights between the bride and the groom is often accompanied by the giving and taking of material properties from the groom and or his kin to the bride and or her kin and the reverse is true in some cultures.

Broadly, the material goods given and taken at marriage accompanying the transfer of rights may be placed in two categories; dowry and bridewealth. However, Goody (1973) identifies four unique cases where there is the giving and taking of either goods or services including; bridewealth, bride-service, dowry, and gift exchange/sister exchange. Goody notices that symbolically, the giving of these goods marks the transfer

of rights in marriage but “they also have their economic functions, not primarily as intermediaries in a purchase, but as ways of redistributing property” and are often “linked with other aspects of social organization, particularly the economy” (J. Goody, 1973).

Dowry and bridewealth are often confused by many as synonymous. It is therefore right to strike the line in marking their differences. “Dowry can be seen as a type of pre-mortem inheritance to the bride, bridewealth as a transaction between the kin of the groom and the kin of the bride” (J. Goody, 1973). Whereas this distinction is largely agreeable, Goody (1973) argues that in some European and Asian societies, it becomes hard to distinguish dowry and bridewealth. He points to the fact that in these societies, the material good is often provided by the groom or his kin and presented to the bride’s kin, hence may be referred to as bridewealth. However, eventually, the primary recipient or beneficiary of these goods is the bride as in dowry. In this case, drawing a line to distinguish bridewealth from dowry is technically difficult. Goody (1973) however prefers to refer to this type of transaction as an ‘indirect dowry.’

According to Conteh (2016), dowry was a historically popular practice in Europe, the Near East, East Asia, South Asia, and some parts of America. In a historical context, Conteh refers to dowry as a term implying “the transfer of a large wealth of goods and services to parents of the bride during marriage” (Conteh, 2016, p. 1). In its contemporary practice in South Asia, Conteh would be comfortable using the term groom price instead of dowry since the payments are to the groom rather than to the bride’s kin. This points to the ambiguous use of the term dowry. The thesis considers

dowry to be the transaction of goods from the bride's family to the groom, as practiced in many Indian communities. In this case, Pushpam (2022) provides a profound definition; "dowry is a payment, such as property or money, paid by the bride's family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage. Dowry contrasts with the related concepts of bride price and dower" (Pushpam, 2022, p. 432). The form of marriage transaction among the Lugbara does not qualify as dowry since the groom or his kin provides the wealth to the kin of the bride, which is commonly referred to as bride price or bridewealth.

The debate on the terminologies bridewealth or bride price was of significance in the early and mid-twentieth century. Africanists and Anthropologists contested the use of either of the two terms to refer to the transfer of wealth or materials from the groom or his kin to the bride's kin in African traditional marriages. Initially, Western colonialists and anthropologists referred to it as bride price. By this, they considered African traditional marriage involving the transfer of wealth as the selling and buying of women similar to the buying and selling of goods in the commercial market (Evans-Pritchard, 1931). Some called it dowry, others preferred terms like settlement, indemnity, earnest, or dower, but Evans-Pritchard (1931) coined the term 'bride-wealth' which has since become popular and has been adopted in this study.

Evans-Pritchard (1931) believed that using the term 'bride-wealth' would be an objective term to describe the transfer of wealth from the groom to the bride's family. He believed that bride price does not fully represent this practice because it focuses on its economy but not the social aspects of the same. Whereas Evans-Pritchard

believed that it is difficult to use a single term to describe bridewealth, he argues that “bride-wealth stresses very definitely the economic value of all the different things which are handed over by the group of a man to the group of a woman as one of the concrete obligations of the union”(Evans-Pritchard, 1931, p. 33). Unlike the word price, Evans-Pritchard believed that wealth is more general that it is not limited to an economic function as the word price would.

Evans-Pritchard’s assertion seemed not to have closed the debate. Years later, Wieschhoff (1941) used the term bride price but clarified that “this "bride-price" is not a medium with which to "buy" a wife, but is given rather as compensation for services rendered” (p. 300). Meanwhile, the American Anthropologist, George Dalton raised a similar pertinent question regarding the use of the terminologies; bridewealth and bride price: “On what grounds is it useful to use a term with a very special meaning in Western economy—price—to describe a transaction in primitive economy that in some ways resembles the price transaction in our own and in some ways do not?” (Dalton, 1966, p. 732). Dalton’s question points out that the terms we reckon with are foreign to the practitioner. It also clearly indicates that bridewealth or bride price are terms created by the West to suit a Western perception of African or Asian practice. Dalton (1966) attempted to delve into the controversies in the use of the terms; bridewealth and bride price and concluded that the payment of material goods when contracting marriage should not be compared to the payment of money or goods for goods or services as in the market economy. Dalton states;

Bridewealth, bloodwealth, potlatch, kula, silent trade, debt bondage, etc.,

are transactions that superficially resemble familiar commercial transactions in market economies—something is paid over in return for something else—but are different in objective ways from commercial exchanges and are regarded by the participants (Dalton, 1966, pp. 736-737).

As noted by Dalton (1966), marriage payments are reciprocal transactions with primarily dual functions; “to indemnify the girl's family for the loss of her services, as an earnest of good intentions on the part of the groom and his family, to solidify the new affinal bonds created by marriage, and to legitimize children born to the union” (Dalton, 1966, p. 732). Arguably, Dalton proposes the use of a more neutral term than the use of the word ‘price’ which implicates the practice to be a commercial activity. Yet marriage transactions have a non-commercial economic significance, thus, the evolvment of the term bridewealth to describe the material transactions the groom or his kin make to the kin of the bride at marriage. Nevertheless, recent studies reveal the ever-increasing commercialization of bridewealth in Africa.

Consequently, Chinonyerem (2014) uses the term bridewealth instead of bride price and argues that the socio-economic changes introduced by the colonial West stand responsible for the distortion of the meaning of the bridewealth, the creation of the use of commercial terms, and subsequent commercialization in Africa. He argues that the colonial regime altered the agrarian economy, sending many Africans to civil services and the mining sector. He further noticed that the Christianization of Africans and the subsequent introduction of the Western education system of schooling created a different social setting in Africa as opposed to the pre-colonial era. She asserts that:

All these social changes led to the introduction of status and social classes in southeast Nigeria, of which women were seriously affected. Under these changed circumstances, bride wealth became distorted and began to be understood as bride price. People charged high sums to cope with their poverty, or to recover sums they spent in training their daughters in school (Chinonyerem, 2014, p. 3).

Commercialization of bridewealth has been widely reported in contemporary Africa. For example, a study among the Kipsigis of Kenya has revealed that “the custom of bride wealth has transformed from being a mere cultural practice to a highly commercialized venture” (Komingoi, 2018, p. x). Meanwhile, among the Zulu in South Africa, a study by Possel & Rudwick (2018) has found out that *ilobolo* is becoming a constraint to marriage because the payment of bridewealth has been individualized to be paid by the husband. “Our interviews suggest that this is linked both to the individualization of the custom, which has increased the responsibility on a prospective husband to save for *ilobolo* through their own earnings, and to what is seen to be commercialization of the custom” (Possel & Rudwick, 2018, p. 19). Several other studies including; (Byung-Soo, 2018), (Asen, 2017a), (Chitakure, 2021), (Atekyereza, 2001b), (Ademiluka, 2021a), etc. all point to the commercialization of bridewealth.

As noted by Onyango (2016), the “term “bride-price” has the connotation of a purchase or financial transaction” (Onyango, 2016, p. 3). Onyango, like many of the scholars previously cited has argued that the present practice of bridewealth is more like a financial transaction which she attributes to its commercialization. In the same vein,

(Bonye et al., 2020) have cited that the custom of bridewealth commodifies women, thus the women whose bridewealth has been paid are “considered as property of their husbands” (Bonye et al., 2020, p. 161). Despite the commercialization tendencies, based on the traditional functions of the marriage payment, the present study uses the term bridewealth as opposed to bride price. It is considered that the present-day practice of bridewealth is a deviation from its original intention which does not concern with a market-based economy.

Summarily, bridewealth was traditionally not intended to sell or buy a woman as a bride. The practice of bridewealth, according to John S. Mbiti has been misrepresented by scholars and others from the Western culture who in efforts to name the practice or describe it did misrepresent the custom. “The custom of presenting a gift to the bride’s people is practiced all over Africa, though in varying degrees,” remarks Mbiti (1988). He further notes that “Different names are used to describe it, such as ‘bride-wealth’, ‘bride-gift’, ‘dowry’ (wrongly in this case) and ‘lobola’. Most of these terms are either inadequate or misleading” (Mbiti, 1988, p. 180). However, in most African cultures, the practice of bridewealth has tended towards its commercialization, making one easily conclude that it is a prospect of selling and buying women as wives just as one would buy a commodity from the marketplace. Accordingly, it is important to stress that bride wealth is a treasured cultural exchange of materials to seal a marital relationship. An extended literature review addressing bridewealth in context of the African perspective (including the Lugbara), biblical perspective and missionary perspective is detailed in Chapter II.

## **1.8. Research Methodology**

This study is purely Qualitative research informed by the constructivist model. The study through personal interviews and focus group discussions provided for the practitioners of *oku jeza* to construct the concept and practice of *oku jeza* which then was interpreted and revisited theologically in the light of church marriage. The subjection of the practice of *oku jeza* to a biblical and theological conversation qualifies this study as practical theology research (Hermans, 2004). Practical theological research is multidisciplinary encompassing empirical, political, ethical, psychological, sociological, pastoral, gender-oriented, and narrative-based research (Swinton & Mowat, 2016). As a guiding definition, practical theology is “critical, theological reflection on the practice of the Church as they interact with practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world” (Swinton & Mowat, 2016, p.74).

In this there has been a critical, theological reflection on *oku jeza* (the practice of the world) as it interacts with church marriage, specifically focusing on the pastoral and theological visitation of bridewealth. Practical theology further seeks to study “the experiences and constructions of individuals and communities, responding to what they perceive, construct as coming from God, and their discourse about God and towards God... Whatever practical theologians may investigate, it is always connected in some way to human discourse in relation to God” (Ganzevoort, 2004).

### **1.8.1 Research Approach**

Practical theology generally employs approaches or strategies used in social science

except it is unique in the sense of its theological reflection on the subject of the study. “Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (Creswell, 2014, p.31). Creswell considers three main approaches to scientific research; (i) qualitative approach, (ii) quantitative approach, and (iii) mixed methods approach. On the other hand, (Bryman, 2012) uses the term research strategy rather than research approach while maintaining qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods as the main strategies in research.

The Qualitative approach or strategy which is more employed in practical theology and social science research was equally used in this study. It is a “research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2012, p.380), this was the spirit of this study. This approach and or strategy contrasts with Quantitative research in that the latter usually tests objective theories by “examining the relationship between variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures” (Creswell, 2014, p.4).

In other words, quantitative research strategy employs quantification in both data collection and analysis. In this study, the quantitative approach was not desirable since the research is not in any way testing a given theory nor is it intending to numerically analyze the collected data. Rather, since the research is interested in analyzing how the practice of *oku jeza* can be revisited in relation to church marriage and eventually addressing a social problem. As such, the study has employed the qualitative approach

or strategy.

### **1.8.2. Research Design**

Qualitative research as outlined by Creswell (2014) has the following five major designs; narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographies, and case study. Although (Scharen & Vigen, 2011) critiqued the use of social science in theology and ethics, he concluded that “ethnography ought to be means of doing theology” (p. 47). The research approach used here is both ethnographic and interpretive. In ethnography, the researcher is an active participant in the study, not a distant observer. The researcher participated especially in the *oku jeza* ceremonies where the negotiation and payment of the bridewealth occurred. The researcher participated in some of the *oku jeza* functions to observe the negotiation and payment of the bridewealth. A combination of ethnographic and interpretive design was advantageous because it allowed the researcher to come closer to understanding both his interpretation of *oku jeza* and the experiences of research participants (Maggs-Rapport, 2000).

### **1.8.3. Theological Framework**

Using the qualitative design, this Practical Theology study draws much from the practical theological reflection suggested by Swinton (2016), an improved version of Pattison’s (1989) Mutual Critical Conversation. This model involves the identification of a situation in the practice of a contemporary church, which is explored using other sources of knowledge (qualitatively). The data obtained herein then constructively dialogues with scripture and tradition leading to the revision of the situation (the

practice of bridewealth). The weakness of this model is that the open dialogue allows “the data acquired from qualitative research [have] an equal voice within the conversation and can challenge theology and tradition in exactly the same way as theology and tradition can challenge its findings” (Swinton & Harriett Mowat, 2013, p. 40). This makes theology vulnerable to secular epistemology.

Therefore, the theological approach used in this study is the hospitality, conversation, and critical faithfulness (Swinton, 2016). In this approach to theological qualitative study, the practical theologian in identifying a situation or practice of theological interest, invites qualitative research methods as a ‘practical theologian.’ Here, the qualitative research method is highly valued and used in the epistemological study of the identified situation. However, the practical theologian allows it to undergo conversion so that it can be used for ‘God’s redemptive intentions for the world.’ The ‘converted’ qualitative research method is then under the authority of the scripture and guidance of the Holy Spirit used “to challenge forms of ‘false consciousness’ and to develop an approach that is marked by *critical faithfulness*” of the researcher (Swinton & Harriett Mowat, 2013, p. 44).

The current praxis studied here is the tradition of *oku jeza* in the Lugbara Marriage tradition which has in a way become an integral part of church marriage among the Lugbara Christian communities. The study employed a qualitative research method as a hermeneutical tool to do a cultural or contextual analysis of the practice of *oku jeza* and put it in a theological perspective. The insights (data) generated are subjected to a theological reflection by deriving pastoral and theological significance to it.

Thereafter, the theological dimensions drawn from the reflections have been used to generate authentic and faithful revisions of the tradition of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

### **1.9. Location of the study**

This study has been conducted among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile, in the West Nile region of Uganda. The Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile covers 9 administrative political districts of Adjumani, Moyo, Yumbe, Koboko, Obongi, Terego, Maracha, Ma'di-Okollo, Arua and the Arua City. The Lugbara majorly live in the Districts of Arua, Terego, Maracha, and Arua City. The headquarters of the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile is located at Mvara, about three (3) kilometers from the central business area of Arua City. The choice of the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile was dictated by the fact that the subjects of the research, the Lugbara Christians are largely found in this Diocese. In terms of ecclesiastical division, the Diocese has several Archdeaconries comprising Ma'di, Aringa, Keri, Koboko, Maracha, Terego, Rhino Camp, Oyibu, Logiri, Vurra, Arua, Arua Urban, and the Cathedral. Of these Archdeaconries, the ones which are predominant of Lugbara Christians are; Maracha, Terego, Arua, Arua Urban, Logiri, Vurra, and the Cathedral. Thus, the study concentrated on these Archdeaconries where the Lugbara are the majority.

### **1.10. Target population**

The target population in this research has been the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The Lugbara Christian community is chosen for this study because they are the majority Christian community in Ma'di-West Nile. Additionally,

the researcher, though not a Lugbara has lived among the Lugbara for over a decade, acclimatizing himself with the culture of the Lugbara. The study targeted both ordained and lay leaders as well as married Lugbara Christians within the mentioned Archdeaconries. To allow for the observation of the conduct of *oku jeza* events, the study also targeted the members of the Lugbara Christian community whose *oku jeza* ceremonies were at hand.

### **1.11. Sampling Methods**

The study mainly used a non-probability sampling method in arriving at the participants for both the group discussions and personal interviews. All the participants for the study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is commonly used by many research works “because they are found in any research paradigm and help in ensuring that quality sample is located without biases so as to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings” (Friday & Leah, 2024, p. 90). The participants however ought to meet the criteria to participate in the research. For example, for both the personal interviews and group discussions, the researcher interviewed only Lugbara Christians who have undergone *oku jeza* and church marriage in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile. This method of purposive selection of participants by the researcher by setting a “specific criterion which should be followed for participants to take part in the study” (Friday & Leah, 2024, p. 97) is called criterion sampling. This ensured that all the participants had an experiential knowledge of the topic of the study.

After having set the criteria for selection, the researcher drew from the prospective

participants ten of the participants for personal face-to-face interviews using both random purposeful and convenience purposeful sampling. This method works best “when the purposeful sample is larger than one can handle. It reduces judgment within a purposeful category” (Friday & Leah, 2024, p. 97). Considering the huge number of Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile who have undergone *oku jeza* and church marriage, the random purposeful sampling made it easier for the researcher to select a manageable number of participants for the study. Although the researcher intended to interview five clergies and five lay Christians, more clergy were selected for the interview since it was more convenient for the researcher to reach out to the clergy than the latter. The participants for the focus group interviews were also selected according to the convenience of their availability as long as they met the criteria of having undergone *oku jeza* and church marriage. Table 1.2 and Table 1.2 show participants for both the individual interviews and the group interviews respectively. Codes are used to identify the participants for ethical reasons.

*Table 1.1. Characteristics of participants for the individual interviews*

SN	Participant	Gender	Archdeaconry
1	Male Clergy A	Male	Vurra
2	Male Clergy B	Male	Arua Urban
3	Male Clergy C	Male	Maracha
4	Male Clergy D	Male	Vurra
5	Female Clergy A	Female	Terego
6	Female Clergy B	Female	Vurra

7	Male Clergy E	Male	Arua
8	Lay Participant A	Male	Logiri
9	Lay Participant B	Female	Arua
10	Lay Participant C	Female	Vurra

### 1.2. Participants for the group interviews

SN	Focus Groups	Archdeaconry	Males	Females	Total
1	Focus Group 1	Vurra	5	3	8
2	Focus Group 2	Maracha	3	4	7

#### 1.12. Data Collection Methods

The study utilized both secondary and primary sources in obtaining data. Secondary sources have been used to build up relevant literature related to bridewealth, focusing on how the practice can be revisited. The secondary data are primarily sourced from books and journals from the Library of Uganda Christian University (UCU), the Library of Uganda Christian University Arua Campus, and other electronic resources from the UCU Library and the Digital Theological Library. Data collection methods are tools or instruments used for data collection. A thematic approach of literature review in which “reviews of literature are organized around a topic or issue, rather than the progression of time” (“Literature Reviews,” n.d.) was used. Themes relating to the concept of bridewealth and Christian marriage were the key focus of the data sourced from secondary sources. The primary data was sourced from the field interviews, discussions and observations. This study therefore employed the following two methods of data

collection: participant observation and interviews.

### **1.12.1. Observation**

This method is chosen because certain aspects of the practice of *oku jeza* are better observed than enquired through interviews. According to Creswell (2014), observation is advantageous in that the researcher has a first-hand experience with the participant, he can record information as it occurs and it is useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss. The researcher has been able to attend at least three of the *oku jeza* (traditional marriage) functions among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese. Two of the observed *oku jeza* events occurred in Vurra Archdeaconry while the other was in Maracha Archdeaconry.

Observation has proved quite useful as the researcher observed first-hand the negotiation process of the amounts of items to be paid in bridewealth. Since the “Qualitative approach is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviors” and “Research in such a situation is a function of the researcher’s insights and impression” (Kothari, 2004, p. 5), observation becomes a useful tool for a balanced impression. A semi-structured observation approach was used. The researcher took fieldwork notes of the observation which was later used to compare notes with interview data. However, observation alone could not provide satisfactory data for *oku jeza*, as such, the method was much supported by both personal and group interviews.

### **1.12.2. Interviews and focus group discussions**

The study utilized semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted seven (10) face-to-face personal interviews and two group interviews (focus group discussions). Of the ten personal interviews, seven participants were clergymen and women while three were lay Christians. Meanwhile, five of the seven clergy were men and two were females. Two of the three lay Christians were females, and one was a male and all the participants in the two focus group discussions were lay Christians. Two focus group discussions were conducted. The researcher obtained consent from the informants to audio record the interviews which were later transcribed using TurboScribe. The transcribed data was validated by reviewing the transcription to the recorded audio, an online AI-powered audio-text transcriber. The transcription was validated by the researcher by carefully listening to each recorded interview to correct any transcription errors by the online software.

### **1.13. Data analysis**

The qualitative data collected through individual interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were analyzed using qualitative data analysis with an ethnographic approach involving conceptualization and coding of the collected data. Data was analyzed by categorization by bringing together groups of codes that collectively represent a broader concept. The coded data were then conceptualized by examining the relationships between these categories (Hennink et al., 2020). An inductive coding has been adopted in the data analysis. The researcher, using phrases and terms used by the participants generated codes to sort and categorize the data. Each category of data with similar codes has been examined in the context of the research

questions for further categorization and related concepts were theorized out of each category. These concepts contributed to the major sections of the reported data and subsequently the conclusion thereof.

#### **1.14. Data verification**

The study employed triangulation and reflexive journals to double-check the accuracy and quality of collected data. For example, triangulation involves the use of multiple sources of data to establish support for or identify contradictory information. This has been done by comparing the data from individual interviews to focus group discussions and participant observations. Meanwhile, the researcher did keep a journal for recording personal insights on the course of data collection to support the researcher's judgment of the quality of data collection.

#### **1.15. Conclusion**

This chapter provided a general overview by describing the historical background of the study, identifying the problem of the study, and pointing out both the main and specific objectives of the study. The chapter stated the scope of the study of revisiting bridewealth as practiced in the *oku jeza* of the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The study was limited to the Lugbara Christian communities who are resident in the Archdeaconries in the Diocese which are predominantly made up of the Lugbara. These Archdeaconries included; Maracha, Terego, Vurra, and Arua Urban. The chapter also considered the review of the scholarly literature related to the bridewealth in Africa with a specific focus on the practice among the Lugbara. This has helped to put the topic of bridewealth in a global context in addition to providing space

for this study to interact with prior academic works by other scholars on the topic. The literature review is also quite important as it has helped in identifying the existing research gaps in the revisitation of bridewealth relating to church marriage.

Further, the chapter highlighted the research methods employed in the study and finally identified the data collection techniques, data analysis and validation procedures, and ethical issues considered to uphold the integrity of the study. In conclusion, chapter one is foundational to the study of bridewealth among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The next chapter further details theoretical discussion on bridewealth in Africa, narrowing down to the bridewealth discourses in Uganda and among the Lugbara of Uganda.

## CHAPTER II

### PERSPECTIVES ON BRIDEWEALTH: AFRICAN TRADITION, BIBLICAL TEACHINGS AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter has provided a detailed discussion of bridewealth in Africa in general and a specific focus on bridewealth practice in Uganda and among the Lugbara. The chapter utilizes library and archival resources for this theoretical discourse. *Oku jeza* cannot be studied without considering the present discourse on bridewealth among other African peoples. This chapter provides a valuable link of the practice of bridewealth among the Lugbara and the rest of Uganda and Africa. Being a theological study, the chapter also delved in discussing the topic in the context of the Old and New Testament, and the bridewealth discourse in the Church in Africa. This lays the ground for the latter chapters.

#### 2.2. Bridewealth in Africa

The custom of marriage through the transaction of material goods, herein called bridewealth, is an age-old practice in Africa. Despite its global practice in different forms, bridewealth payment is highly developed and practiced in Africa. Mwamwenda & Monyooe (1997) have asserted that bridewealth is integral to marriage in Africa. In most of the African communities, there is hardly any marriage without the payment of bridewealth. This is because “in many traditional African societies, the husband could not assume full rights to the sexual, economic, or procreative powers of his wife until a standard portion of the bridewealth had been transferred” (“Bridewealth,” 2014).

Despite civil and legal battles to eliminate or at least regulate the bridewealth, it receives popular support in many African communities. A study by Mwamwenda & Monyooe (1997) among Xhosa-speaking graduates in South Africa reveals “88% of the participants supported the practice of bridewealth payment” (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997, p. 270).

African communities have a high regard for this customary practice for several reasons. Bridewealth is considered an “integral part of an African marriage because the custom heightened (a) the husband’s gratitude for a good wife, (b) his appreciation of the wife’s dignity and worth, and (c) the wife’s assurance of her husband’s continued recognition and respect” (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997, p. 270). In addition, the custom also “helped to create friendship between the intermarrying families and stabilized marriages as the whole community was involved” (Wepukhulu et al., 2023, p. 168). Conclusively, it is therefore right to deduce that “bridewealth legalizes the union, and it gives to husband’s rights over wives and children. Thus custody of children accrues to fathers” (Raitala, 2015, p. 129). In this kind of custom, no marriage is recognized without the payment of bridewealth, and in cases where a man fails to meet the obligations of bridewealth, he forfeits the rights over his wife and children.

It should also be emphasized that traditionally, the bridewealth as practiced in African communities has no intention of selling a woman for material gain. Magesa (1997) has well noted that “Bride-wealth is given not to purchase a woman to be married, as all the negotiations and manner of its ‘payment’ or delivery make it clear.” The view that bridewealth has a greater social function than it is misunderstood by many has also

been augmented by (Evans-Pritchard, 1931). Referring to the practice of the payment of bridewealth among the Azande and Tswana, Magesa (1997) strongly argues against the view that compares bridewealth to the market selling and buying.

Notably among the Azande of South Sudan, Magesa argues that bridewealth is not usually paid at once. That after the initial payment of the ‘token cattle’, the remaining items of the bridewealth are paid over a long period. And, at most, the children of the woman are the ones who complete paying the bridewealth. Magesa (1997) further illustrates that as much as bridewealth is given at once among the Tswana in Southern Africa, its “social and religious values remain the same as in most other ethnic groups in Africa... a form of thanksgiving to the wife’s people for the care they have taken of their daughter. It fosters and solidifies bonds of relationship that are difficult to sever” (Magesa, 1997). Magesa, therefore, concludes by outlining the two-fold major ‘uncorrupted’ functions of bridewealth: through bridewealth, the husband has exclusive sexual access to the wife, and it legitimizes the children born in the wedlock in their father’s lineage.

### **2.3. Origin of bridewealth in Africa**

Although several scholars have paid attention to several segments of the bridewealth only a few have dedicated to examining the origin of the bridewealth in Africa. A discussion on bridewealth in Africa should, however, not be devoid of considering its origin. Commonly, the origin of bridewealth in Africa has been linked to the end of endogamy, a practice where one marries from his or her kin or close relations like brother, sister and cousin. This argument has been supported by Chitakure (2021) whose

argument is based on “the fundamental religious assumption that in the beginning, all human beings are endogamous by necessity” (p. 48).

Chitakure argues that in the Christian narrative of the creation of Adam and Eve, their children probably practiced endogamy as there was no other human race to marry from. Chitakure further believes that the *Mwedzi* myth among the Shona where Mwari (God) created a man called Mwedzi (Moon), and two women, one of them called Hweva (Morning Star) and gave her to Mwedzi as a wife has a similar significance to endogamy as in the story of Adam and Eve found in the Christian Scriptures. These narratives easily support the idea that early human beings lived in endogamous marriages until a certain time when their numbers increased greatly. Bridewealth must have evolved following the possibility of endogamous marriages having gradually evolved into exogamous marriages. This view is equally supported by (Middleton, 1992) who while writing about the origin of the Lugbara pointed out a similar view. So, Chitakure concludes:

It can be argued that during the time when endogamy was practiced, bride wealth was not paid because there was no need to do so since women’s services were retained by their kin. Nothing was lost. If a man marries his sister or cousin, the services of the woman will remain in the same family. Bride wealth then possibly began when men started marrying outside their families or clans because, in the situation, the wife-givers experienced the loss of their daughter’s services (Chitakure, 2021, p. 49).

This theory therefore traces the origin of bridewealth to a time when marriages

graduated to exogamy. Based on the present traditional justifications for bridewealth including the fact that the bride-giving family loses her services which is to be compensated by the bridewealth, this theory holds water. This should lead us to examine the significance of bridewealth in Africa. Why is the bridewealth significant in African traditional marriages?

#### **2.4. Significance of bridewealth in Africa**

As noted earlier, bridewealth is integral to African customary marriage. Chinonyerem, (2014) has sought to examine the significance and justification for transferring bridewealth while contracting marriages in Africa. She points out the following six functions of bridewealth; (i) legal function, (ii) determination of paternity of children born in the marriage, (iii) symbolizes the worth of the bride, (iv) recognizes a woman's fecundity, (v) compensation of natal loss of labor and company, and (vi) confers respectability on the woman and the marriage. In his research which focused on the Kiga, Ganda and Langi of Uganda, Atekyereza (2001a), has identified similar functions of bridewealth. He specifies that bridewealth serves the following functions; (i) sign of commitment on the side of the man, (ii) legalizes the marriage, (iii) gives respect to the couples, (iv) it stabilizes the marriage, and (v) it gives the man authority over the woman and her sexuality. Let's examine these functions in detail.

##### **2.4.1. The Legal function of bridewealth**

This is perhaps the most outstanding function of bridewealth, it legitimizes the marriage. "In order to legalize a marriage contract, the husband-to-be or his family has to pay a "bride-price" to the girl's family" (Wieschhoff, 1941, p. 299). Chitakure (2021)

also argues that “the payment of bride wealth legalizes African marriage” (p. 53). In a study focusing on the Kiga, Ganda, and Langi in Uganda, Atekyereza, (2001) reports that the bridewealth legalizes marriage. However, it should be noted that whereas the bridewealth practitioners consider it a way of legalizing marriage, a “legal marriage in Uganda requires a formal marriage certificate issued by a recognised office” (Atekyereza, 2001a, p. 15). The African Theological Advisory group also attests that bridewealth “was the legal exchange which validated a marriage and confirmed the consent of both parents of the bride and bridegroom. Without the payment of dowry, no marriage was recognized as valid” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 128).

#### **2.4.2. Bridewealth helps stabilize marriage**

Relatedly, bridewealth is a very significant customary practice in the contraction of marriage in Africa because it solidifies marriage. It is hard to think of marriage in traditional African society without a bridewealth. Again, it is difficult to imagine how marriage in Africa would be without the giving and receiving of bridewealth. Expressing the inseparability of marriage and bridewealth in Africa, Waweru writes: “I do not know what marriage in Africa would look like without bridewealth. It would only result in a culture of divorce where one man or woman could jump from one person to another. Bridewealth helps to solidify marriage” (Waweru, 2011, p. 180).

#### **2.4.3. Material functions**

Bridewealth carries a material function in that the ‘scarce consumption resources’ are redistributed in the community through it. Ansell (2001) writes, “Rights to labor and land may be transferred through the practice of lobola, but so too are material goods”

(p. 700). The economics of bridewealth allows for the cyclic distribution of resources in the community in that the wealth received by a family when their daughter marries is also later given out when their son marries. Through the practice of bridewealth, a family that never had cows stands a chance of receiving cows and goats for as long as the family has a girl child. In this way, a community's material goods keep circulating within the community with every household standing a chance to receive and to give.

#### **2.4.4. Paternity determination**

In patrilineal societies where bridewealth is also commonly practiced, bridewealth helps determine the paternity of children born in the marriage. So, by paying bridewealth, the husband buys the reproductive rights of his wife. All the children produced by the woman as such will belong to the man. Magesa (1997) explains that through bridewealth, the children born in the marriage legitimate the children to the father's lineage and that "it is this legitimation that stabilizes the vital force of the clan and that makes the giving and receiving of bride-wealth so crucial from a religious point of view." The African traditional practices require that children born in the marriage must have an ancestral belonging, bridewealth therefore is the determination of the lineage of the children. Without such recognition, the children born in the union do not have a legit belonging to the father's clan and may face difficulties as Magesa further elucidates; "Without such recognition and legitimation by the bride-wealth, even if in symbolic nature in the form of offering—hoes, spears, or even some beverages—the status of the children born of a union becomes extremely ambiguous to themselves and dangerous to the community" (Magesa, 1997).

Magesa (1997) raises pertinent questions relating to the legitimacy of children born in a marriage. He concludes that the payment of bridewealth determines the legal association of children born in African marriages. Magesa opines;

In such circumstances, to which ancestral allegiance do the children belong? Which ancestors do they invoke? Can the ancestors look at them with favor? Since they may have no particular allegiance to the clan of the father, will they carefully observe its customs and taboos? To solve these issues, until legitimation is finalized by bride-wealth, as a rule children born of an illegitimate union are identified with and legally associated with the mother's clan and lineage (Magesa, 1997).

Bridewealth is highly valued in traditional Africa and hardly can a marital union be considered legit without it. It is a disgrace for a man and a woman to cohabit without starting to pay some part of the bridewealth and in such a case, the woman may not be highly valued by both the husband and the clan. Additionally, the children born in such a marital union without the giving of bridewealth do not have any legitimate lineage to their father's clan. "It is clear then that a marital arrangement without bridewealth is highly irregular and offensive, and that a woman who accepts cohabitation with a man without bridewealth does an injustice to the two clans concerned as well as to any children" (Magesa, 1997) born in the union.

#### **2.4.5. Initiation of the bride into the groom's clan**

Among the majority of the African people, bridewealth serves as a means of

transplanting the bride into the clan of the husband. Although this does not savage the woman's social relationship with her kin, through the payment of bridewealth, she acquires certain rights akin to that of the husband's clan's people. Writing about the practice of bridewealth as practiced by the Setswana in Southern Africa, Resane (2023) notes that with the payment of bridewealth, the bride "cuts ties with her biological family and becomes part of her husband's family, though this does not mean social or emotional severance with her origins" (p. 4). She however expresses that this practice can easily be seen to commodify women, arguing that the payment of the bridewealth makes a "woman becomes a commodity, possession bought from the market to become man's gratification tool and baby manufacturing machine for the marital clan" (Resane, 2023, p. 4).

The argument here is that in bridewealth, the woman becomes a commodity bought by the husband or his clan was a misconception from Western anthropologists and missionaries being perpetuated by opponents of bridewealth to date. In its pure and unadulterated nature, "bridewealth is given not to purchase the woman to be married, as all the negotiations and the manner of its 'payment' or delivery makes it clear" (Magesa, 1997). Magesa explains the fact that even after the marriage or giving of bridewealth, the woman always belongs to her family, clan, and people, it is ridiculous to consider it as a 'wife purchase.' Additionally, in traditional Africa, no one has been denied marriage because he is poor (Adhunga, 2014), this further illustrates that bridewealth was never a wife purchase otherwise the poor might fail to acquire wives. As with many other African societies, the payment of bridewealth is an integral part of

marriage in Uganda societies.

## **2.5. Present perspectives on bridewealth in Africa**

Bridewealth is one of the customary practices in Africa which has attracted mixed reactions with some proposing for its abolition, others advocating for its retention, and some advocating for certain reforms. In short, those who stand for its abolition argue mainly from a feminist and human rights perspective where bridewealth is seen to violate women's rights. In 'Harmful Traditions', Turner's (2009) voice represents the feminist view expressed from a human rights perspective which vehemently condemns bridewealth. In advocating against bridewealth as a 'harmful tradition', Turner writes:

Those who argue that everyone should be free to practice their culture ignore the fact that customary law, unwritten as it may be, is defined and guarded by a patriarchal society. The main tenet of customary law is the subordination of women. Those who want to keep women oppressed understand that reform would mean a loss of power and control. In fear of change, they pretend to be defending culture, while in reality they are fighting for the continued oppression of women (Turner, 2009, para. 22).

Bridewealth is also often seen as a fuel for domestic violence. Some scholars however argue that bridewealth is a customary tradition worth practicing in its present form. Lastly, some argue that bridewealth is good but certain aspects should be revised. These views have been articulated by several scholars as reviewed below.

### 2.5.1. The Abolitionist Perspective

The argument for the abolition of bridewealth is widely debated. Mubaiwa (2019) has been very critical of the practice of bridewealth pointing out that in Zimbabwe and among the Zimbabwean diaspora, bridewealth charges have very high bills. She supports the feminist argument that ‘practices such as Bride Price are harmful and represent barriers to the empowerment of women’ (Mubaiwa, 2019, p. i). For instance, her thesis found that where a marriage has been contracted without the payment of bridewealth, such women are disrespected and men humiliated for not being man enough in failing to pay bridewealth. Additionally, Mubaiwa’s (2019) study argued that many young couples who marry in consideration of bridewealth end up in heavy debt which eventually results in conflicts between the husband and wife. As such, bridewealth is regarded as “immoral and demeaning to the woman and must be done away with” (Mubaiwa, 2019, p. 156).

Equally, Tofa (2021) has discussed and echoed a dissenting voice against lobola (bridewealth), and opines that with the escalating violence against women associated with lobola, the practice should be abolished. Meanwhile, Kellet & Gnauck, (2017) study among the women in West Nile reveals that there is an intersection between cultural practices like bridewealth and AIDS and they concluded that economic empowerment programs should be able to interface with such cultural practices. In addition, some parents in Uganda do not value educational investment in their daughters because they consider the girl child as a source of wealth and marry them out at a tender age to benefit from bridewealth (Wodon et al., 2016), making a case

for the abolition of bridewealth.

The debate on the abolition, reformation, or retention of bridewealth has been a matter of concern in the 1995 Uganda Constituent Assembly. The 1995 constitutional review in Uganda debated the practice; some argued for its abolition while others argued for its retention. Subsequently, it was retained with the view that the ancient practice ‘does not violate women’s rights guaranteed under the Constitution and in international human rights instruments’ (Mujuzi, 2010, p. 414). However, led by the women’s rights advocacy Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called MIFUMI, a lawsuit was filed to challenge the constitutionality of the practice of bridewealth. The Court of Appeal ruled that the voluntary payment of bridewealth to build a relationship is not unconstitutional. Their ruling further throws light that because some men use their payment of bridewealth as a scapegoat to justify domestic violence against their wives, yet several men never beat their wives despite having paid bridewealth. They therefore find it hard to conclude that bridewealth breeds domestic violence against women (*Constitutional Appeal No: 02 of 2014, 2015*).

### **2.5.2. The revisionist perspective**

Generally, the arguments against bridewealth surround the abuse of the practice by some community members making the practice one of the contributors of social evils. This study argues against the abolition of the bridewealth and the view that the bridewealth promotes social evils like domestic violence against women. As Cherishe (2021) argues, that bridewealth is not the sole reason for domestic violence since some

men who were not highly charged with bridewealth still barter their wives whereas some men who were highly charged with bridewealth do not barter their wives. Another study has found that there is no evidence which supports the “notion that the practice of bride price has detrimental effects on the well-being of married women” (Lowes & Nunn, 2018, p. 136).

In a study which examined the link between bridewealth and domestic violence in a Ghanaian district, Dery (2015) argues that bridewealth promotes the subordination of women (wives) to men (husbands). His study has found that despite wide acceptance of bridewealth by the community, recent changes in the practice of bridewealth are undesirable. He argues that bridewealth contravenes the principle of equality of all persons regardless of their gender as enshrined in the constitution. Arguing that “the practice of bride-price makes the marriage unequal because the woman is considered paid for by the man” (Dery, 2015, p. 266). Further, Dery argues that bridewealth has become ‘expensive, unaffordable and unacceptable.’ Arguing for its reform, Dery’s study also finds a strong correlation between bridewealth and domestic violence since the ‘practice of bride-price, therefore, cements and enhances gender power imbalances and women’s inequality in society.’ Dery calls for a concerted effort to mitigate the effect of bridewealth but also for an urgent reform of bridewealth.

In a similar study in Eastern Uganda, Hague et al. (2011) have uncovered the link between bridewealth and domestic violence, advocating for its abolition or reform. Their study has revealed that the practice of bridewealth payment commodifies women which increases male dominance over women and perpetuates domestic violence. They

found that rural women have the bigger burden of domestic violence linked to bridewealth. 88% of their interviewees suggested either the abolishment or reform of the practice. Their argument for the abolition or reform in the practice of bridewealth is hinged on its link to domestic violence against women, arguing that bridewealth presents women as commodities.

Referring to the consequences of bridewealth on women as ‘latent, unrecognized and unintended,’ Adjei (2019) acknowledges the negative impact of bridewealth, and argues the proscription of bridewealth is likely to be slow or fail. The study conducted in Ghana has asserted the practice of bridewealth poses two major implications. First, bridewealth places a moral obligation of respect and subordination on the part of women, and this psychologically creates an ownership mentality in men. This ownership mentality “may lead them to see their wives as their ‘purchase’ over whom they exercise unfettered authority, including physical and psychological abuse” (Adjei, 2019, para. 19). Secondly, the transactional nature of bridewealth could ‘objectify’ or ‘commodify’ women in marriage. Nevertheless, the study showed that the practitioners did not ‘offend any communal morality or societal ethos’, hence, it should be stayed.

In his work, Baloyi (2013) focused on culturally oriented hindrances to marriage among young people in Africa and identified excessive family interference, the negative role of lobola (bridewealth), and the role of possible infertility as key hindrances. He has significantly noted that bridewealth was not ‘intended to give rise to any form of abuse or business dealing, but some people used it to subject women and even to make a lot of money out of it’ (Baloyi, 2013, p. 70). Baloyi concludes that owing to the good

aspects and aim of the bridewealth, the custom can be revised to maintain its intended role in marriage. This view is also consistent with that held by Asimwe (2013), Lawrence-Hart (2017), and Asen (2017). The latter in her feminist perspective calls for reformation of the practice, especially the tendency of commodification and commercialization of bridewealth which otherwise makes the practice to become a 'wife-for-property-exchange' (Asen, 2017, p. 42).

In his study of the practice among the Bafumbira of Western Uganda, Ruguna (2015)) only recommended the abolition of the commercialization of bride price implying that practice and its intended role in the society should be retained. Relatedly, Ademiluka (2021) echoes that 'rather than stopping payment of bride price for Nigerian Christians, one would call for a return to its traditional purpose' (p. 7) as he notes that abolishment of the practice could lead to social disorder in the Nigerian Christian community. This view is supported by a study in Northern Uganda that has found that the absence of bride price was problematic and likely to 'increase the vulnerabilities of girls' (Schlecht et al., 2013, p. 240). Despite his feminine tone, Asimwe (2013) has a significant point: "Since the practice has popular support among the community members it should not be abolished as demanded by some politicians and activists, but there is a need to modify it" (p. 36).

The study agrees with the views that bridewealth is a very critical custom in Africa, in this respect, among the Lugbara Christian community. The present study acknowledges that the Lugbara Christian community practice of *oku jeza* is not devoid of the tendencies of the commodification of women and the commercialization of the

practice. Such tendencies reap the custom of *oku jeza* of its intended purpose in society and might undermine church marriage. Bridewealth, specifically among the Lugbara and generally among the African cultures is in dire need of “re-visitation, re-evaluation, and re-adjustment” (Motswapong & Machinya, 2020, p. 113). The research premises itself in contributing to the pastoral and theological approaches in revisiting the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community that upholds the intent of the practice in society.

## **2.6. Bridewealth in Uganda**

Uganda has a diverse ethnic grouping majorly belonging to the Bantu, the Nilotics, and the Sudanic people. Among the tribes of Uganda, there is barely any without the custom of bridewealth payment. Marriages in Uganda are customarily contracted by the payment of bridewealth by the groom or his kin to the kin of the bride. Bridewealth is highly cherished and practiced in Uganda (Asiimwe, 2013) and it is an integral aspect of marriages Kaye et al., (2005) and Bishai & Grossbard (2010). A report by Hague & Thiara (2009) in collaboration with MIFUME, a local women’s rights advocacy Non-Governmental Organization in Uganda, revealed significant support for the practice. Their interview results reported only 28% of the study population, just below a third argued for the abolition of the payment of bridewealth (Hague & Thiara, 2009, p. 30). Proponents for the abolition or reform of bridewealth in Uganda are growing.

## **2.7. The Lugbara of Uganda**

To understand the practice of bride-wealth and *oku jeza* among the Lugbara, we need to seek to know the Lugbara of Uganda. The Lugbara are Bari-speaking (Middleton,

1992) or Sudanic-speaking ethnic groups (Middleton, 1973) belonging to the Ma'di-Moru (Shiroya, 1981). Middleton (1973) described the Lugbara as a small-scale African people found in the northwestern (West Nile) region of Uganda, and Zaire, now called the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Accordingly, Storer (2020) brings to light that the present word 'Lugbara' has no literal meaning in the Lugbara language also known as *Lugbarati*. Storer presents that “during the early years of British rule, groups which would become known as the Lugbara were documented variously as the *Lubari*, *Lugwari*, *Lugwari* and *Logbara*” (Storer, 2020b, p. 79). The Lugbara was primarily an agrarian society mainly growing *ondu* also called finger millet (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2016). They also kept cattle and other livestock (Middleton, 1960).

Having descended from the Ma'di-Moru group, the first migrants from the Ma'di group from Sudan to Lugbaraland are believed to have trekked through Mount Midigo in the present Yumbe District. Oral tradition has it that the Lugbara are a result of intermarriage between a Ma'di-Moru group and the Kebu and Lendu (Alidri, 2016). The latter who were the immediate neighbors of the Lugbara were believed to have preoccupied some parts of the present Lugbara Land. “The Kebu moved farther south but continued to supply the newcomers (the Lugbara), with whom they remained on very friendly terms, with iron hoes and other iron articles” (Shiroya, 1981, p. 125). Shiroya (1981) writes that the Kebu and the Lendu are believed to have come to the Lugbaraland “in small separate groups and at different times. They therefore claim various ancestors as the founding fathers of their group” (p. 125). Other Lugbara groups

who arrived in the Lugbaraland include one that broke from the Bari and another led by Banale's father who descended from the Moru and arrived via the Acholi territory (Shiroya, 1981). The subsequent evolution and formation of the Lugbara people from the three groups has best been summarized in this paragraph by Shiroya (1981):

It is evident that the Lugbara, like many other ethnic groups in Africa, cannot claim ethnic purity. It is, however, also true that they have evolved their own cultural traits which have given them their own unique ethnic identity and character. However, in the course of the evolution and growth of that identity, the core of the Lugbara society (i.e. the Moru-Madi groups) absorbed a large number of non-Lugbara peoples. Thus, the majority of Lugbara population in Aringa and Maraca were originally Bari, or at least they were Bari – or Kawa-speakers. In Terego, the Tereo group has some historical connections with the Lwo speaking peoples across the Nile. The Lugbara population in Vurra especially in Logiri Division, has a strong mixture of people who originally spoke Kebu (Shiroya, 1981, p. 135).

The present-day Lugbara of Uganda are no longer a small-scale group of people as described by Middleton (1973), they are the largest ethnic group in the West Nile region (Titeca, 2009). The 2014 National Housing and Population (NHPC) puts Arua, the main district of the Lugbara as the fourth most populous district in Uganda after Wakiso, Kampala, and Kibaale respectively. They occupy the original counties of Maracha, Terego, Ayivu, Vurra, and Aringa. Presently, the Aringa however has claimed to be an independent people from the Lugbara despite the historical claims of them being

Lugbara. The Lugbara are found in the political districts of Arua (Vurra), Terego, Maracha, and Arua City (Ayivu). These four main groupings of the Lugbara (Maracha, Ayivu, Terego, and Vurra) people have similar kinship and marriage systems.

### **2.8. Kinship and Marriage among the Lugbara**

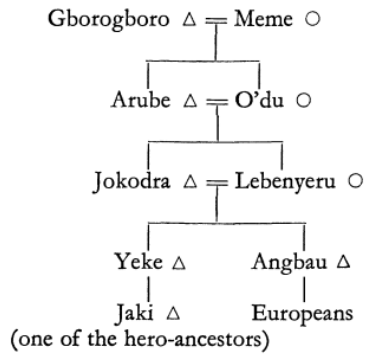
Despite having evolved as the Lugbara people, the Lugbara do not have a centralized administration as in the kingdom system (Casale, 1982). Kinship among the Lugbara is paternal and it only extends within a very short relation and distance. Writing on the kinship among the Lugbara, Middleton states that “Traditional Lugbara values are based upon kinship, in particular agnatic kinship, as the overall organizing principle of society” (Middleton, 1960, p. 453). They were organized in small autonomous groups of about 4,000 people call *suru* which is generally made up of a single clan (“Lugbara,” n.d.). The clans or *suru* are exogamous, it is forbidden for a member of a clan to marry from the same clan. Marriage among the Lugbara happens by the transfer of cattle and other items from the groom’s kin to the bride’s kin.

### **2.9. Bridewealth among the Lugbara**

The Lugbara alongside other African people consider marriage critical in passing lineage from one generation to another. As noted by Dalfovo (1991), marriage births a Lugbara home, and marriage is contracted by the transfer of bridewealth, largely by the use of cattle. Among the traditional Lugbara, “Without bride-wealth marriage is not possible and, consequently, a poor person without cattle remains unmarried” (Dalfovo, 1991, p. 47). As an agrarian society, before cattle became a medium of exchange among the

Lugbara, they used iron hoes (Middleton, 1992) to pay bridewealth. The contact between the Lugbara and the Europeans (Belgians) greatly influenced the transition from the use of iron hoes to the use of cattle as bridewealth. Considering the social change among the Lugbara, Barnes-Dean (1986) has asserted that the Belgians befriended their first Lugbara contacts, made them chiefs, “and paid them handsomely in cattle. Cattle soon became the medium of bridewealth exchange” (Barnes-Dean, 1986, p. 340).

Lugbara mythology traces the giving of bridewealth to their first ancestors, Gborogboro and Meme – the first people created by *Adronga 'ba o'bpiri* (God the Creator). Gborogboro is believed to have come from the sky (heaven) and married Meme, the former is said to have given bridewealth for marrying the latter (Middleton, 1954). The couple is said to have given birth to a pair of male and female children. This pair after having grown also did get married and this manner of marrying one's sibling continued until it was not necessary as their number increased. It is also believed that “since they were siblings bridewealth was not given at these unions” (Middleton, 1954, p. 190). Figure 1 below shows the descendants of Gborogboro and Meme in the Lugbara mythology.



**Figure 1. Descendants of Gborogboro and Meme. Source: Middleton, J. (1954)**

The Lugbara mythology, according to Middleton (1954) points out that the giving of bridewealth did not continue after Gborogboro until the time of Dribidu (the hairy one). Dribidu, who also is known as Banyale ‘eater of man’ was believed to have been driven from East of the Nile because of this vice and he crossed to the present Lugbaraland via Gimara (in the present Obongi District). He was superhuman and magical. Banyale then found a leprous woman whom he healed and later impregnated her, “which resulted in war with her kin and the subsequent payment of seduction fine and bridewealth... Before this time there had been no fighting between men and, except in the case of the first created pair of humans, there had been no bridewealth” (Middleton, 1954, p. 191). In his observation of the then Lugbara, Middleton (1954) concludes that “There is, of course, an intimate connexion for Lugbara between fighting and bridewealth, since most fighting is, or was, due to quarrels over such transactions” (p. 191). This mythology, although it is not widely upheld by many today (Dalfovo, 1998) provides an insight of the origin of bridewealth payment among the Lugbara.

Bridewealth is one of the outstanding features of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara communities to date. It is usually calculated and demanded by the family and or clan

of the bride, an average of about seven (7) heads of cattle is usually demanded (Lorist et al., 2022). Traditionally, arrows were majorly used to pay for bridewealth before the introduction of cattle (Cadri, 2007) and money as a medium of exchange. Presently, money, other animals such as goats, chickens, and other assorted items are included in the bridewealth. As in many other African cultures, bridewealth has been grossly abused by the members of the society. In their research, Lorist et al., (2022) have reported the close link between patriarchy, bridewealth, and domestic violence among the Lugbara. As indicated by one of their respondents, by paying bridewealth, men often feel they have bought their wives:

Men believe that after paying bride price, they have bought the women. So he treats the women as property, because of having paid bride price. Any time he comes at home at night and he wants to have sex, he can have it; the women must say “yes.” Sometimes it causes marital rape (Lorist et al., 2022, p. 241).

The realization of the challenges of bridewealth on the Christian faith and church marriage among the Lugbara was discussed in the Fourth Synod of the Arua Diocese (Catholic) in 1994. One major concern the Synod raised was the exorbitant bridewealth demanded at marriage. The Synod condemned the excessive charging of bridewealth and asked Christians to abandon bridewealth which has become abusive (Cadri, 2007). The Synod raised their concerns against exorbitant charges of bridewealth and other vices in these words declaring such practices as stumbling blocks to the faith: “We are all aware of the cultural elements like superstition, polygamy, and exorbitant bride

wealth which prevent Christ from being in our hearts and our society” (Second Diocesan Synod 1994: Five Years Pastoral Plan for Arua Diocese, 1994, quoted in Cadri, 2007, p. 127).

Presently, marriage among the Lugbara is effected by transferring the bridewealth from the groom to the bride’s kin (Wadiko, 2019a). Various items mainly cattle, goats, chicken, money, and others make the bridewealth. These items paid in bridewealth as described by Wadiko (2019) are largely categorized as follows; (1) *Jotile*, translated as ‘door’ paid as goats, chicken, cassava, or in cash worth the non-cash items. The items paid in *jotile* are either eaten by the clan members of the bride or remain with the bride’s family. (2) *Ali* which derives from *Ali’baza* meaning ‘sexual intercourse.’ The payment of *ali* grants the man sexual access to the woman. “Lugbara people so much condemn sex between unmarried people. So, when a man marries a woman, he has to pay for sleeping with her. One cow is paid as *Ali*, to the bride's relatives to legalize their sexual intercourse” (Wadiko, 2019, p. 68). (3) The next main item in the Lugbara bridewealth is the *aje* where *oku jeza* derives. *Aje* translates literally as ‘buying’, so one would think that it is the price for ‘buying’ the woman. This also is in some Lugbara dialects called *mali* meaning wealth. On the *aje*, Wadiko (2019) writes:

All the remaining cattle fall under this, for instance, if the man pays ten herds of cattle, one is removed for *Ali*, and nine remain for *Aje*. The number of cattle paid for *Aje* is determined by the agreement between the two families. Being a patriarchal society, this sitting includes the paternal relatives. In fact, women do not say a word during this time. A mother does

not know how many animals are to be paid for the daughter (Wadiko, 2019, p. 68).

It should be noted that traditionally, among the Lugbara, a man is not obliged to pay all the items charged in bridewealth at once. For instance, it is only the *jotile* and *ali* which are mandatorily required at the time of the marriage. And, the cattle paid as *aje* or *mali* are usually paid after the bride has had her first birth (Wadiko, 2019). In an event where the cattle in *aje* are paid upfront and at the time of the marriage, they are usually refunded fully in the case of childlessness. These cattle are also refundable at divorce and in that case, one cattle per child born by the woman is retained (Lorist et al., 2022). Since a man is seen to have ‘bought’ his wife by the transfer of bridewealth, he usually exercises full authority over her sexuality, labor, and other services. Failure to perform the duties for which she has been fully paid often results in her mistreatment and the woman hardly can think of leaving the marriage since her kin will be demanded to refund the bridewealth (Wadiko, 2019).

## **2.10. Bridewealth and the Bible**

The discussion of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian Communities fits well by considering bridewealth in the bible. We must acknowledge that Christians highly regard the Bible as having authority over all aspects of life. Individuals and Christian communities worldwide draw their day-to-day life from the Holy Book. Despite the changes in the adaptation of the Christian Scriptures in different cultures, the moral authority it holds over its adherents influences every bit of a Christian. In matters relating to bridewealth, most Christians in the Lugbara communities make several allusions to the scriptures to

validate the practice. Here, we shall examine scholarly texts putting bridewealth in the context of the Holy Book of Christianity.

### **2.10.1. Bridewealth in the Old Testament**

A bulk of indicators for the practice of bridewealth in the bible are to be found in the Old Testament section. Broadly, there are four scholarly views on the existence of bridewealth in the Christian Holy Scriptures. The first view is that bridewealth is explicitly found in some passages, the second view talks about dowry, not bridewealth, the other view believes it is indirect dowry while the last one talks of marriage gift. Some of the views on these practices are to be found in different bible passages while some are the same passages being interpreted divergently.

In 'The Bible in the Lobola Debate', Togarasei (2021) has argued that the only Hebrew text which mentions 'bride price' is to be found in Genesis 34:12, in the story of the rape of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. According to him, the Hebrew word, *mohar* which translates to 'bride price' was used by the son of Hamor (Shechem). Shechem promised to pay *mohar* (bride price) if Jacob and his sons allowed him to marry Dinah. In his analysis of the marriage gifts in ancient Palestine, Lemos (2010) as well as Machingura & Tatira (2021) have argued that bridewealth had a central role in Hebrew culture's kinship and inheritance systems. However, Lemos (2010) asserts that significant social changes shifted from the initial practice of bridewealth to dowry. Lemos also argues that the Hebrew word *mohar* may not exclusively refer to bridewealth as in other contexts, it also relates to dowry.

Lemos (2010) further explains that the giving of *mohar* was a legal requirement found in the Torah, especially in Exodus 22 and Deuteronomy 22. In the case of rape, the perpetrator was obligated to pay *mohar* to the father of the victim. Lemos argues against the view that the marriage gift mentioned here directly given to the girl's father could be dowry but bridewealth. He also points out the similarity in the Hebrew texts and the Middle Assyrian Laws except “there is no uniformity in the amount given as bridewealth in the biblical texts that mention this prestation” (Lemos, 2010, p. 40).

Togarasei (2021) has pointed to a couple of other passages seemingly pointing out the practice of bridewealth in the Bible. One example he points out is the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah, where Eliezer, Abraham's servant, offered some marriage gifts to Rebecca, many believed it to be bridewealth. Lemos (2010) affirms, “it seems likely that this gift may be classified as bridewealth, for it is property tendered to the bride's family” (p. 47). He then points out the bride services Jacob offered to his uncle Laban to have Racheal and Leah. We read that Jacob offered two sets of seven years of service for his father-in-law to have his two wives. “Unlike in the narrative of Rebecca, Leah and Rachel are not given marriage gifts as it is their father who benefits from Jacob's labour” (Togarasei, 2021, p. 68).

Perhaps the story of Leah and Rachel has demonstrated a form of bride service (price) in which the women felt sold off by their father to their husband although Lemos (2010) points out that it was not a common practice in the ancient New East. The statements made by both Leah and Rachel as they parted with their father speak volumes about the fact that bride service was a sort of bridewealth offered by manual labor. Both women

acknowledged that the bride service Jacob provided to their father validated their marriage to Jacob and removed their inheritance rights. They both said: "... Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us" (Genesis 31:14-15). Lemos (2010) also considers this form of bride service as bridewealth paid by one's labor.

Similarly, Togarasei (2021) pointed out, bride service can also be found in Joshua 15:6 and 1 Samuel 18:25-27. In the former, during the conquer and settlement in the Promised Land, Caleb offered his daughter to a man who would conquer Kiriath Sepher. So, Othniel offered a bride service to Caleb to acquire the latter's daughter as wife. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 18:25-27, David married Michal by a bride service. Although Saul intended to put David on the frontline to die at war, David was able to deliver what the king required in exchange for his daughter. So, in essence, David offered bridewealth in form of service to marry Saul's daughter, Michal. Lemos (2010) believes that "this text provides the most unambiguous example of giving bridewealth in the Hebrew Bible" (Lemos, 2010, p. 42).

Other Hebrew Bible texts where bridewealth could have been practiced among others include; Genesis 12 where Pharaoh offered gifts for Sarai. Lemos (2010) argues that since Abraham presented himself as a brother to Sarai, it is likely that the gifts offered by Pharaoh to Abraham were meant to be bridewealth. Arguably, the bridewealth was to make Sarai become Pharaoh's wife. Lemos also points to a text in Hosea 3 where God commanded Hosea to marry an adulterous woman. Hosea writes that he "bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley" (Hosea 3:2). It has

however been argued that the word for buy used here does not derive from the word *mohar*. Some argue that this could have been bridewealth contrary to Lemos (2010) who believed this could have been a purchase considering the woman was already married and that the wealth was most likely not paid to the woman's parents.

In a nutshell, “bridewealth played a central role in the solemnization of the Jewish marriage... So, it is difficult to talk about marriage in the Jewish or Old Testament context without bridewealth” as noted by Machingura & Tatira (2021, p. 81). Lemos (2010) summarizes the Hebrew Bible texts that mention cases of bridewealth or at least similar to it. He categorizes them into four: “We have cases of bridewealth, of dowry, of indirect dowry, and of a marital gift (*mattan*) that was of unclear character” acknowledging that “many of these cases were dubious” (Lemos, 2010, p. 59). The texts which explicitly mentions the case of bridewealth include; Ex 22:16-17; Deut 22:28-29; 1 Samuel 18; Genesis 24; and Genesis 29. Meanwhile, the texts that mention cases of dowry or indirect dowry are Genesis 12, Hoshea 3:1-2; Joshua 15:16-17; 1 Kings 9; Genesis 29:24, 29; Genesis 24.

To emphasize the likely wide practice of bridewealth, Lemos opines: “Thus, the clear-cut examples of bridewealth outnumbered those clear-cut cases involving dowry or indirect dowry... there is a still a larger number of texts that deal with bridewealth than with any other marital prestations” (Lemos, 2010, p. 59). Meanwhile, Waweru (2011) acknowledging the wide practice of bridewealth in the Hebrew culture writes that *mohar*, “does not strictly mean bridewealth in terms of money but the equivalent of wealth that exchanged hands during marriage” (p. 180). We, therefore, note that bridewealth or

marriage prestations have been widely practiced in the Old Testament.

### **2.10.2. Bridewealth in the New Testament**

The New Testament has neither recorded instances of marriage prestation nor any commandment nor condemnation of it. It is however argued that the New Testament must have been aware of placing a price on brides. However, anthropological studies reveal that the first-century Hebrews practiced betrothal (bridewealth) payments (Malina, 2011) to seal the marriage. The allegory of God having to pay for the bride by the groom laying down his life mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and Ephesians 2:13 is thought to have a relationship to bridewealth or bride price (Ingram, 2006) and (Fox, 2020). The sacrificial blood of the Lamb shed to purchase the bride “was the most precious and most valuable marriage payment ever made” (Pati, 2009, p. 90). Hence, “it can, therefore, be safely assumed that it is not wrong for Christians to pay and receive bride prices” (Ademiluka, 2021, p. 3).

### **2.11. Christian Missionaries in Africa and Bridewealth**

Many African traditional practices have met great opposition from missionaries who presented a Western form of Christianity on the continent. The missionaries did not spare Bridewealth. Like most Western anthropologists, the missionaries looked at bridewealth as the buying and selling of women as wives and they grossly condemned it. Although some missionaries accepted African marriages on condition that they be monogamous, they condemned bridewealth describing it as a “sell-out” (Godwyll & Wilson, 2012) and a “slavish and degrading form of wife buying” (West, 2002, p. 86). However, many African communities that turned to Christianity resisted the attempted elimination of

bridewealth by the missionaries and they continued to practice it (West, 2002). As such, some missionary societies and churches allowed the practice of bridewealth for African Christians. For examples:

The Roman Catholic Missionaries [in most cases] ensured that bridewealth had been paid before a marriage was solemnized. In spite of the misinterpretations about the payment of prestations by Christian missionaries, the practice remained in place and customary marriage persisted in many African communities (Godwyll & Wilson, 2012, p. 140).

The resilience of the African traditional practices in the face of opposition from missionary Christianity as described by (Chitakure, 2017) is not just peculiar to the Shona in Zimbabwe but common to many African communities. As noted by Chitakure, many African Christians entering church marriage have to pay allegiance to the customary requirements for marriage. Among the Shona, Chitakure (2017) writes; “the traditional marriage rituals precede the Christian wedding. The bridewealth negotiations and other marital rituals must be done first before the couple can marry in church” (p. 66). This relates to the present practice among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile which requires written parental consent from the bride’s parents before the church marriage can occur. The rationale is that for a “marriage to be valid, the marital consents must be free from any defect” (Chitakure, 2017, p. 66) including the customary standpoint of marriage.

## **2.12. African Christian Theological perspectives on bridewealth**

Bridewealth is a reality African Christian Theology cannot ignore. Olando (n.d.) in his

work on 'Bridewealth among Dinka Anglicans in Southern Sudan' and Ademiluka (2021) in his work 'Bridewealth and Christian Marriage in Nigeria' have important perspectives on bridewealth. Olando acknowledges that bridewealth is "one feature of traditional Dinka life that has affected the Anglican Church in Sudan" (Olando, n.d., p. 348). Ademiluka (2021) has equally noted that bridewealth is widely practiced in Nigeria. Among the Dinka, Olando observes that the role of bridewealth is to acquire rights from the man over the children to be born in the proposed marriage. In addition, bridewealth also traditionally serves as a way of compensating the bride's labor which will be transferred from her paternal family to the marital family noted Ademiluka (2021). These among others are the functional roles of bridewealth across most practitioners in Africa.

In his biblical review of bridewealth and the Christian Bible, Ademiluka discovered that there is no mention of it in the New Testament but its practice has been well documented in the Old Testament. Despite the abuse of the institution of bridewealth including the commercialization and all the negative effects thereof, Ademiluka (2021) argues for the revisit of the practice instead of canceling it. He pointed out that canceling bridewealth could have a catastrophic impact on marriage in Africa, and calls for a return to its traditional intention. Ademiluka concludes that "if its traditional purpose is adhered to, payment of bride price need not lead to women abuse, and it is not contrary to any biblical teaching" (p. 7).

Meanwhile, Olando asserts that most Christian leaders in South Sudan view the bridewealth favorably. "Dinka Anglicans participate in it and so do other church leaders across South Sudan. These leaders give various reasons why they participate in this

practice. One of them is that it gives the groom status in society...” (Olando, n.d., p. 349). The Dinka Christian Theology, according to Olando, believes that Jesus who reveals himself in both the Old and the New Testaments is an uncle to all Dinka. Thus, Jesus who was present in the Old Testament did not forbid the payment of bridewealth then (as we see it in the marriages of Isaac and Jacob). Therefore, “... there is no harm in the bride gift custom. This is because *Nhialic* approved bridewealth in the Old Testament in the life of Abraham’s son Isaac and grandson Jacob” (Olando, n.d., p. 349).

In his attempt to formulate an African Theological thought on bridewealth, Olando (n.d.) has a favorable thought on bridewealth. He refers to the feminist African Theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye who did not condemn the practice but rather saw it as a formation of a bond and friendship between two families, that of the groom and that of the bride. Olando also cites both Mugabi and Osadolor who both argue that no culture is superior to another and that African theological thought believes that God is present in all activities [of good intent] including bridewealth. Further, Olando refers to the works of O’Donovan who although a non-African had a positive view of African practices including bridewealth. Therefore, from an African Theological viewpoint, bridewealth is an important aspect of friendship and relationship building. The African Theologian argues that;

Jesus is our friend and his friendship can be seen in our relationships with God through him. God is the source of all relationships and this [marriage relationships] should be expressed even in the exchange of bride gifts. We have a friend in Jesus and there is nothing bad in encouraging friendships. The friendship motif goes hand in hand with the African philosophy of sharing

what you have with those whom you want to befriend (Olando, n.d., pp. 353-354).

The Theological Advisory Group that was set up to provide theological guidance to evangelical churches in Africa did not condemn the payment of 'dowry' as they call it. They argued that it is not condemned by the Holy Book, rather it has been sanctioned by the bible. The group writes; "The fact that Scripture nowhere condemns payment of dowry but instead contains examples of God's people exchanging dowry for marriage, demonstrates that God's Word does not condemn dowry but implicitly supports its legitimacy" (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 130). Referring to some biblical occasions where bridewealth has been paid such as that of Isaac, Jacob, and David, the group concludes that "Dowry seemed to be paid according to the man's ability. Abraham, a wealthy man, gave out of his wealth while Jacob, in his material poverty, gave his labour" (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 130).

The Theological Advisory Group further argued that bridewealth as practiced in African culture has the same meaning as practiced in the bible. They therefore do not see any reason to condemn the practice except for the vices related to greed which has resulted in higher charges of bridewealth for material gain. Ademiluka (2021) and (Olando, n.d.) hold a similar view when they argued that the bible has in no way condemned the payment of bridewealth. The group however acknowledges that bridewealth payment though it was culturally legit is not essential for Christian marriage. This means that a Christian family that asks for bridewealth should not be condemned in as much as bridewealth does not legitimize Christian marriage. Thus, the payment of bridewealth is 'optional' to

Christian families but not a requirement for Christian marriages.

### **2.13. Revisiting bridewealth in the light of African Christianity**

A few of the African Christian writers have voiced their calls for reforms or revisiting of bridewealth in Africa. For example, while acknowledging that the meaning and role of bridewealth have much shifted from the traditional norm, Atekyereza (2001) calls for a reform of the practice to allow for its fairness. He writes; “the need to redefine the meaning and role of bride-wealth in as far as it gives rights and obligations is acknowledged if such distribution of rights and obligations is to be fair” (Atekyereza, 2001a, p. 38). Revisiting of bridewealth becomes very vital in cases where its original intention is being abused in the modern era. In Botswana and many parts of contemporary Africa, bridewealth is turning up to become the price of the bride. This has been observed by Motswapong & Machinya (2020) arguing that unlike in the past where the practice has been a token of appreciation from bride takers to bride givers, today, it has become “coerced and commercialized thereby leading to a shift to bride price” (p. 106). To them, bride price is the acquisition of a woman’s body at a price. Such a shift from the traditional significance of bridewealth needs to be reviewed. The call to revisit or develop a theology of bridewealth in modern Africa has also been echoed by Adhunga (2014). He argues that “While bride-wealth has meaning and value in traditional African societies because of poverty, intercultural marriages, and modern influences, it is difficult to maintain the concept of bride-wealth in the present society” (Adhunga, 2014, p. 171). He, therefore, calls for a theology of inculturation to better understand bridewealth and “to sustain its meaning and value in reference to the dignity of women” (p. 171).

Following this call for reform, proposals for revisiting bridewealth have already been sounded. The Theological Advisory Group has listed insightful approaches in revisiting the bridewealth payment. First, they write that bridewealth must not be considered as an essential or mandatory practice in Christian marriage. The group advocates for liberty for Christian families to choose whether or not to ask for bridewealth. They have argued that “The payment of dowry was traditionally an essential part of every legitimate marriage but with the passing of time and changing of customs, dowry should not be considered essential for every Christian marriage today” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 131).

Secondly, the Theological Advisory Group has also voiced concerns about the greed which has encroached the practiced. They have observed that greedy parents have contributed to the escalation in the hiking of the items asked in the bridewealth. They also attribute the tendency for some parents to demand full payment of bridewealth before consenting to the Christian marriage of their daughters to greed. Because of the greed of some parents (including Christian parents), “Dowry has changed its meaning. It is now more commercial. Parents demand money before a daughter is given in marriage” the group decries (p. 131). Therefore, to return to the traditional essence of the practice of bridewealth, greed must be avoided. Opiyo (2022) also discouraged Christian parents from demanding too much in the bridewealth for their daughters. Ademiluka (2021) also has called upon Christian parents to desist from asking for “excessive bride prices on their daughters” (p. 7).

Furthermore, the Theological Advisory Group has also proposed that Christian parents should seek the Christian virtues of their prospective son-in-law more than material

things. It is right for Christian parents to treasure the Christian character of the man asking for the hand of their daughter more than bridewealth, the group argues. In this way, “Christian parents may decide not to request dowry of a young man whom they love, respect and trust, rather than create a great hardship for him” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 131). And, if certain Christian parents would like to receive bridewealth, it should be considerate, taking into account the ability of the person who is to pay. In this regard, it may be concluded that there is more value in having a Christian son-in-law than in material goods paid in bridewealth.

Fourthly, the Theological Advisory Group (1996) also appealed to Christian parents to be in control of the negotiation of the bridewealth. Traditionally, negotiations for bridewealth are chaired or led by clan leaders of the two parties, that of the bride and the groom respectively. The parent of the bride usually does not so much engage in the negotiation process. However, considering the entry of greed and other related factors, the Theological Advisory Group (1996) argues that it is foolish for Christian parents to entrust this role to the clan leaders, especially if they are not even saved. They appeal to Christian parents to choose godly men who will respect their views to lead the negotiation. They also propose the involvement of church elders where necessary. They write:

The father has a major role to play. He calls the family together. He invites the family to the wedding. He sets the date. He can forbid beer at the wedding if he desires. Therefore, relatives should not be allowed to take the upper hand. Authority goes with age. Christian parents can also invite

church elders to talk about dowry in order to prevent dowry from becoming a burden (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 131).

Additionally, the Theological Advisory Group (1996) recommended that the church teach and counsel their members, especially parents regarding the practice of bridewealth. The group believed that the church has the responsibility to teach Christians not to demand too much of the bridewealth when their daughters are getting married. They made emphasis on the need for Christian parents not to allow non-Christians take the chairmanship of the negotiation event. They strongly argue that “The Christian parents should have the primary voice. If the unsaved chairman of the committee to discuss the dowry makes certain recommendations, others often fear to contradict him” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 132). They also saw it fit for the leadership of the church to first counsel Christian parents in their congregations who are due to give away their daughters in marriage. This they believe will empower the Christian parent to boldly take charge of the negotiation process instead of leaving it entirely in the hands of the clan. Counseling and teaching should also allow Christian parents to be grounded well to follow Christian teachings rather than the traditional teachings on marriage. Ademiluka (2021) supports this view when he opined that “the church has to teach Christians to adhere to biblical priorities” (p. 7).

Most importantly, the Theological Advisory Group (1996) also recommended that Christians should be taught to regard Church weddings as more important than everything else. This emphasis comes in the background that many parents often deny their daughters for church marriage before bridewealth is paid in full. In their counsel, they

recommended that “Dowry does not need to be completed before marriage. A Christian wedding should be encouraged by the Christian parents before all the dowry is paid. Dowry payments may continue after the marriage ceremony takes place in church” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 133). However, they also note that sometimes the young Christian men and women do not value church marriage as such, many take shorter routes to marriage even if bridewealth is not a block. In this case, they advised that the church should teach the young people to value church marriage and look at it as the ultimate manner to enter marriage.

Lastly, the Theological Advisory Group (1996) proposed that the church should help dispel present misconceptions about dowry (bridewealth). In their view, the practice of offering bridewealth in the course of entering marriage has been misinterpreted leading to its abuse. The church can only support its members by teaching the traditional essence of paying bridewealth being—relationship building—rather than the accumulation of wealth. Other issues addressed by the group, in this case, include the appeal to those entering marriage to consider a manageable wedding function and avoid comparisons to how others conducted their marriages. With these, the group hopes that bridewealth can be reformed or revisited to be practiced in a manner that honors its original intentions and disallows diversion from thereof. This has also been emphasized by Opiyo (2022) arguing that “A Christian wedding should remain simple and manageable to any believer just like Christian baptism and confirmation ordinances” (p. 200) calling upon young people to desist from extravagant Christian weddings.

## CHAPTER III

### ASPECTS OF *OKU JEZA* AS PRACTICED BY THE LUGBARA

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter gives details of the aspects of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara in fulfilment of objective one of the study. Specific attention is given to the concept of *oku jeza* as understood by the Lugbara. It further explores what the Lugbara means by referring to the process of marriage as *oku jeza*, is it wife buying or it is a figurative terminology? The chapter also will unveil the origin of the practice of paying bridewealth or the *oku jeza* among the Lugbara. Then, the chapter graduates to look at the various items paid in *oku jeza* by Lugbara, the amount of the items paid, and the significance of each of these items paid in *oku jeza*. Additionally, the chapter has sought to discover the significance of paying bridewealth among the Lugbara.

#### 3.2. The concept of *oku jeza* in the Lugbara community

Marriage is practiced differently in the diverse cultures of Africa, among the Lugbara, at marriage, there is the payment of bridewealth by the groom's family to the family of the bride. The common term used among the Lugbara to refer to this form of marriage which requires the payment of bridewealth is called *oku jeza* which may be translated as *the buying of a woman (wife)*. Understood from this literal translation, one would conclude that marriage among the Lugbara, a process called *oku jeza*, is the business of buying and selling women as wives. The fundamental question to pose is what *oku jeza* is, whether it relates to buying of women as wives as the literal meaning of the term implies.

##### 3.2.1. *Oku jeza*, a paradox?

From the field data collected, *oku jeza* is a paradoxical term, participants in general do agree that the term has a relationship as used in business. For clarity, the verb buy in Lugbarati is *je*, to buy a pen would be put in Lugbarati as *kalamu je* just as *oku je* would mean to buy a woman. However, the respondents find difficulty in admitting that bridewealth in essence is the buying of a woman as one would buy a pen from the bookstore. Another term that is also commonly used in the place of *oku jeza* is *aje* which has similar meanings originating from the same word, *je*. Female Clergy B reported that “The Lugbara, they have various terms of *oku jeza*. Sometimes they will say *oku jeza*, sometimes they will say *ajé*, just *ajé*. They will not mention that *oku*, but more *ajé*.” This was also attested to by Lay Participant 1 who stated that “*oku jeza*, in short, is also called *aje*, sometimes the Lugbara like to use the word *aje* than *oku jeza* but they are the same” (Lay Participant A).

The inconsistency in the use of the word *oku jeza* or *aje* has been admitted by many of the participants. For instance, Male Clergy A admits that literally, “*Oku jeza* is to buy because in our culture *jezu* is to buy.” He however rejects the notion that in practice a family sells the bride for the groom, although it is possible for the groom to feel as though he has bought the woman. The contradiction is equally seen in the expression by Male Clergy A who has expressed that; “in the real sense you do not buy but the man feels in the end when the process is over, I have this woman as mine, I have this woman, she now belongs to me. That’s why the word *jeza* comes in.” This is equally the witness of Male Clergy C who asserts that *oku jeza* has increasingly gained a business connotation during the independence and post-independence era asserting that; “I think the term [*oku jeza*]

as a business has gained ground during the time of independence, but during colonial times, it was an appreciation. The term *jeza* comes because you give something, because if you go to buy something, you give something.”

This is not just the expression of Male Clergy A; it has been expressed by nearly all the respondents in both personal interviews as well as in the focus group discussions. Male Clergy B as well as Male Clergy E thinks the use of the term *oku jeza* could be because of the limited vocabulary in the Lugbara language. He accepts that *oku jeza* means buying a woman as a wife but quickly refutes that “It is not supposed to be *oku jeza*, but because when you give something, then the woman becomes like your property. When she becomes your property, you can do anything with her” (Male Clergy B). On the other hand, Participant B equally points out that “when a man gives cows and other items in bridewealth, he gets his wife, this exchange of the cows and the woman sounds like buying something.” A female lay respondent, herein referred to as Participant C expresses how even if the practice is not supposed to mean selling a woman, the manner of negotiations makes it hard to deny that the woman is being sold. “There is a long list of items placed before the groom’s family, these items are negotiated just like negotiating the price of a commodity in the market, that is where one cannot deny the aspect of buying in *oku jeza*” (Participant C).

Similarly, Female Clergy A while admitting that *oku jeza* is not selling women or buying wives, many Lugbara men often feel they have bought their wives. She attributes the use of the term as used in business transactions to marriage because in both cases, there is giving by one party and taking by the other. “When they are having that process of

marrying a woman, they use the same term when they are buying another commodity in the market. Because there is the exchange of, let me say commodity, whereby the other one will give, I will give to you and you give to me” (Female Clergy B). The clergy further states that there are moments when a man will feel and even speak it out to the wife that he has bought her. She explains that this often happens when a woman is stubborn or has raised the temper of her husband. “When the woman is stubborn or she doesn't give respect to the husband it comes automatically. *Ajé mi jé jé* [I have bought you]. Don't play with me, *ajé mi je jé*. These things are there. So sometimes a man can feel now this woman is his property. It's true. You look like a property” (Female Clergy B). This view was also expressed by Participant B who asserted that “the dowry paid during *oku jeza* makes a man feel that he has bought his wife.”

This paradox is also easily noticed in the responses of Male Clergy D. Whereas he categorically indicated that *oku jeza* is not the business of selling women or buying wives, he admits that in some people's minds, it is. He cited that some men even go the extra mile to control the income of their wives for the feeling that after going through *oku jeza*, they have already bought their wives. Male Clergy D however insists that bridewealth should be an appreciation than looking at it as the price of the woman. He calls any attempts to look at *oku jeza* as selling or buying women unfortunate.

It is not a business, although it appears to sound so. The animals given are an appreciation to the parents for the upbringing of the girl. Payment of bridewealth does not amount to the buying of the woman. The practice of *oku jeza* has remained an appreciation even to date, if it has changed to

business, it is unfortunate. In some people's mind, where love is not the essence of the marriage, some people look at *oku jeza* as though they have bought their wives and that they control their wives in every way, some even control their wives' salary (Male Clergy D).

Whereas it appears that the men who marry are the ones looking at their wives as properties they have bought, Male Clergy C also points out that some parents also have the feeling that they can get rich at the marriage of their daughters. He explains that it is in the post-colonial era that *oku jeza* begins to be looked at as a business. Yet he argues that originally, it was not meant that in *oku jeza*, a parent sells his daughter and a husband buys his wife. Male Clergy C's explanation below points to the paradox in *oku jeza* as not being a business but yet gaining ground as a business.

I think the term as a business has gained ground during the time of independence, but during colonial times, it was an appreciation. The term *jeza* comes because you give something, because if you go to buy something, you give something. That's why the idea of buying has come in. Otherwise, it was not taken as business per se. But the way it is now, it looks like as though business. Today, many parents think they can get rich or money when their girls get married, which was not the case in colonial times. In colonial times, marriage was also for life (Male Clergy C).

Therefore, the use of the term *oku jeza* by the Lugbara is in the fact that whereas the term is used without the intention that it is the selling and buying of women, yet in

practice it sounds so. Considering the *oku jeza's* literal meaning is to buy a wife, it becomes hard to admit that the term refers to the selling and buying of women at the same time to deny that the term does not mean it. Hence, the term *oku jeza* looks quite paradoxical. This explains the need for a theological approach in demystifying and revisiting bridewealth.

### **3.2.2. *Oku jeza* as a process of marriage**

Another question the research sought to understand is whether *oku jeza* is an event or it is a process. From the responses, the participants have a general view that *oku jeza* is more than an event, it is a process of marriage. However, this process climaxes with the actual marriage when the two clans gather to negotiate the items paid in the bridewealth to traditionally solemnize the marriage. Commonly, the climax of the event is mostly referred to as *oku jeza*. As expressed by Male Clergy A, this process often starts with courtship and ends with the marriage which also mainly is referred to as the *oku jeza*. “*Oku jeza* in Lugbara context is the respected way of how a young man and a young woman having courted or dated for some time will finally declare to both homes (families) that we are ready for a family” (A Clergy A). As well, Male Clergy C reiterates that “*Oku jeza* is a process, it is not an event, it does not happen in a single day. It begins during courtship which is very interesting among the Lugbara.” Meanwhile, Female Clergy C reiterates that “*oku jeza* is the climax of the long process of marriage which begins with courtship.”

*Oku jeza* therefore begins with a boy or girl identifying a suitable partner, which leads to courtship and finally marriage which brings the two clans of the boy and the girl together

for the negotiation. This view is expressed by Male Clergy B, who notes that:

*Oku jeza* begins with befriending someone, then a courtship, and finally the marriage. Generally, *oku jeza* is when a boy identifies a lady, informs his parents, and then clan elders are selected to go to the family of the girl for *irindi a'diza* (tying of the star grass) or booking the lady. They go with some money and if the girl's parents are satisfied, they accept the money as a booking. *Oku jeza* is a process, but not a single event (Clergy B).

Male Clergy C initially refers to *oku jeza* as the moment the boy's clan and the girl's clan meet to do the marriage negotiation, where the parties agree on the items to be paid in the bridewealth. He explains, "Oku jeza actually in marriage is going to marry a girl in a given clan and as you go, your clan and the clan of the girl (elders) have to meet to do the marriage negotiation" (Male Clergy C). This explanation of *oku jeza* is similar to that of Male Clergy D who also explains that "When Lugbara talk of *oku jeza*, is when two marrying parties are brought together. It used to be when the parents (father) of the boy contact the father of the girl." The two male clergy (C & D) both explain that *oku jeza* is not just an event but a process. The process of "*Oku jeza* begins with courtship, introduction, negotiation and then the payment of bridewealth and the celebration" (Male Clergy D). This also is the assertion of Male Clergy C who states, "*Oku jeza* is a process, it is not an event, it does not happen in a single day. It begins during courtship which is very interesting among the Lugbara"

However, it should be noted that the one-time event where the marriage negotiation and

formalization happen as observed by the researcher is equally generally referred to as *oku jeza*. When the family or clan of the groom is going for this single event mentioned above, it is common to hear the word, *ama mu oku je*, meaning, we are going to marry a woman/wife. It is at this event that the girl is given to affirm publicly her choice of the boy, the items of the bridewealth are negotiated and paid either in full or in parts and the two clans formally accept the boy and the girl as husband and wife. Thus, in as much as *oku jeza* is thought to be a process, the climax of this process or the event of the marriage itself too is referred to as *oku jeza*.

### **3.2.3. Courtship in the traditional Lugbara culture**

One aspect of *oku jeza* as mentioned by both Clergies B and C is courtship. How was courtship in the traditional Lugbara culture? Earlier, Male Clergy C has been quoted intimating that courtship among the Lugbara is very interesting. It poses a question of what is interesting about the Lugbara courtship. The traditional Lugbara courtship is indeed quite different and interesting from the present. What makes the former interesting is not only that it was culturally acceptable for a girl to have more than one boyfriend, two, three, four, or even more boyfriends but the boyfriend(s) are allowed to sleep in the same room with their girlfriends in several nights yet without sexual engagement. As narrated by Male Clergy C and A, grown-up girls in a homestead used to sleep in a single hut called *odrojo*, there could be two, three, or more girls in the homestead who all share the same hut as their bedroom. If one of the girls has a boyfriend, she arranges for her boyfriend to visit and sleep with her in the same house where her peers also sleep. In case the other girls also have their boyfriends, as it may

be arranged, there is a possibility of two girls having their boyfriends come to sleep with their girlfriends in the *odrojo* on the same night. A girl offers her arms as a pillow for her boyfriend who sleeps all night on the arms of the girl. This is called *wu 'baza*. The boyfriend is expected to sleep without any attempts of sexual intercourse. This occurs on several occasions or nights. Male Clergy C explains;

Among the Lugbara during courtship, girls are entitled to have more than two (2) boyfriends, others have up to seven. There is no sex before marriage, which agrees with the biblical principles of marriage. Girls in a homestead have a common house where they sleep called *odrijo*. Several girls in the homestead sleep in this house. Their boyfriends will occasionally visit them and sleep in the house together with the other girls. Other girls also get their boyfriends and they all sleep in the same house. The girl puts her arms as a pillow for her boyfriend, it is called *wu 'baza*, they sleep the whole night and the boy is not supposed to initiate having sex with the girl.

Male Clergy C's narrative agrees with the narrative of Male Clergy A who equally explains;

In Lugbara culture when young men and women grow, they begin to sleep in separate houses called *odrojo*. The boys in the clan sleep as a group in their *odrojo* similar to the girls who also sleep in their *odrojo*. But the boy is allowed to go at night to sleep in the *odrojo* of the girls where his proposed girlfriend is sleeping. It is called *wu 'baza*, the girl puts her arms and the boy sleeps with his head resting on the arms (*wu*) of the girl all night but without having sex.

This happens when the other girls are also in the room, just to prove the growing love but no sexual contact. In the morning, the aunties will ask what happened. The girls will testify, *emu ra*, *'ba wu ra* (he came and slept in the arms of the girl).

*Wu 'baza* is not only interesting but also very exceptional. Among the contemporary Lugbara, *wu 'baza* is no longer a practice as explained by Female Clergy C. "Boys and girls of courtship age meet in schools, churches, markets, night clubs, and other social amenities" (Female Clergy C). Some of these social places where boys and girls meet at courtship encourage sexual immorality as opposed to the times of *wu 'baza*. Nevertheless, there were deviant behaviors too during the times of *wu 'baza*. Male Clergy C explains that some boys make sexual advances on their girlfriends during *wu 'baza* and this attracts heavy punishment on the boy and in some cases, it even leads to clan fights.

Some boys are stubborn and they go ahead to have sex with their girlfriends. The moment you confuse a girl and have sex with her, when this happens, the girl alarms, and the boy is arrested, and in 1900, the boy is tied up and thrown in an anthill with termites as a punishment, and a message is sent to the relatives of the boy, they have to come and bail him with fines. This can even cause clan fighting, as such, very few boys misbehave (Male Clergy C).

Courtship in the traditional Lugbara culture forms an integral part or aspect of *oku jeza* as revealed. Another aspect of *oku jeza* in the traditional Lugbara culture which unlike the *wu 'baza* has remained to date and perhaps growing stronger by each day is the

payment of bridewealth which is heftily priced and toughly negotiated by the two clans. The bride's family or clan sets the price and the groom's clan does their best to negotiate what they can afford. One would like to ask, is bridewealth the price of the bride among the Lugbara?

#### **3.2.4. Introduction of the boy by the girl<sup>1</sup>**

Among the Lugbara, when a boy and a girl after courtship resolve to get married, the boy introduces the girl to his family, and the boy also gets introduced to the girl's family. The introduction often sets the motion for the main part of *oku jeza* where the girl's family (clan) upon approval of the boy for their daughter will list down all the items they require in bridewealth. The list of these items today is commonly referred to as the agenda. The introduction of the boy to the girl's family (clan) happens after the girl has made up her mind to marry the boy. After a period of courtship with several boys, "The girl will then choose out of the many boys with whom she finds more attraction. When the girl makes a choice, then the marriage begins" (Male Clergy C) when the girl introduces the boy to the clan. Male Clergy A explains the introduction by stating that traditionally, "Among the Lugbara the boy and the girl who have already agreed to be friends will initiate the process by having the boy tie a certain grass on the girl's leg to book her. And then the girl invites the boy at home" (Male clergy A).

#### **2.2.5. Negotiation of the bridewealth**

Upon the introduction and the receipt of the agenda from the lady's family (clan), the

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<sup>1</sup> The terms boy and girl are used here as synonymous terms to the prospective groom and bride. The term has been used for consistency since the respondents in most cases used the terms boy and girl.

next part of *oku jeza* is the negotiation. Traditionally, the negotiation occurs on the same day the items of the bridewealth are paid, and immediately the marriage is celebrated. However, today, many people prefer to have a prior negotiation and the animals can be brought days after the negotiation. “Before the [negotiation] meeting, there is always a pre-negotiation budget, a list of items submitted to the groom’s clan. The pre-budget item is generated by the lady’s parents. It is the pre-negotiation budget which also many people refer to as agenda to be used in the negotiation” (Male Clergy B). This pre-negotiation budget is also called the *agenda*. The negotiation among the Lugbara is usually tough bargaining between the two clans based on the items on the agenda with a lot of haggling, reports Participant B. Usually, the lady’s family lists items on higher ends which the boy’s party has to negotiate to either the acceptable level or to what they can afford. The items are negotiated one after another and usually, each party has their chairperson. “Traditionally, the parties sit apart from each other to be coordinated by a go-between” Participant A. However, today, the parties sit in a way that allows them to talk face-to-face.

As noted by some of the participants, negotiation among the Lugbara can be a very tough moment as though the parties would not agree. “It used to be such tough negotiation with insults and vulgar languages” notes Male Clergy B. Participant C also notes that the manner of negotiation has now improved, “the haggling and fights are now fading” (Participant C). The Male Clergy B gives an example where they started talking at 8.00 p.m., and by 3.00 a.m., they couldn’t agree until the groom’s clan decided to leave that’s when the girl’s people were shaken. The negotiation process hardly goes for under one

hour, in most cases, it lasts for at least four (4) hours or even half a day or on rare occasions, the entire day. One of the negotiations observed by the researcher took five (5) hours and another lasted for more than six (6) hours. During the negotiations sometimes the two parties often fail to agree on the items charged by the bride's family until one party compromises. Male Clergy C refers to bridewealth negotiation among the Lugbara as a tag of war, "In some cases, negotiations even take two days or trans night. It is a tag of war, to some extent that one party nearly gives up after failing to agree."

In the focus group 1 discussion, it has been noted that two factors make the negotiation process very difficult; the clan members who sometimes do not wish any good for the family of the betrothed girl; and the chairpersons of the negotiating parties where each chairperson would like to demonstrate being a tough chairperson. Male participant 1 in focus group 1 points out that "the chairman they want to show their power... this chairman knows how to negotiate. By the way in the negotiation, they will be quarreling some people will even insult." The participant argues that when each chairperson of the two parties wants to prove their negotiation skills, it tightens the whole process. He noted that usually after the negotiation, the chairpersons shake hands one admitting to the other that he is tough. Meanwhile, female participant 7 in the same focus group 1 remarked that when some clan members do not wish the family whose daughter is marrying well, "they will put prices high in the way that he [the man] should give up, that things [the marriage] don't come to happen." These factors complicate negotiation often causing many of the brides to cry as they see no hope of the parties agreeing. "Many marriages could not proceed because, at the point of negotiation, the two parties could

not agree, often because of the factors cited” Male Participant 1.

### **3.2.6. Bridewealth among the Lugbara, is it the price of the bride?**

Section 3.2.1 above has dealt with the paradox of *oku jeza* bearing a business term yet it has been argued by the practitioners that it is not a business per se. There is however the view among the participants that *oku jeza* to a larger extent is being practiced by some families in the Lugbara community as a business. One is left wondering whether bridewealth which most of the participants were referring to as dowry is the price of the bride. Among the Lugbara community today, marriage involves the payment of several items summarily called bridewealth. From the responses, one can easily assert that bridewealth amounts to the ‘price of the bride’ among the Lugbara. One of the respondents explained “Traditionally, men see their daughters as wealth, that is Lugbara culture. A girl child born is seen as a wealth, that is why they do not take much interest in educating ladies, much attention is given to educating boys knowing that when the lady is mature, she will get married and bring wealth at home” (Male Clergy B). In the practice of *oku jeza*, “the Lugbara believe that it is through girls that one can be wealthy, particularly in the area of animals. If you have three or four girls and they get married, they bring animals, and you kind of become wealthy and respected in the clan” (Male Clergy C). As a ‘price of the bride’, the worth of the bride increases when the girl is educated. Several items in large amounts are usually priced on a bride who is educated rather than on one who is not. This connects with the business principle; high-value goods are highly priced than low-value goods.

In explaining why, the practice is called *oku jeza* by Male Clergy A, there is an indication

that in the eyes of many practitioners, bridewealth amounts to the price of the bride. He explains, “In our Lugbara thinking when I pay nine cows when I pay six cows, I have bought this person. So, in the end, they feel because cows are very important and in those cows are very scarce so if you manage to pay five cows in dowry [bridewealth] you have really done a lot” (Male Clergy A). He, therefore, concludes that the “terminology *jeza* comes because someone feels he has paid enough to have this lady for yourself.” Male Clergy A however points out this as a ‘false feeling’ by some of the Lugbara men, thus, the idea of bridewealth as the price of the bride is not to be concluded so, it is a ‘false feeling.’ The same respondent however clarifies that the feeling that the woman has been bought is not just in the man but the entire community; “beginning from the man to the woman’s family and the community, they just feel *oku ba je je* meaning the woman has been bought. So, it is a general feeling beginning with the man, to the clan of the girl and the entire community” (Male Clergy A). Where else it is evident that respondents do not feel bridewealth is the price for the bride, yet the action of some men contradicts this argument.

Similarly, female Clergy B acknowledges that a similar term *je* or *jeza* is used when buying something from the market and marriage in the Lugbara culture. She reasons that this could be because in both cases, there is giving and taking, an exchange of something for another. Female clergy B states; “When they are having that process of marrying a woman, they use the same term when they are buying another commodity in the market. Because there is an exchange of, let me say commodity, whereby the other one will give, I will give to you and you give to me.” Implicit in her argument is the fact that, the give-

and-take aspect in both cases must have necessitated that initiators of the Lugbara language use the same term. In the market, one gives a price for a commodity, while in the marriage, one gives a price for a woman or a wife.

Based on the give-and-take principle, in the focus group 1 discussion, male participant 5 voiced that the term *oku jeza* used to marry a woman is similar to the term used to buy a cow from the market. “They are just similar because, first of all, the similarity is where one-party packs with something. That is a man parts with wealth, animals, and so on. That is a similarity. It's when you walk up and do something, there is an exchange. There is material exchange” (male participant 5). The participant however has noted some differences between *oku jeza* and buying commodities from the market. “But the difference is that whereas in the market, you part ways at once, in the *Oku jeza*, it is just a longer process. It's a life-long process. It does not end abruptly as it is in the transaction of the market. They say nobody has ever bought a wife at once” (male participant 5).

Female clergy B also acknowledges that traditionally, a woman is given for a price to the husband who owns her, she however points out that this is not and should not be the case among Christians. “Traditionally, that is what they tell. But in Christian way, that is not the term to be used. It should be appreciation. But traditionally they use it, *ajé, oku jeza*” (female clergy B). The clergy argues that in the mind of the traditional Lugbara, in *oku jeza*, they give over their daughters for a price similar to one buying an item from the market. She justifies her argument by stating “Because when this girl (wife) makes the mistake of leaving this boy (husband), they will go back and want their wealth to be

given back. Meaning that they have sold this girl to them and when she comes back, those people have the right to go and bring back their bride” (Female clergy B). Another female participant in the focus group discussion 2 also states; “in *oku jeza*, you do not buy, but our practice makes the whole thing appear like one is paying the price for his wife” (Participant 9).

However, female clergy A has a contrary view. To her as much as similar terminology is used to marry a woman to the one used in buying a commodity, it is sort of appreciation but not buying the woman. She therefore says, “Yes. As I said, it was not *Oku jeza*, but it is just an appreciation, but since now the people who began it, began it in that way, *Oku jeza*, so up to now it is existing” (female clergy A). As a woman, she has indicated that she does not feel comfortable with the use of the word *oku jeza*, she however thinks it is very difficult to get rid of the word since it has been widely adopted in the whole of the Lugbara tribe. “We don't feel comfortable, but now we cannot eradicate it, because for us now to eradicate it, it needs maybe much teaching. It needs much teaching, but now for the whole Lugbara tribe, how shall we eradicate that? It is so difficult” (female clergy A). Similarly, female clergy B has expressed her discomfort in using the term *oku jeza*. She expresses; “As a Christian, I don't feel comfortable. Because when they say *ajé mi'bo* (I have bought you), people will feel now you are totally for them and you don't have a voice. You are now for them; they can use you as they want because you are something bought. Additionally, a participant in focus group discussion two decried the use of the term as prays that it might be changed. “When you hear of *oku jeza*, you know that it does not sound well, I wish it is changed” (Participant 11).

In support of the contrary view held by female clergy A, Male participant 6 in focus group 1 believes that *oku jeza* and buying an item from the market are completely different despite a similar term being used. He based his argument on the relationship between a seller and buyer in the market where the duo does not necessarily establish a relationship as in marriage. To him, in marriage, the two parties through *oku jeza* enter a lasting relationship. “Whereas when you go to the Nyio market (a popular local market), you don't have to know the person you are buying the cow from. You don't have to create a relationship with the person you are buying the cow from.” He continues, “Whereas when you pay, when you are doing *Oku jeza*, you have to create a relationship with this person” (male participant 6).

In his attempt to distinguish *oku jeza* from buying items from the market, male participant 1 in focus group 1 shows that *oku jeza* is different from buying from the market because, “In Lugbara culture, you cannot buy a wife. Going to Nyio market to buy a cow, you pay the money to the owner of the cow and then you own the cow” (male participant 1). However, the participant brought in a dilemma that actually supports the idea that in *oku jeza*, a woman's family is being compensated for their investments in her. “You cannot buy your wife but you have to give compensation. You compensate her people for taking care of her. So actually, they might have spent money on her they might have done better things” (male participant 1). By referring to bridewealth as compensation, male participant 1 indirectly tags it as a price since paying for a commodity is in a way compensating the owner of the commodity.

### 3.3. Items of bridewealth among the Lugbara

As many aspects of culture have evolved, bridewealth among the Lugbara has also evolved to include what was not the case many years ago. Many of the respondents did not have any idea of the pre-colonial practice of bridewealth, a few were able to compare how bridewealth was practiced in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Elderly Male Clergy C and Participant 10 in a focus group discussion 2 have a good reference to what bridewealth was like during the colonial era as much as Participant B. For instance, Participant B recalls that during the colonial era, “bridewealth was mandatory for recognizing marriages and it only was no more than three heads of cattle.” This is similar to Male Clergy C’s narrative that bride wealth “In 1900, it was not even animals, they were giving things like arrows (*‘ye*) and later, animals featured as well. And, in fact, during the colonial times, it was three (3) cows. Before the colonial times, it was more of arrows. The colonial masters had put a law that before you register your marriage, you must pay three cows” (Male Clergy C).

Today, bridewealth among the Lugbara goes beyond *je* and three (3) cows, it is a long list of items often referred to as *agenda* by most Lugbara communities. *Agenda* is the list of items issued by the parents or family of the girl to the family of the boy to be paid as the bridewealth. It is normally given when representatives of the boy’s people go to express their interest in marrying the girl. As soon as the family of the girl agrees to the proposal, an elder or group of elders compose the *agenda* which is posted to the family or clan of the boy through the visiting representatives or sent later after they have gone. Male Clergy B calls the agenda a pre-budget which is “a list of items submitted to the groom’s

clan. The pre-budget item is generated by the lady's parents. It is the pre-budget which also money people refer to as agenda to be used in the negotiation.” He also asserts that “The pre-budget list used to have some customary standards known by everyone, but now people tend to over-charge contrary to the then customary standards” (Male Clergy B). From the respondents, items in the bridewealth include; *irindi a'diza*, *ho'dia*, *eyoti ziza*, *mali*, *ali*, *aci vema*, and several other assorted items as explained below.

### **3.3.1. *Irindi a'diza***

This is one of the first items that constitutes bridewealth in the process of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara. *Oku jeza* enters a serious stage “when a boy identifies a lady, informs the parents, and then clan elders are selected to go to the family of the girl for *irindi a'diza* (tying of the star grass) or booking the lady” (Male Clergy B). Hence, *irindi a'diza* is like the public proposal and booking of the lady which in many contemporary communities is done by the use of booking rings. The purpose of the *irindi a'diza* as explained by Participant B is to “ensure that no other person [boy] marries the girl.” This however must be followed by an immediate homecoming of the groom's clan for the major part of *oku jeza* where negotiation and payment of the rest of the other items of the bridewealth is done. Participant 12 in focus group discussion 2 argued that *irindi a'diza* is hardly practiced in the Lugbara *oku jeza* today. At this event, usually, the first item of the bridewealth to be paid is called *ho'dia*.

### **3.3.2. *Ho'dia***

At the entrance to the homestead of the bride where the groom's clan will be received, a temporary gate (a rope is usually tied where there is no perimeter wall gate) is put in

place which must officially be opened by the clan women of the bride to officially allow the clan of the groom in. The 'gate' is often opened after the latter has been able to pay some amount of money either charged or not to the women at the gate. This item is called *ho'dia*, it is the gate fee that permits the entry of the boy and his clan into the clan of the bride. "When the team of the boy comes, there is a rope put at the entrance of the girl's home kind of a gate. The boy's clan has to pay a fee to enter through the gate. This gate fee is meant to cater for the clan girls who will be taking care of the groom's team by giving them tea, water for bathing, etc." (Male Clergy B).

According to male participant 1, *ho'dia* is the first item on the list of the agenda. He explains that "*Ho'dia* is like you come in someone's place and you are here. You get an option to allow yourself. Some people call it a gate. They tie a rope around the entrance... Then, after the *ho'dia* is done, you enter" (male participant 1). Accordingly, *ho'dia* permits the party of the groom access to the lady's family. According to female clergy B, *ho'dia* is one of the new items created in *oku jeza* basically to allow the women and girls in the village to participate in the process. In that regard, *hodia* is purely organized by the women, and whatever the man pays is charged by the women and paid to the women. Accordingly, she explains *ho'dia*, "When this is the homestead, they will come and tie a long rope in the village where people will enter. They will tie that rope to stop them and they will pay money before the rope is untied. That is the first thing in *aje*. You have to pay for that" (female clergy B). Equally, participant 15 explained that "*ho'dia* is important because it is one of the items of *oku jeza* that the women from the girl's clan benefit from, these days, they can even charge up to two million shillings or more"

(Participant 15).

According to male clergy A, *Ho'dia* “used to be some little money but now it has become a burden because previously you give anything you have but now people ask for 600k or even above one million shillings” (Male Clergy A). Today, *ho'dia* has become an integral part of *oku jeza* that the man's party cannot have access to the bride's family (clan) without paying it. As observed by male clergy A, it is usually overcharged by the women who are in charge of *ho'dia*. Female clergy A shares her experience during her *oku jeza*. She narrated that the *ho'dia* was charged at one million shillings and her husband's people did not have the money to pay, as such, they were left outside of the home at the gate all night. She explains how this was a painful experience for her:

When my husband's people reached my people, it was very tough. Like when they were entering, girls tied a rope at the entrance. And that rope you have to pay one million just at the gate there. One million was not there. They were closing the gate. You have to pay the money. So, the opening of the gate was one million. These people arrived around six in the evening. They stayed the whole night out just at the gate [because they didn't have the money to pay as *hodia*]. Me, I felt bad (female clergy A).

If there is not any money to pay for *ho'dia*, there is no access to the bride's home for the groom and his people. This means that the marriage can fail if the groom fails to meet the demand of *ho'dia*. Unlike many of the other items paid in kind, *ho'dia* is usually demanded in cash. In the narration of her experience with *ho'dia*, one can see that female

clergy A emphasizes the use of money for *ho'dia*, pointing to how *oku jeza* has been monetized. The narrative also shows that the money demanded is often hiked. Explicitly, the groom either pays the *ho'dia* to access the home of the bride to allow the *oku jeza* to progress or lose it. Female clergy A continued her narrative saying that;

[My] People were like, you have to pay that money. Then the money will let you in. So, the money was not there. My husband's people had to spend the night just there in the car at the gate. Me, I felt bad. I felt bad. But I can do nothing. That is now between my people and my husband's people. I can't come and interfere with that conversation. I had to wait. Now in the morning around five at dawn, that's when they paid that money and they let them in (female clergy A).

In the three *oku jeza* events witnessed by the researcher, the minimum *ho'dia* paid at UGX 800,000, and the maximum was UGX 1,600,000. The researcher observed that *ho'dia* negotiations are led by the women without any involvement of the men.

### **3.3.3. *E'yoti ziza***

Upon receiving the guests (groom's clan), at the start of the meeting, they are expected to pay another item of the bridewealth called *e'yoti ziza*, which is the fee for starting (opening) the negotiation meeting. This fee which is paid in hard cash is often charged by the chairman for the girl's clan subject to negotiation. When the two parties agree on the amount of the *e'yoti ziza*, "the elder or chairman of the clan of the lady will now declare the negotiation or meeting open. So, you have to pay *e'yoti ziza* for discussion to begin" (Male Clergy B). The meeting will not start until the money for the *e'yoti ziza* is

paid up. When the clan chairman charges a high amount for this item, negotiation can take close to an hour to agree on it. In one of the negotiations observed by the researcher, an amount of two million shillings was demanded for the *e'yoti ziza*, this was later negotiated down to four hundred and fifty thousand shillings, and the negotiation on this item took nearly an hour. When the meeting is declared open, the clan chairman then draws people's attention to the *agenda* in which the next item is usually the *mali*.

#### **3.3.4. Mali**

*Mali* is a Swahili word which means wealth. One can guess that this word is adopted from Swahili and refers to the main item of the bridewealth, it is the wealth in *oku jeza* that parents get for giving their daughters in marriage. Participant B explains that whereas *mali* was mostly paid in animals like cows and goats, today, many families among the Lugbara prefer cash to those items. This points to the monetization of bridewealth among the Lugbara. It is what the Male Clergy C referred to as the three (3) cows set by the colonial administrators. Traditionally, the *mali* is “broken down in small pieces like cows which can be charged at fifteen (15) but you can settle at eight or nine but you do not complete it at ago because in Lugbara culture you do not pay bridewealth at once” (Male Clergy A). Male Clergy B calls the *mali* as “the real price for the lady, it can be 20 heads of cattle.” He further explains that in *mali*;

There is also money to be given, these days it can even be ten million or even more but it used to be less than that. There are also goats given as part of *mali*, it can be 20, 30 or so. In the *mali*, there is an animal (usually a bull) given called *ali*, which will be slaughtered and eaten by the clansmen to celebrate

the marriage. If this is not done, it can bring problems for the girl in the marriage such as bareness or miscarriages. There are also goats given to the parents of the girl, then the aunties and the uncles (Male Clergy B).

The *ali* in *mali* is a bull that is specifically to be slaughtered and eaten by the clansmen and women of the bride to celebrate the marriage. There is a view that the *ali* provides the man sexual access or simply put, buys the sexual rights of the woman as explained by Male Clergy C, “among the Lugbara, in bridewealth, the man buys the reproductive rights of the woman. They normally ask for one cow, called *ali*, and it is eaten by the clan’s people and that is what gives sexual rights to the man.” In case a man elopes with a girl, he has to pay for the sexual rights in what some Lugbara dialect calls *jotile* and it is believed that if the *ali* or *jotile* is not paid and eaten by the girl’s clan, it causes misfortunes such as miscarriages for her in the marriage. Participant 12 explains;

In the Lugbara culture, sex before marriage is forbidden. When a man elopes a girl, he has to pay *ali* otherwise something worse can happen to him and his wife. I have witnessed a certain suffering because the husband did not pay the *ali*. She would always fall sick but the doctors cannot diagnose her sickness. It was not until the girl returned to her parents and her husband paid the *ali* that her health improved (Participant 12).

### **3.3.5. Other assorted items in the bridewealth**

Several other items have emerged as items in bridewealth among the Lugbara. These items include; arrows (*je*), hoes (*ebu*), raincoats, *gomesi* for mother-in-law, suite for

father-in-law, solar lamps, radios, food items, tethering ropes (*baka*) for the animals paid, and many other items. Some families ask for hoes in kind or cash, and it ranges from a dozen to a cartoon or two. Many of these items are demanded and paid in kind even though the tendency to ask for cash is growing. Each item has a specific role and or stands for a specific function in the bridewealth. For example, “’Ye (arrows), it is symbolic of security, one can be charged up to 10 arrows and its bow. It is symbolic of security. The ‘ye is kept by the father of the girl in his house” (Male Clergy A). As noted earlier, some of these items have traditionally not been part of the Lugbara tradition of *oku jeza* but now their inclusion has become popular. Male Clergy A describes the introduction of new items:

Then we have things that have now come in, that used not to be there; such as a suit for the father-in-law or *gomesi* for the mother-in-law. They may also ask for ropes and raincoats for raring the cows. The ropes are charged according to the number of cows you bring. There is also a gift for the aunties, usually goats, and also for the uncles of the girl. They get it as their gift and it is only paid once, they feel happy (male clergy A).

Male clergy C also points out the introduction of new items in bridewealth which he largely attributes to Western influence. He especially points out the inclusion of clothes (suits & *gomesi*) which according to him were not on the list of items paid in the bridewealth. He also stated that some parents even ask for the refund of school fees they have paid for their daughter sharing his experience and how he rejected the idea of including school fees in the list. Male clergy C makes his point and shares his experience:

Now with the Western influence, the issues of clothes have come in, you have to buy *gomesi* and suits, animals and hard cash have also come in. Some families also ask for the school fees if the girl is educated. When I got married, I was asked to pay school fees, I refused, and I told them that their daughter would have rights over her money. Some people ask for the school fees because the husband of their daughter thinks he has bought the girl and so her monies belong to the man (husband) (male clergy C).

The researcher's observation is that several items are usually included in the assorted items. At one of the *oku jeza*, there was a demand for solar panels and solar batteries. Additionally, items like ropes for the animals and rainboots, etc. are often included. Although these assorted items can be paid in kind, in all the three *oku jeza* witnessed by the researcher, they were all paid in cash. Since these items are often fewer in quantity, it is also the least negotiated item on the agenda.

### **3.4. The celebration of the marriage**

The process of *oku jeza* climaxes with a grand celebration of the marriage. In describing the process of *oku jeza*, male clergy C points out how one event fits into another. "*Oku jeza* begins with courtship, introduction, negotiation and then the payment of bridewealth and the celebration" (male clergy C). The celebration of *oku jeza* follows immediately as soon as an agreement has been reached by the two parties and items of the bridewealth have been paid as agreed either fully or partially. Whereas the celebration may be heavily accompanied by dancing and singing, food and drinks make a bigger part of it. Some animals paid in the bridewealth are specifically tagged for the

marriage celebration. Male clergy D explains the category of animals given in bridewealth slaughtered for the marriage celebration, “The second one is items given to be (animals) slaughtered to the relatives. The third is given to the uncles of the girl. These normally are goats and some of it is given for the celebration of the marriage” (male clergy D). The Lugbara are very celebrative, and at the marriage celebration, it is difficult to notice that there have been tough talks and haggling during the negotiation. Both parties now mix freely and joy overwhelms the stressful moments of the negotiation as the marriage is birthed and celebrated. In some cases, especially for families that enjoy beers and night discos, the celebration may proceed for one or two nights.

### **3.5. Chapter conclusion**

The chapter looked at the concept of *oku jeza* and examined the categories of the items paid in the bridewealth. From the field interviews and observations, it has been noted that *oku jeza* is easily dismissed not to mean selling and buying of women as wives but the practice by many thereof doesn't justify the dismissal. Although *oku jeza* which translates as 'buying a woman' was not originally the selling of women as chattels, yet in its present practice, many families or parents would like to have material benefit from the bridewealth given at their daughter's marriage. As such they overcharge the items and also add more other items on the *agenda*. Thus, *oku jeza* is better described as a paradox, as though it is not the selling of women but tendencies towards its commercialization are on the rise. The respondents also admit that as much as *oku jeza* is not selling women, some husbands after paying bridewealth tend to feel they have bought their wives.

The chapter also briefly described courtship in the traditional Lugbara society characterized by liberty for a girl to have as many as seven boyfriends at one moment and the unique practice of *wu 'baza*. The chapter looked at the categories of items paid in bridewealth which include; *irindi a'diza, ho'dia, e'yoti ziza, mali, aci vema*, and other assorted items such as arrows, hoes, raincoats and butts, solar panels and even cash. It is herein noted that there are no fixed amounts of the items paid in bridewealth, the amount of each item demanded varies from family to family and what the groom pays will depend on their negotiation power. Conclusively, the Lugbara *oku jeza* is found to climax into heavy celebrations with lots of food, drinks, and music which might go on for one or two nights. This paves way for the discussion on the challenges of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CHALLENGES OF *OKU JEZA* TO CHURCH MARRIAGE IN THE DIOCESE OF**  
**MA'DI-WEST NILE**

**4.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides the challenges *oku jeza* poses to church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile Diocese. As a traditional cultural practice treasured by the Lugbara Christians with a strong recommendation of its continuity by the participants of the research, it is important the study interested itself in the challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage in the Diocese. The major challenges of *oku jeza* unearthed for further presentation in this chapter include; commercialization of bridewealth, negative attitude towards those who desire formal church marriage, wanting all items of bridewealth paid once, and heavy ceremonies at the celebration of *oku jeza*.

**4.2. Commercialization of bridewealth**

One major challenge of *oku jeza* to church marriage is the tendency of Lugbara Christian parents to overcharge the items to be paid as bridewealth with the intention of creating wealth from it. This has been expressed by the majority of the participants. For instance, speaking about the commercialization of bridewealth, Male clergy A states that the “clan of the girl look at it as an enriching venture for them.” Meanwhile, Male Clergy B also sees overcharging as a major problem in *oku jeza* posing a big challenge to church marriage. He says; “the heavy demand asked by the girl’s family (overcharging) has become a thorn forcing other young people to elope, it is a major problem. People looking at ladies as business or wealth” (clergy B). This encourages

some parents and the clan people of the girl to overcharge and even create more other items in order to receive as much bridewealth as possible. Participant C wonders why parents overcharge; “the present practice is alarming, why would a Christian overcharge bridewealth for his daughter? Overcharging pushes many young men from coming to the church for marriage.” Participant 1 in focus group discussion 1 attributes the commercialization to clan members who often want material benefit from the marriage. “Some parents are good, but the problem is with the clan leaders. They look at the time of *oku jeza* as an opportunity to eat, so they overcharge and refuse to compromise in the negotiation” remarks Participant 1. The commercialization tendencies result in; elopement, and delayed marriage, and it encourages the creation of new items in the bridewealth.

#### **4.2.1. Commercialization forces young people to bypass church marriage**

The research has shown that the desire by some parents to make wealth from bridewealth, an important aspect of *oku jeza* makes them charge bridewealth exorbitantly. Consequently, many young men who cannot raise the required bridewealth will opt to bypass church marriage. This situation worsens when the church requires a consent letter from the bride’s parents before the arrangement of church marriage. Parents who have an interest in making wealth from the bridewealth would make the payment of the bridewealth a pre-condition before writing the consent letter. During the time of the study, the researcher observed a case where the parents of the would-be bride refused to grant church marriage until the bridewealth was paid in full. Participant 4 also shared his experience;

In 2003, when I showed my intention for church marriage, my father-in-law refused to write the consent letter because I had not completed the payment of the bridewealth. I raised some animals but failed to pay all the eight heads of cattle demanded. Our church marriage had to be delayed for about eight months until I cleared the balance of the bridewealth, and then my father-in-law wrote the consent letter (Participant 4).

It should also be noted that unlike in the past when the burden of paying bridewealth of a bride lay on the father and uncles of the groom, this at most is no longer the case. Men intending to get married will have to first raise bridewealth before they can initiate the church marriage process.

Additionally, *Oku jeza* in which bridewealth is paid comes before the church marriage or at least it leads to the church marriage at most. Apparently, it is required that a couple intending to undergo church marriage show that the parents of the bride have granted them to marry in the church. Male Clergy A explains that *oku jeza* is very important for Lugbara Christians. He states; “That is why the church asks for a letter from the parents of the girl. Should the girl’s parents say the boy should first clear all the bridewealth, then the church marriage shall not happen.” If the church cannot allow to marry a couple before receiving a consent letter from parents who already take *oku jeza* as a ‘venture’ to create wealth, then a gentleman who does not have the wealth to pay will definitely try to elope his fiancée.

However, not all Christian parents require the payment of bridewealth before writing a

consent letter for their daughter to get married. The study reveals that some parents allow their daughter to have a church marriage even if her boyfriend is not in a position to offer bridewealth. Male Clergy D states this happens only if the boyfriend of the girl is a 'good boy', he says; "Some Christian parents if their girl gets a good boy, do not even bother to ask for the bridewealth" (Clergy D). On the other hand, Male clergy B also attests that some parents can allow their daughter for a church marriage without paying bridewealth depending on how the bride's parents have understood their son-in-law to be. Male Clergy B advises that "The groom should make himself known to the parents early, such that they can understand him" when it is time to ask the bride's parents for church marriage. Male clergy B narrated his experience;

I took time to explain to my father-in-law that I love his daughter but I did not have all the wealth to pay. He agreed that I could keep paying little by little as and when I find it. During the negotiation, he explained this to the clan leaders and managed to convince them. He granted me permission for church marriage before completing all the bridewealth. Since then, I have been supporting him and I have even given much more than what the bridewealth would be (Male clergy B).

Marriage by elopement or cohabitation though very rampant among Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile, is considered morally wrong by the Church and it also is not a legally accepted form of marriage. In other words, commercialized bridewealth "makes it very hard for Christians to enter church marriages because they cannot afford it, so, many young people leave the faith, they elope and fall away from the church"

(Male clergy C). One who marries by elopement is considered to have backslidden or left the faith or fallen away from the church as expressed by male clergy C. Moreso, if a young man marries by elopement “many of the church leaders remove him from fellowships for marrying before the traditional or church marriage” (male clergy D) because he is considered to have backslidden. This does not only have an impact on church marriage, but it also eventually affects the spirituality of those who otherwise end up eloping because they cannot afford bridewealth for marriage.

#### **4.2.2. Overcharging makes some men delay to get married**

Relatedly, if bridewealth is commercialized, the recipients of the gifts tend to overcharge such that they can receive as many gifts as possible. For Christian men who would like to have marriage outside that prescribed by the church, i.e., church marriage, they are forced to wait until they have bridewealth at hand. This has been experienced by Participant 4 as already narrated in 3.2.1. This means that their time of marriage is delayed until they accumulate the required bridewealth. This happens in a community where cohabitation is considered morally wrong and a spiritual backsliding bearing in mind that “many of the church leaders remove him from fellowships for marrying before the traditional or church marriage” (Male clergy D). Young men who would like to marry honorably in the church but cannot afford the overly charged or commercialized bridewealth are forced to delay marriage. Delayed marriages come with complications or consequences, which candidates of marriage who might be delayed to marriage for failing to raise bridewealth may have to face.

#### **4.2.3. Overcharging encourages the creation of unnecessary items in bridewealth**

Furthermore, parents who consider the bridewealth as a venture to accumulate wealth are easily tempted to create or introduce unnecessary items in the bridewealth. Traditionally, there were specific items that Lugbara communities would demand for bridewealth. Although the amount charged for the bridewealth items would vary from one Lugbara clan to the other, there was a generally known category of items charged in the bridewealth. The research has found that the tendency to commercialize bridewealth has caused some parents or communities to create or introduce items that have not been in the traditionally known categories. “The pre-budget list used to have some customary standards known by everyone, but now people tend to overcharge contrary to the then customary standards” (Male clergy B). The introduction of new items and overcharging is due to several factors one of them being the motivation to receive as much of the bridewealth items as possible. Male Clergy A expresses this addition of unnecessary items which places a huge burden on the groom:

The process of marriage has now become very difficult because the agenda used to be uniform in all Lugbara culture but now people have added more things. Like in some *oku jeza*, they ask for items like the charge for keeping the beards [of the father-in-law]. So, because of these burdens, many young people take shortcuts. The girl ends up getting pregnant because the thing is now a big burden as they have to pay a lot in bridewealth.

#### **4.2.4. Commercialization also leads to monetization of bridewealth**

We live in a cash economy in which business transactions are carried out using cash currencies instead of the use of items in kind. This has also impacted the transaction

of bridewealth where there is a move away from kind items to the demand for cash. The research has also found that this tendency of monetizing bridewealth is also linked to its commercialization. For those who look at bridewealth as a venture to get money, they would rather value the items to be paid according to their monetary worth and demand for the items paid in hard cash. As earlier noted, the researcher has observed that the *ho'dia*, *e'yoti ziza*, some parts of the *mali*, *aci vema*, and the other assorted items are usually demanded in cash. Others, in addition to the items in kind, will also demand a specified amount of money as part of the bridewealth. For example, male clergy C noted that “Now with the Western influence, the issues of clothes have come in, you have to buy gomesi and suits, animals and hard cash have also come in. Some families also ask for the school fees if the girl is educated.” The ‘Western influence’ here is understood to be the money economy which uses hard currencies for transactions, so, *oku jeza* also becomes monetized.

#### **4.3. Community attitude towards men who desire to enter formal church marriage**

The Christian moral expectation in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile of marriage for its members is through church marriage. This research has revealed that those who enter marriage, especially by elopement are considered to have backslidden. Yet, for one to marry in the church, he is expected to present to the church a consent letter from the bride's parents granting the marriage. It has also earlier been revealed that many parents among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese do not issue this ‘consent letter’ until the man has paid bridewealth or has gone through the *oku jeza*. The bridewealth demanded by the bride's parents or clan elders is usually overcharged

because the community thinks that a man who wants to undergo formal marriage has already prepared to pay the 'commercialized' bridewealth.

This community attitude disadvantages those intending to get married since it promotes overcharging of the bridewealth. Just like one who prepares himself before going to buy a commodity from the market, a man who comes to pay bridewealth is hoped to have prepared enough of the price or the wealth to pay as well. This view has been expressed by a number of the participants. For instance, male clergy A states, "When a gentleman comes to the girl's family to ask for marriage, they think he has prepared, so they say '*ba ma li afa drinia mgba* [let us charge him properly]." This detrimental attitude results in overcharging or promotes the commercialization of bridewealth among the Lugbara.

#### **4.4. The demand to pay for everything once**

The research has found from the participants that the demand for one to pay all the items of bridewealth at once is a burden to the men seeking church marriage. "In our traditional setting, it is often said that 'you do not buy a wife in a day.' But these days parents want everything to be paid at once, this often is a burden to young men wanting to get married" (Female Clergy C). Participant 4 narrated his ordeal where the father-in-law could not allow him church marriage until he paid off all that was demanded in the bridewealth. Such conditions lay an unnecessary burden on the young people as expressed by Participant B. "Refusing church marriage for a couple because of bridewealth is not fully paid is problematic. Some people have failed to marry because of such conditions" (Participant B). A participant reasoned that "parents fear that when

their daughters get married before the husbands pay bridewealth in full, they will not have the privilege to interfere with the marriage, as such they want everything before the church wedding” (Participant B).

#### **4.5. Heavy celebration of the *oku jeza***

This research has also revealed that the heavy celebration of *oku jeza*, which many of the participants referred to as ‘introduction ceremony’ poses a challenge to church marriage. The introduction ceremony usually is the climax of the *oku jeza*. It is the traditional marriage that comes with a heavy celebration, quite as heavy as the celebration of the church marriage would be. The participants have expressed that this often places a burden on those getting married, as such, some either stop with the celebration of *oku jeza* and cannot proceed to church marriage or some totally shun it and simply elope. When asked about the challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage, Male Clergy A cites the celebration of the *oku jeza* or the introduction ceremony as a major challenge. He states;

Actually, with the current system that has come on board, after the *oku jeza*, there is a burden they have brought called introduction which is also another wedding. It normally happens after the night of the negotiation. So, many young boys run away from church marriage because after the *oku jeza*, one has to also go through an introduction which they see as a burden yet the ladies like it because it is like a show for them. Some young men enter it with debts (Male clergy A).

This challenge has also been expressed by Male Clergy B who acknowledges that the

heavy celebration of the *oku jeza*;

...undermines church marriage because now people focus on introduction which is heavily spent on instead of planning for a wedding in the church. I therefore would not recommend such a heavy introduction. Instead, I recommend that couples intending to get married should simply after the negotiation and paying bridewealth arrange for wedding (Male Clergy B).

Considering the foretasted, *oku jeza* which “begins with courtship, introduction, negotiation and then the payment of bridewealth and the celebration” (Clergy D) is a challenge to church marriage among Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile as its celebration takes a lot of resources which is either unaffordable or takes away all the resources from one.

#### **4.6. *Oku jeza* breeds a ground for marital violence against the wife**

One of the dark sides of Church marriage is that *oku jeza* breeds marital violence against the wife. The feeling in a man that the bridewealth paid in *oku jeza* is the price for the bride easily creates a false feeling in a man that he now owns the woman. Participants have reported that this kind of feeling can easily result in marital violence as the man thinks he owns the woman just like owning a property purchased from the stores. Female Clergy A explains his dissatisfaction against the term *oku jeza* and links it to marital violence;

So, that terminology *jeza* comes because someone actually feels he has paid really enough to have this lady for yourself. And, the bad thing with it is this beating of women, *ma ofe mi dria ti aro, ma eco mi co ku adi si?* [I have paid

eight cows for you, why can't I beat you?]. That false feeling that I have bought you with eight cows. So, it is really a false feeling, that word jeza really should not be there (Female clergy A).

This kind of marital violence against women in marriage based on bridewealth which is a requirement in *oku jeza* casts dark clouds on church marriage and it is an abuse of women and marriage. Church marriage in which a Christian man and woman enter into a sacred covenant can hardly be thought of as having such violence against one party in the marriage. This research has evidenced that *oku jeza* which is associated with the payment of bridewealth provides a breeding ground for marital violence.

#### **4.7. *Oku jeza* denies some rights for women**

As reported earlier by female clergy A, the bridewealth paid in *oku jeza* makes some men feel their wives are properties. Consequently, a woman's rights to property and decision-making are usually limited. This can be seen in the expression of female clergy A, “And, the bad thing with it is this beating of women, *ma ofe mi dria ti aro, ma eco mi co ku a'di si?* [I have paid eight cows for you, why can't I beat you?].” A woman whose husband often barter has limited rights in the marriage. Female Lay Participant C asserts that; “Some men after paying full dowry treat their women like slaves. The woman is left to do every chore and production in the gardens because she has been paid for. The woman barely has a voice in the marriage.”

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

This chapter examined the challenges of *oku jeza* on church marriage. The biggest

challenge reported here is the commercialization of bridewealth. This aspect of bridewealth in *oku jeza* has become a stumbling block for those intending to access church marriage. This is because the bridewealth is charged quite high and many of the young men are unable to afford it. Worst still, some parents demand the bridewealth should be paid fully before the couple can proceed to church marriage. Additionally, unlike in the past when bridewealth was largely paid in kind, today, many parents also prefer the use of cash. Moreso, when a young man proposes to church marriage, it is believed that he has prepared himself. In that case, the parents or clan of his prospective bride overcharge on the assumption that the gentleman has prepared himself to pay the bridewealth. All these make it difficult for young men intending to enter marriage to afford bridewealth. This forces the majority of them to opt for elopement and begin cohabiting. Those who are not willing to bypass church marriage delay to marry. In summary, bridewealth which is a prominent aspect of *oku jeza* poses a huge challenge to church marriage. The next chapter shall explore how these challenges can be overcome by proposing theological and pastoral approaches in revisiting the bridewealth so that it may be practiced by the Lugbara Christian community without hurting church marriage.

## CHAPTER V

### PASTORAL AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO REVISIT THE PRACTICE OF *OKU JEZA*

#### 5.1. Introduction

This is the second last chapter of the thesis which responds to the specific objective three of the study. The chapter generally reports on the pastoral and theological approaches to revisit the practice of *oku jeza* in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The chapter also seeks to draw the pastoral and theological views of the participants on the practice of *oku jeza*. Generally, the participants consider *oku jeza* as very important in the Lugbara marriage and unanimously agree that it is necessary for Christians to undergo *oku jeza* and they appear to scantily draw biblical roots of the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza*.

#### 5.2. Should a Lugbara Christian go through *oku jeza*?

The afore question in the subtitle was meant to evaluate the perception of the participants on the value they place on the practice of *oku jeza* vis-à-vis Church marriage. In general, all the participants report that it is a good thing for a Lugbara Christian to undergo *oku jeza*. They explain that the aspect of giving bridewealth in *oku jeza* has two-fold significance; an appreciation to the girl's parents but also it provides ownership rights over the woman to the man. *Oku jeza* is also viewed by some of the participants as a way of honoring God through formal traditional marriage. Some participants indicated that good parents can accept what the man brings without negotiation while some even give

their daughter in marriage even if the man has no wealth to pay. A number of the participants reason that parents should not use the *oku jeza* to overcharge their son-in-law-to-be while some of them discourage hefty spending on the celebration of *oku jeza* for Lugbara Christians, they rather propose the couple focus on church marriage. We will start by examining the significance of bridewealth as treasured by the participants.

### **5.2.1. It is an expression of appreciation of the bride's family by the groom**

The participants argue that it is important for a Lugbara Christian gentleman preparing for church marriage to undergo *oku jeza* because, through the bridewealth paid, the man expresses gratitude to the girl's parents for raising her. "According to the Lugbara, these animals given to the parents of the girl is an appreciation to the parents of the girl, this is part of tradition and it can be continued even by the Christians" (Male Clergy D). For instance, Male Clergy A, when asked whether he thinks it is necessary for a Lugbara Christian to go through *oku jeza* to enter church marriage, says; "I could say yes, in terms of the payment but it should not be exaggerated." In the same way, Male clergy C encourages the payment of bridewealth as marriage gifts by Lugbara Christians. He says, "Yes, for me I told people on the radio that it should be a marriage gift but not payment (bridewealth). It is good for a man to give a gift in appreciation. I recommend gift in appreciation than payment" (Male clergy C). In the same vein, Male Clergy B supports the idea of a man giving bridewealth by saying; "the aspect of appreciation of the parents of the lady if the man treasures his wife, it is a good thing. But it should not be *jeza*, as in Genesis where Abraham's servant pays some items for appreciation" (Male clergy B).

The appreciation of bridewealth paid during *oku jeza* to show appreciation to the girl's parents was not only expressed by the clergy, but also the lay participants. For example, Participant 1 reasoned that "in bridewealth, the man appreciates his parents-in-law for raising a good wife for him. As Isaac appreciated Rebecca's parents, I agree that men should pay bridewealth to appreciate the parents of the girl" (Participant A). In the same vein, another participant in focus group discussion 2 reported a similar view: "Bridewealth is very important in our culture. A man cannot simply marry one's daughter without appreciation. There should be an appreciation for the woman's parents" (Participant 10). Appreciating the girl's parents through bridewealth was also expressed by Participant 6 in the focus group discussion 1; "I think for a man to marry without paying bridewealth is not good. The girl has been raised by a family; it is important to say thank you to the parents of the girl by the bridewealth" (Participant 6). Equally Female Clergy A explained that since parents used to bring their daughters in good discipline as virgins until they got married, "it was good to appreciate" (Female Clergy B). The female clergy confides that it is good to pay bridewealth to appreciate the girl's parents.

### **5.2.2. There is no ownership without a price**

Further, in a response by Male Clergy B, who intimates that for a man who 'treasures' his wife he should pay bridewealth one can deduce the idea of paying a price for what one treasures. One therefore has to pay for what he treasures. Accordingly, paying for a treasure transfers ownership to the payee. Male Clergy B says that "I would say it [paying bridewealth] is necessary because ownership comes when you have given

something.” He then goes on to give an example wherein Bunyoro, a certain man wanted to give his daughter for free to him but he refused because in the Lugbara culture, it is bridewealth that binds even the couple together or that grants ownership of the wife to the man. On this account, Male Clergy B argues that a man has to pay the price to own a treasure, his wife.

The ownership of a woman by a man through the payment of bridewealth was not popular among the lay participants. One respondent argued that “bridewealth allows the man to have own his wife. That is why if he has not paid bridewealth of his wife and she happens to die, the woman will not be buried at his home until he pays bridewealth” (Participant B). What the participant remarked is common among the Lugbara, a man will still have to pay the bridewealth for his wife before she is buried if she dies before paying her bridewealth. Meanwhile, Participant 11 in focus group discussion 2 supports the view of the bridewealth providing ownership over his wife. He remarked that “if a man has not paid bridewealth, how can he claim the woman is his wife? You have to pay something [bridewealth] for you to have her as your wife” (Participant 11). One would therefore conclude that the Lugbara consider bridewealth quite important because through it, a man owns his wife, he has authority over his wife.

### **5.2.3. Bridewealth payment honors God**

The payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza* is viewed as a way of honouring God by some participants. Marriage in this way is seen by some participants as formal and honouring God. In the focus group discussion 1 made up of lay people, there was also a general agreement that it is necessary for Christians to undergo *oku jeza*. A male participant here

code-named Participant 1 explains that it is necessary for a Christian couple to undergo *oku jeza* to give glory to God especially if bridewealth is considered to be an appreciation. God is honored through the marriage gifts (bridewealth) given to the bride's parents/clan, Participant 1 believes. He states "Because through marriage [*oku jeza*] they build a family. As a family, which is a pillar of the church, it should be a family that brings honor to God and the eyes of men. It should be a family that brings joy... when you honor, you don't honor with empty words. Even when the wise men came to see Jesus, they didn't worship him with empty words... So, we bring gifts to honor." He concludes by calling upon Christians not to look at bridewealth as a cost but as "gifts to honor the family" of the bride.

However, viewing bridewealth as a marriage gift, Participant 1 discourages parents from overcharging bridewealth. He points out that when parents overcharge bridewealth, it prevents their daughters from getting married honorably and such women end up frustrated. "But what will happen to the life of this lady who has been frustrated because of that monetary thing? Who knows, because the Bible says in Proverbs, he who finds a wife finds a good thing, and the favour of the Lord shall be upon him. Now we are stopping these people from being together just because of the monetary thing?" (Participant 1). He appeals to Lugbara Christians to accept the marriage gifts of appreciation offered by their prospective sons-in-law.

#### **5.2.4. Some parents allow a bridewealth free *oku jeza***

In as much as bridewealth is a central aspect of *oku jeza*, some participants have stated that it is possible for some parents to give their daughters without the demand for

bridewealth. This depends on a number of factors and one of them is the assessment of the girl's parents of their son-in-law to be. Male Clergy D states that "some Christian parents if their girl gets a good boy, do not even bother to ask for the bridewealth." Meanwhile, Male clergy B also points out that some parents or families allow the boy to pay whatever he can get without a 'burdensome' moment of negotiation. He bears this witness, "I have known of families that do not even allow for negotiation, they receive whatever he brings and ask him to think of more appreciation in the future" (Male Clergy B).

In her approval of *oku jeza* for Lugbara Christians, the female clergy equally affirmed that a Christian must undergo *oku jeza*. Female clergy A explains that the bride's parents determine whether an impending marriage should be subject to *oku jeza* or not. According to her, some Christian parents can grant Church marriage to their daughter even without undergoing *oku jeza*. Responding to the question of whether Christians should undergo *oku jeza*, Female clergy A responds; "Yes. It is just the will of the girl's or wife's parents. Whoever is to marry a woman without *oku jeza*, the husband will just come to the wife's parents and he will explain his condition... Then if God bless you with the other things, you will bring later." She explains that some parents can understand the man's condition and allow for the church marriage without going through *oku jeza*.

However, female clergy A underscores that in most cases, even if the parents of the bride are willing to allow their daughter to wed in church without undergoing *oku jeza*, in most cases, the clan people would not allow it. It is upon this basis that she thinks

the church should first receive a consent letter from the bride's clan before proceeding to wed a couple. "That's why before we have to marry, wed couples in church, there should be a letter from the woman's clan, from the wife's clan. They have to write a letter about their appreciation or their feeling about the wedding" Female clergy A. According to her experience, some clans will explicitly write that the groom has not paid or paid in half the demands of the bridewealth required in *oku jeza* but they have no objection for the marriage. Female Clergy A emphatically concludes, "It is very necessary to have that letter" before a priest arranges for church marriage. This means that church marriages are at the mercy of clans who in most cases demand the requirements in *oku jeza* be fulfilled before granting church marriage.

Some of the respondents are disgruntled with the manner in which the clans also called *suru* in Lugbara override the parents of the bride when it comes to *oku jeza*. Focus group 1 male Participant 3 asks "Why is *suru* considered so high in making decisions, why do they override the parents?" He thinks that this in most cases does not end well as many of the clan people usually do not allow for church marriage to continue without fulfilment of *oku jeza* even if the parents of the bride are willing to allow the marriage. He wonders why when a marriage is gifted with children, "looking after the children and the rest of the thing, educating them, is the responsibility of these parents. It is not the *suru*... now, when this girl grows up, and the decision about this girl is being done and left in the hands of the *suru*" (Participant 3).

Participant 3 narrates that when his brother was getting married, even though the parents were not so much concerned about the bridewealth, the decision of the *suru*

reigned over that of the bride's parents. This has made his brother hate the *suru* of the girl to date. MP1 explains that *suru* comes in because in Lugbara culture, children belong to the society/*suru* but not the parents. However, Participant 3 thinks that the *suru* is more concerned about the economic benefits of *oku jeza* than they have goodwill for the marriage of their daughters. In this narrative, we can see that through the tough haggling at the negotiation of bridewealth, some of the grooms are left bitter and their attitudes towards their in-laws get tainted.

#### **5.2.4. Focus on the church marriage rather than the *oku jeza* celebration**

Even though it is evident that the participants think it is necessary for betrothed couples to undergo *oku jeza* and make marriage gifts or payments, some of the participants discourage the heavy celebration of the *oku jeza*. They argue that these celebrations are not necessary and often it drains the groom of the resources they would have used for their family. Clergy A states that in the past, there was no introduction, the negotiating parties only ate the animals exchanged.

In the Lugbara culture, the moment the negotiation happens, they say *aje de i 'bo* (the marriage is accomplished) because the negotiation ends with the feast which is the introduction itself since both parties' exchange cows for eating. But now the issue of church marriage has come in because of Christianity. For me, when I was getting married after my university education, I paid some of the bridewealth but since I was not ready for the wedding, they delivered the girl to me in one week and we later wedded after three years (Male clergy A).

### **5.2.5. *Oku jeza* is a customary requirement**

Female Clergy B underscores that *oku jeza* is a customary requirement that Christianity may not undermine. She agrees that a Christian must undergo *oku jeza*. She explains that Christianity does not appear in people's culture in a vacuum. In her response to the same question of whether Christians should undergo *oku jeza*, she says; "Yeah, it is necessary. Christianity does not just begin in a vacuum, that is according to what we learn. It got our gods [culture] there, which we used to worship. Now it found its root in that gods and still today people stick to their culture" (Female Clergy B). Female Clergy B seems to say that the customary traditions precede Christianity and Christianity does not make one less a Lugbara. She concludes that the Lugbara Christian parents will still demand *oku jeza*. "So, I think in a Christian way, still they will ask [for bridewealth] because that is a tradition which was set" (Female Clergy B).

### **5.3. Biblical or theological justifications for *oku jeza***

The study has sought to find out from the participants their theological and or biblical justifications for the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza*. Many of the participants pointed out that it is biblically right to provide bridewealth in the course of marriage but some of them could not explicitly provide biblical references or sound theological justifications to their assertions. Majority of the participants referred to the story of Isaac and Rebecca in which Abraham's servant took gifts and presented them to the father/family of Rebecca as 'bridewealth.' Some pointed out the 14-year labor of Jacob meanwhile, some explain that offering gifts to the bride's family honors God, therefore it is biblically right for a Christian to pay bridewealth.

### 5.3.1. The marriage of Isaac and Rebecca says it all

While making biblical or theological justification for the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza*, the majority of the participants point out the story of the marriage between Isaac and Rebecca. They pointed out that Abraham who is the father of faith sent his servant with many gifts to offer to the family from whom he was sent to marry Isaac. For example, female clergy A explains:

Yes, there are biblical justifications, like in Genesis when Abraham, was about to die, he sent his helper, there was a man who was in charge of his work at home, a helper, with a lot of gifts, there were camels, there were a lot of other gifts, he sent them to his place, he doesn't want Isaac to marry, from the place where he was staying (Female Clergy A).

Meanwhile, although Female Clergy B could not point to a specific bible reference to bridewealth, she says that bridewealth is biblically justified. "I think the Bible also talks about bridewealth. But I don't know whether the Bible is specific about the number of animals... giving dowry or bride price is there. But for me, I am poor in memory but let me get it on my own time. My memory is not all that good" (Female Clergy B). Male Clergy A categorically states' "Abraham's servant went with some gifts to offer to Rebecca's parents, those gifts are symbolic of bridewealth, you do not get someone's daughter without giving something. So, it is biblical but it should be charged highly." In the same way, Male Clergy B points out to the same passage in Genesis 24 saying; "Genesis 24, gives justification on the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza*. Abraham's servant paid some appreciation items, not buying" (Male Clergy B). This has also been pointed out by one of

the clergy participants, “Yes, I give you an example of Isaac in Genesis 24, it shows that it is a gift as an appreciation, so you give gifts in appreciation” (Male Clergy C)

### **5.3.2. Jacob paid bridewealth by his labor**

A few of the participants were able to point out that Jacob’s manual labor to marry Leah and Rachael is another biblical justification for paying bridewealth in *oku jeza*. For example, Focus Group 1 male Participant 6 states “Basically, these things are there, they started in the bible. They are there in the Bible. Paying a bride price is somehow mentioned in the Bible” (Participant 6). He points out how Jacob worked for his father-in-law Laban to marry his two daughters, Leah and Rachael respectively. “That’s why Jacob worked for his father-in-law for 7 years, they gave him the wrong one. He had to work another 7 years to get the right one” (Participant 6). This was also expressed by Male Clergy A “Yes, in Genesis, the case of Laban where the bible says a lady you have taken, you have to pay” pointing out how Jacob worked for fourteen years for Laban to pay for the bridewealth of both Leah and Rachael.

### **5.3.3. Paying bridewealth honors the bride’s family and God**

A few of the participants believe that marriage was instituted by God, so offering bridewealth or marriage gifts pleases God. When asked about the biblical or theological justification for bridewealth payment, Male Clergy B although not directly pointing to the bridewealth paid in *oku jeza* explains:

“Yes, Genesis 2, where God says it is not good for the man to be alone. Marriage is therefore instituted by God. Oku jeza is biblically to be between a man and a woman, not same sex. It is for companionship and procreation.

Proverbs 18:22, he who finds a wife, finds a good thing. So, once you find a good, you must be thankful to God” (Male Clergy B).

Earlier on, we have seen this view also expressed by one of the participants in Focus Group 1. Participant 1 says, “As we say, that bribe price, if we now look at it, at its original context, it’s a form of appreciation. To appreciate the family, you have to provide gifts to this girl’s parents... Let’s look at them as gifts to honor the family.” In his view, to offer bridewealth to a family for bringing up a girl honors the family and this subsequently honors God too.

#### **5.4. How does the practice of *oku jeza* undermine church marriage?**

The practice of *oku jeza* in which many Lugbara Christian parents and clans charge bridewealth before they allow for church marriage for their daughters has adversely undermined or affected church marriage. The participants acknowledged the effect of *oku jeza* on church marriage with much concern and worry. *Oku jeza* denies church marriage for a man who cannot afford bridewealth demanded by his prospective in-laws. This has most often blocked many young people from church marriage. Some participants have linked this to cases where some parents look at *oku jeza* as a profit-making venture what some scholars call commercialization. They explain that the tendency to make material gain from *oku jeza* motivates parents to overcharge the items of bridewealth. Additionally, some participants reasoned that many prospective candidates for church marriage now focus on traditional marriage rather than church marriage.

#### 5.4.1. *Oku jeza* makes church marriage impossible for some couple

*Oku jeza* makes church marriage impossible for many couples, explains Female Clergy B. The demand for bridewealth in *oku jeza* “can make church marriage impossible if the two parties do not agree. Meaning that it will not be church marriage. It may end or they may take another direction. Meaning that the church marriage is interfered with” (Female Clergy B). This is true especially when the man intending to marry cannot afford the bridewealth. For a gentleman who loves his fiancé to be denied marriage because of bridewealth even tortures the man. Female Clergy A expressed her concerns; “I’m not happy just because of the bride price, of other clans, agreeing, sometimes they agree what the husband cannot afford, and so that alone can torture the husband, and you cannot go and steal what you wanted to give for bride price” (Female Clergy A). She explains that unlike in the past when bridewealth was the responsibility of the man’s immediate and extended family, today, the man alone struggles to raise it.

Charging bridewealth blocks a man who cannot afford it from accessing church marriage in that only those who can afford bridewealth undergo *oku jeza* and later proceed to church marriage. Female Clergy A reports that the “rate of people coming to marry in the church will not be as expected like in a year you may just wed one person” in an event where couples intending to access church marriage are subjected to *oku jeza*. She however anticipates that “if these things [bridewealth] were not there” (Female Clergy A) lots of couples would come to the church for church marriage. The resultant effect of this is that many couples who cannot afford to pay for bridewealth often take shortcuts by eloping, thus encouraging cohabitation. Sadly, “if the boy is a committed Christian,

sometimes he can go through such challenges in raising the animals. This results in the boy eloping the girl” explains Male Clergy D.

#### **5.4.2. *Oku jeza* has become a profit-making venture**

The participants have also expressed the fact that many parents and or *suru* of the girls now look at *oku jeza* as a business venture. Parents and their clans prefer to charge their prospective in-laws as much as possible to get material wealth out of the *oku jeza*. Male clergy A explains that “there are those areas where the church feels *oku jeza* has become commercial particularly the clan of the girl looks at it as an enriching venture for them.” He links this attitude of parents who overcharge for the material benefits in *oku jeza*. “When a gentleman comes to the girl’s family to ask for marriage, they think he has prepared, so they say ‘*ba ma li afa drinia mgba* [let us charge him properly]. The church has not been happy with such attitude” explains Male Clergy A. Equally Male Clergy B attests that “the heavy charges by parents forces many young people to elope and begin cohabiting.” He appeals to parents not to “consider bridewealth as a business but an appreciation, whatever the man brings should be accepted” (Male Clergy B).

The clergy feared that young men who elope for failing to pay bridewealth are often disallowed in church fellowships and from accessing sacraments like partaking in the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) as they are often considered backslidden. Overcharging bridewealth “makes it very hard for Christians to enter church marriages because they cannot afford it, so, many young people leave the faith, they elope and fall away from the church” (Male Clergy C). This fear was also expressed by Male Clergy D who noted that when a boy marries by eloping, “many of the church leaders remove him from

fellowships for marrying before the traditional or church marriage.” The burden of bridewealth in *oku jeza* and its effect on Lugbara Christians intending to marry not only denies church marriage but also greatly impacts the spiritual life of the affected individuals.

#### **5.4.3. People focus more on traditional marriage than church marriage**

*Oku jeza* also undermines church marriage because many Christians tend to focus on traditional marriage and think less of church marriage. *Oku jeza* “undermines church marriage because now people focus on introduction [ceremonies] which is heavily spent on instead of planning for a wedding in the church” Male Clergy B. What Male Clergy B has referred to as introduction is otherwise the climax of *oku jeza*, a moment when the traditional marriage happens. This according to the clergy is a heavy spent on ceremony which many Lugbara Christians focus on than the church marriage. By the time they go through the introduction ceremony, they would have spent a lot that they no longer have resources for the celebration of the church marriage. “I therefore would not recommend such a heavy introduction. Instead, I recommend that couples intending to get married should simply after the negotiation and paying bridewealth arrange for a wedding” remarks Male Clergy B.

#### **5.5. What is the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile doing or ought to do to address the challenges of *oku jeza***

The section has explored what the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile is doing or should do to address the challenges of *oku jeza* on church marriage. Generally, the participants are concerned about the state or the challenges of *oku jeza* on Christian marriage and they

have offered several suggestions for the Diocese to consider. However, a number of the participants have been able to indicate that it is going to be a tough task for the Diocese to influence. It is explicitly expressed that there are many Lugbara Christians and clan members who have stuck to their traditions despite being in the church. Some participants also think that the church is encouraging the practice of *oku jeza* by demanding an authorization letter from the lady's parents before proceeding with church marriage. One participant has expressed that the challenges posed by the current practice of *oku jeza* bring an existential crisis to church marriage "And things are getting worse. So, if the church does not come and rescue the situation, then the meaning of marriage is already lost" Participant 3.

Despite the stated challenges above, the participants demonstrated hope that the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile can still influence the Lugbara Christian communities in the matters of *oku jeza*. Some of the suggestions provided by the participants include discipleship and teaching of the biblical truth to the Christians. Some participants believed that if the church devoted to disciple its members, there would be attitude change. Others have suggested that the church should rather establish support systems that allow for the community to materially contribute in support of the couples going through *oku jeza*. More still, some of the participants have proposed that the leadership of the church (especially the lay leaders) who live in the communities should engage as much as possible in the processes of *oku jeza* to influence their clan members.

Similarly, some have appealed to the church leaders to show a good example when their daughters are getting married by not sticking to the payment of bridewealth before

authorization for church marriage. Further still, the participants have also called for a concerted effort or collaboration between church leaders, cultural, government, or civil society institutions in the revisiting of *oku jeza*. These responses demonstrate the desire for revisiting bridewealth among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

#### **5.5.1. It is a difficult task**

Despite the participants' optimism of the church's capacity to influence the negative aspects of *oku jeza* which poses challenges to church marriage, some participants think it will be an uphill task. Considering that the culture of demanding bridewealth in *Oku jeza* has existed from time immemorial, some of the participants reason that it will be a difficult task for the church to influence the desired changes. Female Clergy A argues that some of the clan leaders who perpetrate the exorbitant charging of bridewealth are not regular in the church, as such, it might be difficult for the church to influence them. According to Female Clergy A, "There are some clan leaders who don't even go to church once in a year, so their speech is just like stone, when they have talked, they have talked". She continues to lament: "churches everywhere, even people of God reach up to families, but then up to now even there are some people they tie their hearts like stone, they can't come to church... so bringing this issue to the people, it will be very hard, those church people are trying their best" female clergy A.

In a similar vein, Male Participant 2 of focus group 1 expressed his fears arguing that since there is a lot of intermarriage between Christians of different denominations, it will be very hard for the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile to fight this vice singly. "When you are

married to a different religion, maybe a different church, it will be hard. It will mean that, maybe, all religions [denominations] come together, maybe they sit and they are fighting together” (Participant 2). In his view, it might be easier if the marrying parties were all from Anglican families, then the church might be able to influence. Participant 3 in focus group 1 pointed out that a dialogue between the church and community would be of help. He is worried that whereas “the church is looking at the honor in the marriage, the traditionalist people are looking at what [material wealth] they can get from this marriage. Property and honor is a very difficult thing” Participant 3. These sentiments and the call of the same participants for the church to intervene demonstrate a paradox and disillusionment among the participants. On the one hand, they have looked at the church to help yet they have argued that it is a difficult situation for the church to bail out.

#### **5.5.2. The church is promoting *oku jeza***

Regrettably, the participants have also observed that the church is indirectly promoting *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile. Some of the participants have argued that the action of the church to demand authorization from the girl’s parents is promoting *oku jeza* since many parents would not give the authorization letter until the groom has duly fulfilled the demands of *oku jeza* levied on him. Meanwhile, others reasoned that the church discontinues cohabiting couples who have not paid bride wealth from partaking in holy communion. They think that this shows approval of the *oku jeza* and its practices by the church. As such, they conclude that the church is indirectly responsible for promoting *oku jeza* whose main

aspect is the payment of bridewealth by the prospective groom.

For instance, male clergy C is not impressed that the church has left it to the girl's parents to decide whether their daughter can marry in church or not in relation to bridewealth. He reasons that instead of the church asking for authorization "They should have asked the parents to only give permission. They should teach the parents to be able to write letters even when bridewealth has not yet been paid" according to Male Clergy C. When asked whether the church's demand for a letter from the girl's parents is promoting *oku jeza*, Male Participant 7 in focus group 1 responded that; "Yes, because there are some things in the church which promote these things. Because before you go to your wedding, you must get a letter from the girl's parents. And usually, they want to write you that letter after they have squeezed you". Meanwhile, female clergy A expresses her dilemma by saying that if the church goes on to wed without the permission of the girl's parents, something worse may happen to the lady in the marriage. Female Clergy A observed that "They may wed [without parental permission letter] ... but now, as I say, in the family, you will not have life as expected, you know. When these people of the clan start talking, sometimes you may not produce".

Another ground on which the participants argue that the church is promoting *oku jeza* is when a communicant who elopes without paying bridewealth is stopped from holy communion meanwhile a communicant who has gone through *oku jeza* but has not married in church is allowed to partake in. Male participant 4 in focus group 1 states "I've seen, for example, if a man marries without coming to church, if you do a shortcut, usually, before if you are partaking holy communion, you are stopped" for not giving

bridewealth. He pointed out that church council meetings to restore those who fall out of partaking in holy communion because of marital issues are normally asked whether they have paid bridewealth. If one has married and hasn't paid the bridewealth, they do not allow him to return to the communion table. Male clergy D has also intimated that if gentlemen elope without paying bridewealth "many of the church leaders remove him from fellowships for marrying before the traditional or church marriage" male clergy D. These actions of the church are seen to be approving and strengthening the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

### 5.5.3. Discipleship and teaching

Using various avenues, the participants have recommended that the church should do discipleship and teachings to avert the otherwise catastrophic impact of *oku jeza* on church marriage. In its teaching, the church should be able to point out traditional practices in *oku jeza* that are unhealthy to church marriage. Male clergy B reports having been involved in radio campaigns against such practices; "The church is doing something about it, especially sensitization. I have heard on the radio, the Voice of Life, when the church speaks against these unacceptable practices. I have also personally talked about these things on the radio" (Male Clergy B). He further states that "the church should also do biblical teaching on marriage such that parents can be influenced" (Male Clergy B). Participant 13 reports that the "preaching on family life on the radio Voice of Life has been helpful."

One of the areas a participant recommended for teaching is the question of overcharging the items in bridewealth. According to Male Clergy D; "some pastors try

to teach their Christians to make sure that parents do not overcharge or make it mandatory for the payment of bridewealth before marriage.” As noted earlier, one of the challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage is overcharging the items in the bridewealth and making it mandatory for the prospective son-in-law to first complete the bridewealth before proceeding to church marriage. Male Clergy D believes that in this way, parents might be influenced to charge less and also allow their children to access church marriage without having fully paid the bridewealth. He also notes that the church should disciple her Christians because a disciple Christian better understands the ideals of Christianity. Quoting him verbatim, “The church should also do proper discipleship of her Christians through practical teaching to the extent of having young people properly prepared for marriage in the future. Well, disciplined Christians can discern factors that undermine the faith” (Male clergy D).

Similarly, in Focus Group 1, there was a strong emphasis on discipleship as recommended by Male Clergy D above. Male participant 1 in Focus Group 1 reasoned that the church has preached enough but disciplined less. He therefore challenged the church to focus more on discipleship as much as evangelical preaching. In his words he urges, “The church has to do a lot to reach and also to expand the kingdom of God. As I've seen, the problem with us now here is the discipleship” (Participant 1). He laments that “The Anglican Church, I think, is not embarking so much on discipleship” and recommends that “if we focus on discipleship, focus on families, and focus on other things, I think the church will greatly influence the communities”. He also further points out that the church “must begin to preach the gospel with a purpose. And the purpose is not only for

people to enter heaven. But the purpose should also be there for people to sustain their homes and families” (Participants 1).

#### **5.5.4. Build a church support system**

Another way for the church to overcome the challenges of *oku jeza* on Christian families and church marriage is by forming a church social support system that will offer material support to the young men who otherwise cannot afford bridewealth charged in *oku jeza*. As an example, female clergy A has noted that the Lugbara Christian community in Kampala has been supporting young men intending to marry but cannot afford the bridewealth. Through the church's social support system, the church makes a material contribution towards acquiring the items required for *oku jeza* and also supports the couple for a church wedding. Female Clergy A narrates what the Lugbara Christian community in Kampala does:

Like in Kampala now, these days even the church can contribute, even the church can contribute to the youth, like when you are just a youth, and you are all along in your life you have been working in the church, the time may come for you, now you want to marry, but you have nothing in your hand, so the church will just begin meeting. In this meeting like we started last time, people make contributions, after contribution they buy what the clan wants, they even come to that sitting with the clan, what do you expect this boy to give you, so after giving it is the church going back to buy all those things and they bring, and they go up to the extent of wedding, it has happened very many times (Female Clergy A).

However, she thinks that the Lugbara Christian community in the greater Arua is not ready for such a social support system. She noted that such a support system where Christians contribute to buy items to pay for bridewealth has not yet happened in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. In her own words, "...in this diocese it has not happened, it has happened in the church which has been serving, in Bethel church, they have married women from..." (Female clergy A). She provides a specific example of what the Lugbara Christian community in Kampala has done, pointing that "... recently they have taken a boy who is twenty-something, they nurtured him, now they have taken him to school to become lay reader, thereafter they will also marry for him, the church will marry wife for that lay reader, the expense is all on church." Without substantiating she concludes that "it does happen in other places, but now here [Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile] it is somehow hard yet" (Female clergy A).

#### **5.5.5. Church leaders should engage in the process of *oku jeza***

In addition to teaching and discipleship, some participants recommend that the church should get engaged in the process of *oku jeza*. It has been noted that many of the lay leaders in the church such as church wardens and union leaders like Fathers Union should not sit back when their clans are engaging in *oku jeza*. They should rather get involved to influence the process. For example, Female Clergy A recommends that those who intend to get married should use such lay leaders in the church as go-betweens. A go-between is someone, usually not part of the two clans chosen by the groom to coordinate the negotiation process in the course of *oku jeza*. In her view, "when you put the go-betweens, so you put the go-between to be church leader, a reverend or a lay reader or

*idia* (churchwarden), and that *idia* will work, will say just appreciate, just ask for anything for appreciation” (Female clergy A). The clergy explains that “When they [church leaders] talk physically to those people, they can understand, but then when they talk, when they are from far, they will not understand” (Female clergy A).

#### **5.5.6. The church should put in place guidelines for Christian marriage**

It has also been reported that the church uses its decision-making structures like councils and synods to come up with guidelines regulating the marriage process of its Christians. For instance, Male clergy C decries the church’s silence on the matter of *oku jeza* and calls upon the church to consider setting guidelines for her followers to follow. He vehemently remarked that, “The church has not openly come up, otherwise the church could come in the synod with clear guidelines for Christians to follow teaching people to leave the idea of bridewealth and going by gift in appreciation than to let the girl go like that” (Male clergy C). Meanwhile Male Clergy A reports that the church has been trying to come up with such strategies but it has not been successful. “One of the things the church has been doing to come up with resolutions that can be pronounced by the council or synod. So, the church must make pronouncements against such high charges levied” (Male clergy C). In his observation, Male Clergy C has noted clearly that “In one of the synods, there was almost a pronouncement which was meant to harmonize these situations but unfortunately the resolution was not passed.” He calls upon the church to rise up with a single voice to make pronouncements which should be earnestly preached to the congregation. Female Clergy B also advises that the church should “put guidelines about marriage, Christian marriage. If you want to

do Christian marriage, what are the things that you need to do or you need to ask? So, it's to make the marriage to be in a Christian way.”

On the contrary, although one of the participants noted that such discussions were made in past Diocesan Synods without concrete decisions, he is skeptical of whether such a regulation would work out. Male Clergy B states, “Using the church structures and authorities such as synod or council or bishopric authority may not be possible. I have seen it discussed in synods but no conclusion could be made or implementation can be difficult.” This clergy has strongly advised against the church coming up with such regulations, he feared that the culture might rise against the church. He notes; “The church may not impose something on the culture, but can rather do preaching and teaching to bring a change of attitude. But not setting a standard like phasing out bridewealth which may set the culture against the church” (Male clergy B). Male Clergy B’s observation that such unsuccessful attempts to make a pronouncement at the Diocesan synod agrees with what Male Clergy A has observed. They both have noted that whereas such discussions were held at the Diocesan Synod, it was not successful. However, Clergy A is optimistic that it could work while Clergy B does not think that it would work out.

#### **5.5.7. Christian parents should take charge in the process of *oku jeza***

In the focus group 1 discussion, there was a serious concern regarding the clan people (*suru*) making decisions on behalf of the parents of the lady getting married. In his rhetorical questions, Participant 3 shows his discomfort when the *suru* overrides the parents in making a decision. He asks; “why are there the views of *suru*? Why is *suru* so

important in making decisions? Why do they override the parents?” (Participant 3). Male Participant 4 agrees that parents should take charge of the process of *oku jeza* for them to ensure that the items paid in bridewealth are not overcharged. He then gave an example where the parents of the girl decided that their daughter would marry even without fulfilling the requirements of *oku jeza*. “Recently, my in-law got married in the church, even before they paid anything. But agreed to go to church, and finish everything. After five years, they came and paid the bridewealth. Because the father was more concerned about his spiritual life. He didn't take the issue of bridewealth seriously” (Participant 4).

#### **5.5.8. Collaboration with cultural institutions, the government and non-governmental organizations**

As with many desired social changes in the community, there is also an appeal from the participants for the church to collaborate with cultural institutions and the government to revisit bridewealth among the Lugbara. This calls for a concerted effort to ensure that the practice of *oku jeza* does not become a stumbling block in marriages. “The church can also collaborate with cultural institutions for example the Acholi and Alur cultural institutions have come up with uniform charges which are not exaggerated” recommends Male clergy A. He hopes that the efforts of the cultural leaders among the Acholi and Alur could be leveraged if the church collaborates with the cultural leaders. There is a common intersection which should draw the church and cultural leaders together especially considering that “both institutions [church and Lugbara Kari] seem to have agreed that there is overcharging leading to pre-marital

pregnancies, and other effects” (Male Clergy A). Clergy A is also a leader in the Lugbara Kingdom (Kari).

In addition to the collaboration between the church and the cultural institution, the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile should also collaborate with the government to mitigate the challenges of *oku jeza*. All government organs from the lower local councils in the villages through to the legislative arm of the government including government agencies can be collaborators to the church in this matter recommends Male Clergy A. The clergy emphatically states “The church also needs to collaborate with the government systems which goes up to grassroots” (Male Clergy A). In addition to the government, he also recommends that the church should jointly engage with non-governmental organizations in fighting against some practices of *oku jeza*, especially putting up joint efforts in transforming the mindset of the Lugbara Christian community. This is well articulated by Male Clergy A “The issue here is changing the mindset of the people, even other stakeholders like NGOs should be engaged in the same.”

#### **5.5.9. Clergymen and women should lead by example**

There is also an appeal that clergymen and women should show good examples to the Lugbara Christian community especially when they have sons and daughters getting married. Participants encouraged the clergy to refrain from demanding bridewealth as a condition for church marriage. Male Clergy B appeals to clergy to look at bridewealth as an appreciation, to accept what their prospective sons-in-laws can afford than levying charges on them. He recommends that “the clergymen and women also need to be exemplary, they should look at bridewealth as appreciation than business” (Male

Clergy B). It is reasoned that the good example of the clergy can teach the Christians what they ought to do as noted by male clergy B. “Once people/Christians see them do it, they would follow” (Male Clergy B).

The female clergy B equally agrees that the clergy should be able to show a good example especially when their daughters are getting married to ‘good Christians’—those who love God. Speaking optimistically affirming that ‘these things’ (giving daughters without asking for bridewealth) can happen, the female clergy B has this to say:

Now like, I know you and I know you love God. You want to get married to my daughter and you have nothing. I know your faith. If I am a true believer, I can say, no, you take this girl. But let me call the church leaders to witness it. And then I will give this girl for you. You go and keep her, take care of her. And then when God gives you something, you will now in turn give me whatever you want to give. These things can happen (female clergy B).

Meanwhile, male clergy C who strongly recommends Lugbara Christians to consider the marriage payments as a gift of appreciation rather than bridewealth also appeals to the clergy to be an example. He narrated how he prevailed over his clan when her three daughters were getting married. Male Clergy C’s efforts to take charge in the matters of the marriage of his daughters speaks to the previous recommendations appealing to Christians not to let the *suru* fully be in charge of the marriage process. The experience of Male Clergy C as he narrates facilitated a smooth talk between the

two parties of the bride and the groom with a few hours of negotiations. He laments that in some cases, negotiations go on for all day with sometimes the groom's party giving up. Male clergy C provides the following recommendation:

I have campaigned against this over the radio. In fact, you don't buy a human being, you rather give gifts, the question of bridewealth and dowry should not be the case among Christians. In fact, for my daughters, I didn't demand for bridewealth. I only asked the men to bring whatever they had; my clan's people were not happy but they let it go. Marriage negotiation took 1-2 hours only. Some men after paying bridewealth consider they have bought the woman and some of them even barter their wives. In some cases, negotiations even take two days or trans night. It is a tag of war, to some extent that one party nearly gives up after failing to agree.

#### **5.5.10. Encourage cross-cultural marriage**

Although it was expressed by many of the participants, one of them was able to categorically state that the church should encourage inter-cultural marriage. This explicitly came from Male Clergy D who states; "The church can also encourage cross-culture marriage." He explained that inter-cultural marriages offer an opportunity for one culture to learn from the other. For instance, if a Lugbara Christian marries from another culture that does not overcharge bridewealth, the Lugbara Christian community will learn from the other culture.

#### **5.5.11. Special ministry to Christian families**

Some participants believe that the church has not focused on Christian marriages and families. Participant 9 in Focus group 2 points out that there are a lot of complexities in marriage that the church has not paid much attention to. She reports that for the church to impact Lugbara Christian communities in matters relating to *oku jeza* “it will mean the church will adopt better ways, more complex ways of dealing with families and marriages. Which the church is not geared for right now” (Female participant 9). The participant agrees with Male Participant 1 that “the church right now is only after spreading the gospel.” She therefore recommends that “there is a need for the church to do much more in reaching out to their families” (Female Participant 9). Male Clergy A also recommends that in their pastoral ministry to families, “Individual pastors should incorporate it in their home visits and talk these issues to parents to help mitigate these challenges” (Male Clergy A). Female participant 9 longs to have the church have an intentional ministry to Christian families.

### **5.6. Theological approach**

Although data from the research does not explicitly speak to the theological approaches to revisit bridewealth, the call by some participants to consider bridewealth as a marriage gift has a theological significance. For example, Male Clergy B refers to cases where some parents receive ‘whatever’ their son in-law offers. Bridewealth is a social fact that has persisted in Africa despite growing globalization. This is because the practice of bridewealth in most African cultures is a social fact that cannot be easily swept under the carpet. “A social fact consists of collective thoughts and shared expectations that influence individual actions. Examples of social facts include social roles, norms, laws,

values, rituals, and customs” (Herzog, 2018). Social facts have the following three characteristics of social facts outlined by Durkheim;

(a) general: that is to say, they are common to many individuals; (b) transmissible: that is to say they can be transmitted vertically from generation to generation and horizontally from one contemporary human group to another; (c) compulsory: that is to say, human beings must take account of them, whether they like them or not—they cannot be ignored (Durkheim cited in Shorter, 1999, p. 32).

The marriage custom of bridewealth, writes Shorter (1999), is an example of social fact since it is generalized, and has over several thousands of years been passed from one parental generation to another in addition to its being adopted by other cultures which did not originally practice it. Further, it has become sort of a compulsory practice in that “young people find it difficult to evade this obligation. Despite current abuse of the custom and frequent calls for its abolition, it is still there as a bone of contention” (Shorter, 1999, p. 32). However, social facts are not static, they keep changing according to the social environment in which it is practiced. Bridewealth in its present form has been noted to have become monetized and commercialized, deviating from its customary purpose. In as much as social facts keep evolving, their evolution hardly leads to its dissolution. Bridewealth, therefore, is destined to remain a prominent custom in the Lugbara culture for generations to come. Propositions to revisit the practice against its abuse and negative forms are more profitable than unyielding calls for its abolition.

The argument that bridewealth, as a social fact, will remain a prominent custom in African cultures can be justified by previous attempts to outlaw it. For example, Christian missionaries were not pleased with the practice since they looked at it as a practice of selling or buying women as wives. “Despite their spirited condemnation of the practice, most if not all [African people] ignored them. Those families that were Christian upheld and performed both customary and Christian marriage rituals” (Chitakure, 2017, p. 30). This research has shown that the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile highly regard the custom of bridewealth but also argue for it being a biblical practice. Before a couple among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese report for church marriage, they first undergo the customary requirement of *oku jeza* with its main feature being the payment of bridewealth. Despite the challenges facing church marriages due to the changes in the practice of bridewealth, there is no will among the Lugbara Christian communities to abolish the practice.

This, therefore, calls for the theology of inculturation to ensure that cultural practices like bridewealth, which do not contradict the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, are practiced while preserving the purity of the gospel. According to Gehman, “The African Christian Church has unique problems which are not faced by any other church in the same manner” (Gehman, 2018, p. 34). He, therefore, calls for the African church to “seek God in the Scriptures through the illumination of the Holy Spirit in the resolution of these problems” (p. 30). Thus, raising the need for inculturation which he referred to as taking “the unchanging truth of Scripture” (Gehman, 1993) and applying it in context to meet the particular needs of a people group. In this case, how can the Lugbara

Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile continue with bridewealth in contracting marriage without adulterating the gospel?

The reflection on the theology of bridewealth by Pati (2009) though not in the African context stands valuable. Pati considered the relationship between Christ and the Church as a groom and bride relation which is a New Testament concept. Referring to the New Testament teaching that Christ (the groom) has bought the church (the bride) with a price, his blood; Pati writes that “Truly, this blood was the most precious and most valuable marriage payment ever made” (Pati, 2009, p. 90). It was a love gift, a payment that flowed from the love of Christ. Bridewealth should therefore be approached from a similar point of view. Just as the price Christ paid to established a relationship between him (the groom) and the church (bride) so does the payment of bridewealth establish a relationship. The marriage of the Lugbara Christians must therefore emulate the marriage of Christ and the Church which is driven by love. “Love must be the influential thing in marriage” (Pati, 2009, p. 96). The giving and receiving of bridewealth must be an expression of love between the bride and the groom extended to the related parties. In this way, “greed, pride, and other aspects that are rooted in the bride price” (Pati, 2009, p. 96) seen in the *oku jeza* among the Lugbara people can be revisited and practiced without diverting from its original intention and without degrading the gospel of Christ.

The bridewealth in *oku jeza* is normally assessed and quoted by the bride’s family and the agreed price is intensely negotiated. The negotiations can be worse than negotiating a commodity in the marketplace. It is characterized by haggling and a bitter exchange of words sometimes involving fistfights. Sometimes the two parties fail to agree and the

suitor is forced to surrender. Male Clergy C describes it as “a tag of war, to some extent that one party nearly gives up after failing to agree.” This manner of demanding for bridewealth and its negotiation in *oku jeza* as practiced by Lugbara is not representative of the sacrificial price Christ (the groom) has paid for the church (bride). The payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza* among Lugbara Christians must follow the pattern of Christ’s love for the church.

It is therefore recommended that Lugbara Christian parents should desist from providing a quotation (agenda) for the bridewealth of their daughters. Rather, the suitor (groom) and or his family out of their love for the bride should offer a marital gift commensurate to the capacity of the groom. As advised by the Theological Advisory Group (1996), “Christian parents need to evaluate the reasons why they demand dowry... Dowry should be paid according to one's ability” (Theological Advisory Group., 1996, p. 131). This view is also supported by Male Clergy C who has argued that Christian parents should instead of demanding for the bridewealth simply receive a marriage gift which he calls ‘a gift in appreciation’ to the bride’s parents. Male Clergy C advocates that Christian’s offer “should be marriage gift but not payment (bridewealth). It is good for a man to give a gift in appreciation. I recommend a gift in appreciation rather than payment.” This will eliminate the current tendencies towards the commercialization of bridewealth.

The concept of Love Gift at which the groom offers a non-demanded and a non-negotiated gift out of gratitude to the groom’s parents as opposed to bridewealth demands attention. In the present, the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza* is a social obligation on the groom and his kin. As noted, it is demanded in a quotation and the two parties engage in deep

negotiation before arriving on the final list and quantities or amounts of items to pay regardless of the ability of the groom to afford the items. The proposition of Love Gift is to turn away from bridewealth which is a social obligation to a personal expression of love by the groom and his kin in appreciation of his bride. Instead of building marital relationships through deep negotiations and haggling, the groom shows care and concern for the bride and ethically considers offering material gift according to his ability (whatever he has) to the bride's kin to cement the relationship. The concept of Love Gift re-orientates the idea of bridewealth from being a social obligation to a joyful expression of love, promotes ethical giving, recognizes the bride as a partner other than an object to be owned.

Significantly, traditional bridewealth by the payment of—cows, goats, arrows, hoes—among others served as a formal recognition of the bride's value to her family and community. She is exchanged for bridewealth judged to be commensurate to what the bride's family and community would lose once she marries. The bride easily becomes an object of exchange, thus commodifying her value at the expense of the burden levied on the groom. Contrarily, Love Gift would be a willful offer which is not demanded, negotiated and coerced. Through Love Gift, the bride is cherished because she is loved and the groom is liberated from undue charges often demanded in bridewealth. Further, the present practice of bridewealth promotes male dominance over women because the bride is given away, her value is tagged to a price and she is sort of an object of transaction. Subsequently, Love Gift offers an opportunity for a cultural shift from

bridewealth and reorientation of marital union where a woman is paid for and possessed to recognition of the bride and mutual participation man and woman in the marital union.

Embracing Love Gift instead of bridewealth does present benefits. Grooms that are unable to afford the social obligation of bridewealth and subsequently fail to obtain consent letter for church marriage are able to offer Love Gift commensurate to their abilities and access church marriage. Nevertheless, it is likely that Love Gift comes with a challenge of insincerity to be reckoned with since it is up to the groom value the Love Gift. It is anticipated that some men might unethically reserve themselves from making any love gifts in the pretext of being unable to do so since it would no longer be an obligation. This challenge can be addressed by the church teaching the young men and women on the value of Love Gift. Further, it is likely that men who are genuinely unable to offer a love gift could easily be misunderstood to be unappreciative. It is therefore important for Christian families to extend grace to men who are unable to offer 'reasonable' love gift, allow their daughters to marry a man of their choice.

### **5.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has sought the pastoral and theological approaches in revisiting *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian Community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. It specifically focused on three major areas; first, whether a Lugbara Christian should undergo *oku jeza*. Here, it is very clear that for various reasons, the participants acknowledge that it is a good thing for a Lugbara Christian to undergo *oku jeza*. Among others, the participants reasoned that through *oku jeza*, a man pays bridewealth which is an appreciation to the bride's parents for raising her as some of them have pointed

out that there is no ownership without a price. Thus, to own a wife, one must pay a price. Some also argued that *oku jeza* honors God as it allows a man to marry his wife in an honorable way. However, there was an appeal to parents and those intending to marry among the Lugbara Christians not to pay much focus to the traditional marriage (*oku jeza*) but to the church marriage.

The chapter also sought to inquire what the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile is doing or should do to revisit the bridewealth. It is seen that currently, the church has very little effort in revisiting *oku jeza*, especially in areas that impact church marriage. Some of the efforts of the church in supporting Lugbara Christians in the matters of *oku jeza* include; teaching, adequate counseling, and engagement of church leaders in the negotiation of bridewealth. Participants recommended many ways in which the church may reign to revisit *oku jeza*. Standing out among the recommendations is; for the church to consider making a special pronouncement through structures like synods or councils or even the bishopric authority of the Diocesan See in an attempt to regulate *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christians. Although there is a clear indication that this will not be an easy climb, many of the participants are optimistic that through collaborations with cultural, governmental, and non-governmental institutions, there can be a breakthrough.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 6.1. Introduction

This study purposed to revisit bridewealth in *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The study premised on developing pastoral and theological approaches to the practice of bridewealth an aspect of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile with an interest in revisiting the practice to maintain its intended role in the society in the Christian context. Therefore, the main research objective for the study was: to analyze how the practice of bridewealth in *oku jeza* by the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile can be revisited with a view of maintaining its intended role in society.

To fulfill this research objective, three specific objectives were developed. The first specific objective was to describe the various aspects of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara. The second was to assess the challenges of bridewealth in *oku jeza* on church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The last was to develop theological approaches to revisit the practice of bridewealth in *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The practical theology research employed the qualitative social research method subjected to a critical theological conversation using the 'hospitality, conversation and critical faithfulness' theory of Swinton (2016). Using this theory, bridewealth as practiced in the Lugbara *oku jeza* presents social concerns. The practical theology research employed the social research method to investigate the problems of bridewealth among the Lugbara Christian community in the

Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. It subjected the research findings to a critical theological conversation and conversion. The research findings guided by the specific objectives are reported in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Chapter 5 summarizes the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

## **6.2. Summary of Research findings**

The research findings are summarized according to the three specific research objectives which formed chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the study. Chapter three was dedicated to reporting on the findings relating to the aspects of *oku jeza* as practiced by the Lugbara. Meanwhile, chapter four reported the findings of the challenges of bridewealth as an aspect of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Chapter five was dedicated to reporting on the findings related to the pastoral and theological approaches in revisiting bridewealth proposing how the custom can be practiced in the context of church marriage among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile while maintaining its intended roles in society.

### **6.2.1. Aspects of the Lugbara *oku jeza***

*Oku jeza* refers to the customary marriage process among the Lugbara involving the payment of bridewealth. Sometimes, the noun *aje* is used to mean *oku jeza*. *Aje* is often used to mean marriage. The term would be translated as 'buying women (wife)' stemming from two Lugbara words; *oku* which means a woman or women, the same word is also used to mean wife, and *jeza*, a verb that means to buy. Before looking at the aspects of *oku jeza*, the chapter sought to elucidate whether the Lugbara term *oku jeza* truly refers to buying a woman or it is being used figuratively. The study found that the usage of the

term *oku jeza* does not amount to the buying of a woman or wife but its present practice tends to be so. This presents a paradox since whereas the original intention of the practice of *oku jeza* is not to sell a woman as a wife, yet its present practice which has been described by many researchers and affirmed by the research participants to be commercialized makes *oku jeza* appear to be the selling of women as wives.

This research has unveiled that the Lugbara Christian community does not agree that *oku jeza* amounts to the selling of women as chattels but they do admit that its present practice is a betrayal of the term. It has further been found out that whereas it is true that the Lugbara women are not being sold in *oku jeza*, the manner of its present practice makes some men feel as though they have purchased their wives. This has been supported by views from the respondents who report that some men after having gone through *oku jeza* look at their wives as purchased property resulting in violence against women. Some men also attempt to control the earnings of their wives simply because they feel having 'bought' their wives amount to having bought their sexual and economic productivity. However, some participants believed that the use of a business term to refer to marriage among the Lugbara could be due to a limitation in Lugbara words. This has prompted the desire in some of the respondents to the development of an alternative terminology to *oku jeza*, none of them however proposed any new terminology to use.

The research has further revealed that *oku jeza* is a process not an event. However, the event that occurs on the day of negotiation, payment of the agreed bridewealth, and the marriage itself is also called *oku jeza*. It should however be noted that these processes can either happen on the same day or they may be spread over several days i.e.; the

negotiation of the bridewealth, the payment of the bridewealth and the marriage event itself could either all take place on the same day, or each process scheduled on separate days. *Oku jeza* in the past is believed to start with the process of identifying a future wife for a boy by his father who then goes ahead to make the proposal to the father of the girl. This immediately is followed by the negotiation of the bridewealth and gradual payment thereof. When the boy and the girl mature, the marriage then takes place. *Oku jeza* continues even after the marriage by the continued payment of the items in the bridewealth.

In the recent past till now, parents no longer identify wives for their sons. Therefore, *oku jeza* begins with courtship between a grown-up boy and girl who upon their consent to marry will notify their families. The boy, accompanied by some uncles or elder brothers will present himself to the family of the girl for a booking ceremony called *irindi adiza*. This is often done by the boy tying a grass on the hand of the lady to symbolically book her. This may be equivalent to the present practice of fixing booking rings or bracelets as symbols of booking a future wife (marriage proposal or engagement). The girl's family will then issue an 'agenda'—the list of items they demand for the bridewealth of their daughter. This list is reviewed by the boy's family or clan who then will propose a date for negotiation of the items on the agenda. Upon successful negotiation, the boy's family or clan will fully or partially pay the bridewealth paving the way for the traditional marriage ceremony (*aje*) which presently is widely known as introduction.

The research has found out that a significant aspect of the Lugbara *oku jeza* is the bridewealth. Traditionally, no Lugbara marriage occurs or is recognized without the

payment of bridewealth. The Lugbara bridewealth as discussed earlier, except for the present tendencies of its commercialization by some parents is not the price of the woman getting married. The Lugbara believe that one cannot buy a woman. However, the present manner of the practice of bridewealth payment in the process of *oku jeza* makes it appear that bridewealth is indeed the price a man pays for his wife. It has also been reported by the respondents that among the Lugbara, girls are *mali* (wealth), a family that begets many girls will receive wealth in the bridewealth as the girls get married and such a family is respected. Bridewealth is comprised of several items ranging from animals like cows, goats, and chickens to cash and other physical items like arrows, hoes, rain boots, raincoats, solar panels, among others. Items paid in bridewealth are categorized and each category of items has a specific role or significance.

Traditionally, the first category of items of the bridewealth is the *irindi a'diza*, thus the items paid for booking the girl. The *irindi a'diza* traditionally could be a cock or a goat and it serves as a betrothal gift such that the girl and her parents are aware of the interest of the suitor. This item is followed by one called *ho'dia*, meaning gate fee. This item which is commonly cash signifies the acceptance of the suitor by the girl's family and clan. If the parents or clan of the girl do not agree to the proposal, they shall not take the *ho'dia*, signifying that they do not agree to the marriage, and the marriage will not proceed. The suitor may also lose chances of marrying the bride if he fails to fulfil the *ho'dia* since without it, his party will not be allowed in the home of the bride. After accepting the *ho'dia*, the party of the boy are given a welcome, setting the pace for negotiation which begins with yet another category of items of the bridewealth, *e'yoti*

*ziza*. This is a sum of cash given to allow the negotiation meeting to start.

The next item of bridewealth in *oku jeza* is the *mali* which is a significant part of the bridewealth. *Mali* means wealth, so, it can be said to be the actual wealth in the bridewealth. Traditionally, *mali* is demanded in kind mostly some heads of cattle ranging from three to twelve and a few goats. Today, some parents will either demand for both animals and cash or others prefer everything paid in cash. Although one cow paid in the *mali* is generally slaughtered for the clan of the bride to celebrate the marriage, the rest of the items paid in *mali* remain for the family of the bride, a few may be distributed to close uncles and aunties of the bride. In the *mali* are other assorted items such as arrows, hoes, ropes for the animals, rainboots and coats, flour, among others. It is the *mali* which traditionally is either fully paid if the groom is able or it is gradually paid in bits over the lifetime of the marriage hence the saying that *ba je oku odu alu ku*, (you do not buy a wife in at once or in a day).

When there is an agreement between the two parties and the proposed marriage is consented to and declared, then the marriage is celebrated. The clan of the bride offers a bull to the clan of the groom. Presently, the marriage takes a form of celebration called introduction involving not only the clans of the girl and the boy, but also the church, friends, workmates, and other associated parties. It is considered as the giveaway ceremony where the family of the girl officially gives the girl to the boy to be his wife. Many Christian families often involve the church in the introduction; thus, a church service is organized in which a brother of the girl gives her as a bride to the boy who fixes an engagement ring on her middle finger. Some Christian couples will immediately begin

to live as husband and wife, but many choose to proceed with a church marriage. When a couple anticipates to proceed to church marriage, the parents of the girl then write a consent letter to the church permitting the church wedding.

### **6.2.2. Challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile**

The second specific objective of the study was to assess the challenges of *oku jeza* to church marriage in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The study revealed several challenges the present practice of *oku jeza* especially the aspect of bridewealth poses to church marriage. First is the challenge of the commercialization of bridewealth. The review of literature has shown that there is a general trend across African cultures where marriages are contracted by the payment of bridewealth and the Lugbara culture is not an exception. This study has shown that bridewealth is being considered by some Christian families as a way of accumulating wealth. This can be summarized by Male Clergy A's statement that the "clan of the girl look at it as an enriching venture for them." The commercialization of bridewealth means that it is overly changed to get as much material wealth as possible from the groom. This increases the number of items to be paid as bridewealth.

Commercialization of bridewealth also hurts church marriage. First, it forces the young who cannot afford it to bypass church marriage. Whereas the church believes the best way to enter marriage is through solemnization of the marriage in the church, Christian men who cannot afford the commercialized bridewealth end up bypassing church marriage. As noted, it is even worse that the church requires written consent from the girl's parents before church marriage can be organized. Many parents prefer to first

receive the bridewealth in full or to a satisfactory amount before they issue the written consent. The ripple effect is that fewer members of the church sign up for church marriage as the rest simply elope and begin to cohabit, an action considered sinful by the church. Further, the research also reveals that commercialization of the bridewealth forces some men to delay marriage until they can afford it. Late or delayed marriage has implications on marriage too. Additionally, the desire to get more from the bridewealth encourages the addition of items that traditionally have not been part of it. Besides, commercialization also encourages demanding bridewealth in cash other than in kind, thus the monetization of bridewealth. Yet the value of the items to be paid in cash is usually over-estimated.

Furthermore, the community believes that a man who proposes for a church wedding has already prepared to meet the cultural obligation of bridewealth. To such they say; *otu 'i 'bo, 'ba ma li afa dri nia mgba*, meaning 'he has prepared himself, let us charge him properly. As such, the bridewealth is overcharged for him. This lowers the morale of those who otherwise are the prospective candidates for church marriage. Another big challenge of *oku jeza* to church marriage is the demand by some families to have the suitor of their daughter pay the bridewealth in full before consenting to the church marriage. The families fear that after church marriage, they may not be in a position to get the remaining parts of the bridewealth and yet they are not supposed to 'separate what God has joined together.' They would therefore prefer all items to be paid in full.

Another developing challenge of *oku jeza* church marriage is the heavy celebration of the traditional marriage commonly referred to as 'introduction.' This celebration has become

a public show in which couples have to invest quite heavily to the extent that they hardly have anything left to proceed with church marriage which is equally heavily celebrated. The heavy celebration which is usually hosted by the girl's family or clan contributes to the increased amount of the items in the bridewealth. The bride's family would translate some items paid in the bridewealth to sponsor the celebration. To support this, they are forced to charge more in the bridewealth to be able to host the introduction celebration. The number of Christian couples who upon investing in the introduction (traditional marriage) fail to proceed to a church marriage is on the rise.

Other additional challenges of *oku jeza* in Christian marriage include; that it breeds domestic violence against women, and denies certain rights to women. The study shows that when a man pays for bridewealth, an important aspect of *oku jeza*, he feels that the woman is an owned property that he can deal with in any way that pleases him. Both male and female clergy respondents in the study have specifically voiced this. The relationship between bridewealth and domestic violence against women in marriage can be seen in the statement by Male Clergy A; “that terminology *jeza* comes because someone feels he has paid enough to have this lady for yourself. And, the bad thing with it is this beating of women, *ma ofe mi dria ti aro, ma eco mi co ku adi si?* [I have paid eight cows for you, why can't I beat you?].” Similarly, some men who have the feeling of having bought a woman deny them property ownership: for what is owned cannot own. Some go the extra mile to control their wife's formal earnings—salary.

### **6.2.3. Pastoral and Theological approaches to revisit the practice of *oku jeza***

The last specific objective of the study was to develop pastoral and theological

approaches to revisit the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. These strategies are quite necessary considering the fact that the study has shown that Lugbara Christians highly value the payment of bridewealth in *oku jeza*. No respondent spoke against the practice except for the voices against its increasing commercialization since they see it as a customary marriage. It is believed that both *oku jeza* and the payment of bridewealth honors God and the parents or family of the girl. Some of the participants also believed that there is no ownership without a price, hence, a man must pay to own a wife.

Before the summary of the pastoral and theological approaches to revisit the practice of *oku jeza*, it is important to note that the study reveals that Lugbara Christians believe the payment of bridewealth is biblically justifiable. First, they point out the marriage gifts offered by Abraham's servant to the family of Rebecca as he went to marry her for Isaac as recorded in Genesis 24. Secondly, Jacob's manual labor to his father-in-law Laban to marry his two daughters is understood to be a biblical justification of bridewealth payment which is supported by available literature (Togarasei, 2021; Pati, 2009 & Tofa, 2021). With these justifications, the Lugbara Christians strongly believe that the Bible is for but not against the payment of bridewealth.

The study also shows that the church is encouraging the payment of bridewealth and that it will be quite tough for the church to influence the practice. Through the church's practice of demanding written consent from the parents of the girl, the study shows that the church is validating and encouraging the payment of bridewealth. Additionally, cohabiting couples who have paid bridewealth are admitted for the sacrament of the

Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) while those who have not are not welcome. This according to the research communicates to Christians the validation of bridewealth payment by the church but also grants too much power to the parents of the girl concerning church marriage. The father of the girl decides whether the daughter's marriage can be solemnized in church or not. As such, it will be an uphill task for the church to revisit *oku jeza*. Nevertheless, the study has revealed the following significant pastoral and theological strategies in revisiting the bridewealth. Participants' suggestions were more of a pastoral approach than a theological approach.

#### **6.2.3.1. Pastoral approaches**

First, the study shows that the church should effectively engage in discipleship and teaching of the Lugbara Christians to revisit the present manner of the practice of *oku jeza*. Discipleship should help Christians be grounded in the Christian faith so that they appreciate Christian principles more than cultural traditions. True discipleship which is a state of being (Williams, 2016) should make a Christian have an "unrivaled love for Christ" (Sanders, 1996, p. 22). Such unrivaled love for Christ should make the Lugbara Christians always ensure Christ leads even at the time of marriage. The church's teachings should focus on expounding the fundamentals of Christian marriage but also pointing out the cultural marriage practices that otherwise are contrary to the principles of Christianity. This pastoral approach relates to the views of the Theological Advisory Group (1996) which guide the church to teach Christians to appreciate Christian marriage. The teaching and discipleship programs should consider a special ministry to Christian families. Christian parents and even couples intending to enter marriage should be taught to

treasure Christian marriage more than cultural marriage.

Secondly, the church should also build a support system which offers material support to couples in the process of the marriage. The focus of this support should address the young men who are unable to meet the demand of the bridewealth for marriage. Presently, there is a good church support system among the Lugbara Christians especially directed to the celebration of the solemnized church marriage. The study puts forward to the church to consider extending such material support to cover meeting the needs of bridewealth for the church members who cannot afford it. A few Lugbara Christian communities in Kampala already have demonstrated that this is possible. The sustainability of such a support system needs to be studied.

To revisit *oku jeza*, the study reveals that church leaders need to get involved in the process of *oku jeza*. Presently, *oku jeza* is seen to be a cultural event in which the church does not involve itself except when invited to conduct a church service at the event. However, the finding from the research calls upon church leaders to get engaged at all levels of *oku jeza*, especially when the candidates of the marriage and their parents are members of the church. We note this recommendation from the Theology Advisory Group (1996) who equally guided that the church should come along with their members whose daughters or sons are going through the cultural requirements. They advised that Christian parents could choose prominent members of the church or its leadership to chair the meetings between the interested parties of the bride and the groom. This could go a long way in changing the present form of the practice of *oku jeza*.

Relatedly, the study findings urge Christian parents to take an interest in the negotiation process during *oku jeza* rather than leaving it entirely in the hands of the clan members. The Lugbara culture allows for a clan leader or other person other than the girl's parents to lead the negotiation. The direction of the discussions is so much determined by who chairs the meeting, especially on the side of the bride's family or clan. Yet, we have also seen that negotiations have turned up to be a battle between the chairpersons of the two parties, as a show of power—about who is the greatest chairperson. As such, negotiations can be very tough and unchristian. It is worst with a chairperson who is a traditionalist. Christian parents should not keep quiet when things are moving contrary to Christian principles. They must openly speak their thoughts to the leaders of the negotiation meeting. Better still, it is proper that they select chairpersons who have a good Christian testimony. We have seen testimonies from some of the respondents who revealed that their being in charge of the talks facilitated the ease of the agreements during the negotiations.

The research has also revealed that the church should put in place guidelines to address some of the challenges posed by *oku jeza*. Since the present manner of *oku jeza*, especially the burden of bridewealth on the young people which deters them from accessing formal marriage, the church could use its structures like councils and synods to put in place guidelines or pronounce itself against the high charges of bridewealth. In the Second Diocesan Synod 1994: Five Years Pastoral Plan for Arua Diocese (1994), the Catholic church pronounced her position on the same, urging her faithful to desist from making bridewealth mandatory before granting permission for church marriage. There is

no formal study that has detailed the impact of this resolution on the part of the Catholic church, but a similar pronouncement by the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile could provide a guideline for her Christians.

Further, the study suggests that the clergy should be able to lead by example. Clergymen and women whose children especially the girl-child are getting married are called to show a good example by either not demanding bridewealth or not putting tough conditions on their prospective son-laws. Male Clergy C provided his testimony of the good example he showed when his daughters were getting married. That he did opt for marriage gift in appreciation than demanding for bridewealth as it would be culturally. As such, the negotiations and marriage agreement meetings would last for as short as less than an hour as opposed to other cases where the negotiation would take the entire day. When the clergy demonstrates a good example, their followers might follow suit.

It has also been recommended that the church should collaborate with government and cultural institutions in addressing the identified challenges of *oku jeza*. Social change and social transformation require a concerted effort from all stakeholders. In her pastoral approach to revisiting the manner of the practice of *oku jeza*, the church has been called to liaise with both cultural and political leaders and institutions. Elsewhere, especially among the Acholi, a respondent claims that the Acholi cultural institution has put in regulations regarding bridewealth payment.<sup>2</sup> Cultural institutions have a high stake in cultural matters like *oku jeza* or bridewealth. They can be quite valuable partners of the

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<sup>2</sup> This study has not sought the impact of the bylaws set by the Acholi Cultural institution on marriage.

church in addressing the challenges of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

Like other cultural groups in Uganda and sub-Saharan Africa in general, bridewealth is an important aspect of the Acholi, cultural marriage. The Acholi in the Northern region of Uganda were greatly affected by the two-decade civil war led by Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which led to the loss of cattle resulting in the inability of many men to raise bridewealth (Paine, 2014). Yet the *Ker Kwaro Acholi* (the Paramount Chief) of the Acholi and the institution did acknowledge the rising charges of bridewealth which many young men aspiring to get married could not afford. To curb the commercialization of bridewealth, the Acholi cultural institution enacted a bylaw specifying the amounts of items to be paid in bridewealth and the maximum duration at which it should be paid for the traditional marriage can take place. The Uganda Radio Network (URN) reports that:

In the revised requirements, one is tasked to pay 5 million as dowry, 6 heads of cattle, 6 goats, 1 spear, chicken, 1 goat each for the mother and father-in-law, materials for the suit and gomesi for father and mother-in-law and 100,000 each respectively for tailoring. Others requirements are washing and bathing soap, paraffin and a lamp, a saucepan and father-in-law's chair among others. One is also given up to two years to complete the submission of the requirements before the marriage ceremony is done (Ojok, 2021).

The Acholi Paramount Chief Rwot David Onen Acana II is quoted saying that “the cultural institution was right to intervene in the marriage woes in the region, saying the ceremony

had turned commercial and uncultured” (Ocungi, 2021). The acknowledgment by the Acholi cultural institution of the commercialization of the bridewealth and their efforts to curb it points to the concern of the leaders of the abuse of bridewealth by many Acholi families and clans.

Although it might be too early to measure the success of the bylaw, newspaper reports provide positive feedback on it. For example, the Daily Monitor reported a case where a 39-year-old man who was highly charged with bridewealth sought arbitration from the Acholi Cultural Institution. The latter’s intervention ensured compliance from the side of the bride’s family. The man who sought for the support of the Acholi Cultural Institution has been quoted by the Daily Monitor; “I felt the assessment was beyond my expectation and what our culture says since they were demanding for 10 cows and Shs16 million as bride price, besides other items. But I was assisted and the marriage went on smoothly, and today, we are happily staying together” (Kalokwera, 2022). The cultural leaders have also reported a surge in those registering customary marriage after the bylaw was enacted. The Diocese of Ma’di-West Nile could explore collaboration with the *Lugbara Kari* (Lugbara Chiefdom) aimed at the cultural regulation of bridewealth among the Lugbara against the present tendency towards its commercialization.

#### **6.2.3.2. Theological approach**

The Theological approach proposed in this research is the re-orientation of bridewealth to Love Gift. It is herein argued that just as Christ sought a relationship out of love and care for his bride (the church), offered the greatest gift of love to build a relationship (1 Corinthians 6:20), grooms could also offer a generous love gift out of love to build a

marital relationship. The Love Gift in this case as opposed to bridewealth shall not be demanded by the bride's family and negotiated by the two parties, but rather the groom and his family offer out of gratitude according to his ability. This is hoped to promote church marriage in that, young men are able to offer whatever gift they are able to afford as opposed to the demanded and negotiated bridewealth. The research has also foreseen that the idea of Love Gift could easily be abused, especially by ungrateful and unfaithful grooms who may unethically decline to offer a gift in the pretext of inability. The church is encouraged to champion this proposal and teach the Christians to appreciate the idea of Love Gift. Christian parents are also encouraged to embrace the idea of Love Gift and graciously accept the gift offered in appreciation at the marriage of their daughters.

### **6.3. Conclusion**

This study considered revisiting bridewealth, an important aspect of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. The qualitative practical theology study sought to develop pastoral and theological approaches that the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile could take in revisiting the practice without undermining church marriage and adulterating the gospel of Christ. The study concludes that bridewealth is an important aspect of the Lugbara *oku jeza* and that the Lugbara Christians highly recommend that a Christian intending to marry undergo *oku jeza*. In its present practice. It is herein concluded that that *oku jeza* is growingly becoming commercialized among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese with an adverse effect on church marriage. Commercialized *oku jeza* means parents are asking for more items in bridewealth than usual for material gain which prevents Christian men who are unable to afford it from

desiring church marriage.

The study considered the Lugbara use of the term *oku jeza* which might be seen to imply that women are being sold as chattels. Contrarily, except for the tendencies towards commercialization of the practice, the study concludes that *oku jeza* is not to be considered as selling and buying of women as wives the way one would buy commodities in the marketplace. To encourage church marriage, the study concludes that the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile should consider revisiting bridewealth, especially by adopting the idea of Love Gift and divorcing the link between bridewealth and church marriage. The church should decide and make known that bridewealth is not mandatory for church marriage and the church should desist from expecting consent letters from the parents of the bride tied on the status of bridewealth payment. The church is encouraged to explore the theological proposal of Love Gift and champion the cultural shift from the payment of bridewealth to grooms offering love gifts.

#### **6.4. Recommendations**

The study lays the following recommendations in the church's effort to revisit bridewealth among the Lugbara Christian communities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

##### **6.4.1. Make bridewealth optional for church marriage**

The Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile should come out openly to declare bridewealth as an optional requirement for church marriage. Church practices that seem to validate the mandatory payment of bridewealth before church marriage should not be entertained. For example, the demand for parental consent by the church from the girl's parents before

proceeding with arrangements for church marriage indirectly portrays bridewealth as a mandatory requirement for church marriage. Equally, the relationship between bridewealth payment and the acceptance of a Christian for Holy Communion needs to be revisited. In short, the church should, as much as possible, divorce the culture of bridewealth from church marriages and other rituals. Civil marriage, for example, does not require the permission of the girl's parents, and bridewealth is not a requirement. Upon the display of public notice of the proposed solemnization of the marriage between two parties for the required number of days, if there be no complaint, the civil marriage proceeds. The church could consider the required pronouncement of banns of marriage. Certainly, if no party objects to the proposed marriage, the church marriage could proceed. This could eliminate the problem of leaving the powers to decide on church marriage entirely to the girl's parents by requiring written permission from the girl's parents which we have already noted is being tied up to the payment of bridewealth.

#### **6.4.2. Strategic ministry to Christian families**

It has been noted in this research that the abuses of bridewealth do not exclude Christian families and parents. Christians are often at the center of the outcry of the rising commercialization of bridewealth among the Lugbara. Further, Christian parents and families are not exempt from denying church marriage for their daughters if the bridewealth is not fully or significantly paid. This is an indication that the ministry of the church to families has not fully resulted in the transformation of Christian families to embrace and prioritize church marriage. The church needs to develop a strategic ministry to Christian families to change this status quo. Luckily, the church has the required

structures in place from Diocesan to the local church level to minister to families. The structures of the church's family life unions like Mothers Union, Fathers Union, and Christian Women Fellowship are at the disposal of the church. This might require the development of a special curriculum for the teaching and discipleship of Christian families to achieve the desired change in matters relating to *oku jeza* and Christian families.

#### **6.4.3. Diocesan Synod Resolution on bridewealth**

This research recommends that the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile should re-ignite the Diocese-wide discussion of bridewealth and its associated impact on church marriage. From the field data, it is noted that such discussions once popped up at the Diocesan Synod but no concrete decisions and resolutions were reached and pronounced. The church cannot and should not ignore the impact of the present manner of the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara and other tribes within the Diocese. While appreciating the social role of bridewealth among the Lugbara, its social roles should rather promote church marriage than hinder it. Although the extent of the impact of such Synod resolution may not be immediately felt, such Synod decisions and pronouncements could go a long in positively influencing the cultural practice which will subsequently promote church marriage.

#### **6.4.4. Encourage the young people to plan for their marriage and value church marriage**

One of the major shifts in the practice of bridewealth is that the burden of paying it has moved from parents and relatives to the man intending to marry. This calls for young Christian men to plan their marriage including saving towards meeting the demand for

bridewealth. While the church support system which supports raising resources to support the celebration of weddings is to be appreciated, careful planning on the side of the gentleman intending to marry, including adequate financial preparation will prove profitable. Young people should also be encouraged to prioritize church marriage as opposed to the lavish introduction ceremonies which are on the rise. Resources used for the introduction ceremony could fully support a church wedding.

#### **6.4.5. The Church should promote the idea of Love Gift**

Love Gift as opposed to bridewealth offers a theological approach to revisiting bridewealth that will promote church marriage. As such, the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile is encouraged to embrace the idea and promote it by teaching the Lugbara Christians to adapt to the cultural shift. Bridewealth has had a heavy toll on church marriage, in that many Christian men due for marriage are unable to afford it, such are bound to elope and cohabit, a practice which the church condemns. Additionally, some Christian men are forced to borrow heavily in order to meet the demands of bridewealth. The couples then spent years in paying back the debt incurred for paying the bridewealth. This bridewealth burden curtails the economic progress of the young families. Therefore, the church is urged to embrace the shift to Love Gift, and teach marrying parties to offer and accept love gifts rather than demanding for bridewealth.

#### **6.5. Suggestions for further research**

This study has been limited to revisiting bridewealth in the context of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Whereas bridewealth in Africa has been largely researched with widespread literature, it is not the case with *oku jeza* among

the Lugbara. *Oku jeza* as a cultural practice cut across the Lugbara tribe regardless of religious affiliation. Further research on the various aspects of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara will enrich the present academic discourse of the practice. Specifically concerning *oku jeza* among the Lugbara and Christian marriage, future research could focus on the socio-economic and religious factors fueling the present commercialization of the practice and the increasing preference for ‘introduction’ instead of church marriage. The economy of bridewealth among the Lugbara and the bridewealth debt burden among Lugbara Christian couples could be of research interest.

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## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Archdeaconry</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Male Clergy A	Vurra	August 17, 2023
Male Clergy B	Arua Urban	August 18, 2023
Male Clergy C	Maracha	September 21, 2023
Male Clergy D	Vurra	September 29, 2023
Female Clergy A	Terego	February 5, 2023
Female Clergy B	Vurra	February 7, 2023
Male Clergy E	Arua	February 8, 2023
Lay Participant A	Logiri	August 20, 2023
Lay Participant B	Arua	September 9, 2023
Lay Participant C	Vurra	September 12, 2023
Focus Group 1 (8 participants)	Vurra	February 23, 2023
Focus Group 2 (7 participants)	Maracha	February 25, 2024

## APPENDIX II

### INTRODUCTION LETTER OF THE RESEARCHER

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Rev. Julius Izza Tabi

Ndrivu Village, Kuluva, Arua  
tabijulius@gmail.com  
+256 782 716168

Friday, July 7, 2023

Dear Participant,

My name is Julius Izza Tabi, and I am a PhD student at Uganda Christian University. I am currently conducting a study titled "Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of Oku Jeza among the Lugbara Christian Community in Ma'di/West Nile Diocese" as part of my doctoral research.

This study aims to explore the practice of oku jeza and its impact on church marriages within the Lugbara Christian community. Through this research, I seek to understand how this traditional practice can be preserved in a way that respects and supports the values of contemporary church marriages.

Your insights and experiences would be invaluable to this study. Participation involves sharing your perspectives on the practice of oku jeza and its implications for marital relationships in your community. Your contributions will help shape recommendations for maintaining this practice while upholding the integrity of church marriages.

Thank you for considering participation in this important research. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,

Julius Izza Tabi  
PhD Student, Uganda Christian University  
0782716168

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"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you" 2 Corinthians 13:14



Tabi Julius Izza



Uganda Christian University Arua Campus  
P.O Box 356,  
Arua, Uganda

## APPENDIX III

# LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DIOCESE OF MA'DI- WEST NILE



Rev. Julius Izza Tabi

Ndrivu Village, Kuluva, Arua  
tabijulius@gmail.com  
+256 782 716168

Friday, January 13, 2023

The Diocesan Secretary,  
Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile  
P.O Box 370,  
Arua.

Dear Diocesan Secretary,

**Re: Permission to conduct academic research in Ma'di-West Nile Diocese**

Greetings in Jesus name.

I am writing to seek for permission to conduct an academic research leading to attainment of the **Doctor of Philosophy** of Uganda Christian University. I am a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student at Uganda Christian University researching and my study topic is: **Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in Ma'di-West Nile Diocese**. The study will be conducted in the three local government districts of Maracha, Terego, Arua and Arua City which covers Maracha Archdeaconry, Terego Archdeaconry, Arua Archdeaconry, Arua Urban Archdeaconry, Vurra Archdeaconry and the Cathedral area in Ma'di-West Nile Diocese. The study will involve;

- i. Interviews with selected participants
- ii. Focus group discussions with selected participants
- iii. Observation of the negotiation and payment of bride price

All the participants will be drawn from the study area and these will include among others; clergy and lay church leaders, and some Christians selected from the study. To conform to ethical requirements of scientific study involving human beings, the study will seek an ethical clearance from Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee (UCU REC) through the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology. The study will commence in January 2023 and is hoped to end by February 2023.

I thank you for your careful consideration of my request and look forward to your timely response. Thank you.

Faithfully yours,

**Julius  
Izza  
Tabi**

Digitally signed by Julius Izza  
Tabi  
DN: OU=Director, O=Uganda  
Christian University Arua Campus,  
CN=Julius Izza Tabi, E=  
tabijulius@gmail.com,  
Reason: I am the author of this  
document  
Location: Makono, Uganda  
Date: 2023.01.10 11:56:26+0300  
First PDF-Signer Version: 12.0.0

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you" 1 Corinthians 13:14

## APPENDIX IX

### PERMISSION FROM THE DIOCESAN SECRETARY

## CHURCH OF UGANDA MA'DI & WEST NILE DIOCESE

P.O Box 370, Arua – Uganda  
Tel: 0393-357077  
Mobile: +256 772-640064 (D/S)



E-mail: [nasser\\_godfrey@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nasser_godfrey@yahoo.co.uk)  
[dscoumwndioocese@yahoo.com](mailto:dscoumwndioocese@yahoo.com)

Our Ref:  
Your Ref:

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2023

**REV. JULIUS IZAA TABI**  
NDRIVU VILAGE, KULUVA  
ARUA  
[tabijulius@gmail.com](mailto:tabijulius@gmail.com)  
+256782716168

Dear Rev Julius,

**RE: ACCEPTANCE LETTER FOR YOU TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN THE DIOCESE**

Greetings to you in the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Happy New Year.

Following your letter requesting for permission to be allowed to undertake academic research within the Diocese, I wish to inform you that we have prayerfully considered to allow you undertake this academic research leading to the attainment of the Doctor of Philosophy of Uganda Christian University Mukono.

You will be undertaking this research in the Archdeaconries of Maracha, Terego, Arua and Arua Urban which incidentally are political Districts also. Which commences from January to February 2023.

With this letter I also inform the respective Archdeacons to accord you the necessary support

May God Grant you success in the process of pursuing your dream to the glory of God.

God bless you

Mr. Nasser Godfrey  
**DIOCESAN SECRETARY / MADI WEST NILE DIOCESE**

Cc: Diocesan Bishop  
Cc: Diocesan Education Coordinator  
Cc: Archdeacons: Maracha, Arua, Terego, Arua Urban

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*"Empowered society that worships and serves God"*

**APPENDIX V**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Research: Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in Ma'di-West Nile Diocese**

**Principle Investigator: Julius Izza Tabi; Tel. contact +256-782 716168**

PhD Student, Uganda Christian University, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology  
P.O Box 4, Mukono, Uganda.

**1. Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

I am Julius Izza Tabi, a PhD student at Uganda Christian University conducting hospitality, conversation, and critical faithfulness. In this approach to theological qualitative study, the practical theologian in identifying a situation or practice of theological interest, invites qualitative research methods as a 'practical theologian.' academic research titled; Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in Ma'di/West Nile Diocese. This research is purely an academic award research for my PhD study at Uganda Christian University. The research seeks to underscore the practice of *oku jeza* today how it impacts church marriages. The study hopes to make inferences on how the practice may be maintained without undermining church marriages among the Lugbara Christian communities.

**2. Description of the Research**

This is qualitative theological research on the practice of *oku jeza* in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Data is collected through personal interviews and focus group discussions.

**3. Subject Participation**

The participants will be Lugbara Christians in the selected archdeaconries of the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile. Specifically, the research will engage both ordained and lay leaders, elders, and married couples.

#### **4. Potential Risks and Discomforts**

This study will involve two-way conversation between the researcher and the respondents on the practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian Community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile and there is minimal risks and discomforts anticipated.

#### **5. Potential Benefits**

The findings will inform the Diocese of Ma'di-West on the practice of *oku jeza* by the Lugbara Christians and provide healthy suggestions on how best the Church can support the Lugbara Christian Community to in a healthy practice of *oku jeza* which promotes the dignity of the girl child and women and builds health church marriages.

#### **6. Confidentiality**

The information you give in this research, will be confidential and only used for purposes of this study. In the process of report writing, your name will never be used and so everything you tell out will remain anonymous. The researcher shall ask questions related to the practice of *oku jeza*. If you do not want to respond to a particular question, you can simply say so, and I will not insist. Every participant will be asked to sign a written study informed consent form before participating in the study as this ensures voluntarism and acceptability to participate in the study.

#### **7. Authorization**

By signing this form, you will be authorizing us to use the information from this research for academic discussions on the practice of oku jeza among the Lugbara Christian community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile.

### **8. Participation**

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this study, it will not affect your work in any way.

### **9. Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization**

As a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any point if you choose not to continue.

### **10. Reimbursements**

Where a participant is required to travel to an interview or discussion venue for the course of this research, a minimum transport reimbursement equivalent to the tune of public transport has been budgeted for each participant.

### **11. Whom to contact in case of ethical related concerns.**

In case of any Ethical related concerns or inquiries, you can contact UCU-REC chairperson; Prof. Peter Waiswa on 0772 405 357, [pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug](mailto:pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug) or UCU-REC Secretariat, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe on 0775737627 or [oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug)

**I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; to tick appropriately**

**Yes.**

**No.**

I understand that I will be given a copy of this signed Consent Form.

**Name of Participant (Optional):** .....

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

## APPENDIX VI

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Interview Guide
-----------------

**Study title: Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian community in Ma'di/West Nile Diocese.**

**A. Introductory part**

- Introduce myself and the study
- Ask participant to introduce him or herself
- Assure the respondent that the data collected at the interview shall strictly be used for the purpose of the study
- Seek informed consent of the respondent, including the permission to audio record the participant

**B. Questions relating to the concept and practice of *oku jeza***

- What is *oku jeza*?
- How has *oku jeza* originated?
- Why is *oku jeza* carrying a connotation of business transaction?
- What are the categories of items paid to the bride's family in *oku jeza*?
- What is the significance of each of the category of items paid in *oku jeza*?
- How is the amount of items paid in *oku jeza* determined?
- What is the importance of bride wealth in Lugbara customary marriage?
- What are some of changes which has occurred over the years regarding the custom of *oku jeza*?

**C. Questions relating to the challenges of *oku jeza* to Christian marriage**

- Is it necessary for a Christian to go through *oku jeza* before he can marry in the church?
- Are there some challenges experienced by persons entering Christian marriage while going through the custom of *oku jeza*?

**D. Questions relating to pastoral and theological approaches to *oku jeza***

- Is there any scriptural or theological justification for the practice of *oku jeza*?
- Are there some points of discontent or ways in which the current practice of *oku jeza* undermines church marriage? If yes, what are those areas of discontent? If no, why do you think *oku jeza* does not negatively impact church marriage?

- What is the church doing in supporting those undergoing *oku jeza*? If the church is not doing anything about it, what should the church do about it?
- What pastoral approaches should Ma'di/West Nile adopt in responding to the challenges of *oku jeza* to Christian marriage?
- How can *oku jeza* be practiced by Lugbara Christian communities without undermining the girl-child and church marriages?

## Appendix VII

### Observation Protocol

Thesis title: Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *Oku Jeza* among the Lugbara Christian Community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile

This observation aims to capture the process of oku jeza, especially during the negotiation and payment of the items in the bridewealth and to find out the cultural-religious intersections in the process of the negotiation and payment of bridewealth among the Lugbara Christian Community.

### The setting

The site at which the observation has been done is the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile, especially in the Vurra and Maracha Archdeaconries. The participants are;

- i. The Groom and his clan
- ii. The bride and her clan
- iii. Church community
- iv. Mediators

### Preparation for the observation

The research first obtained an ethical clearance from the UCU Research Ethics Committee (UCU REC), a permission letter from the Diocesan authorities in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile, and consent from the groom, the bride, and elders from the two parties clearly explaining the intention for the researcher's observation of the events. The researcher organized the necessary logistics, especially transport to and from the venue, and other necessary logistical matters, including notebooks, pens, and recording

devices where recording would be permitted.

### **Observation framework (what to be observed)**

The researcher will observe the following;

- i. The setting in the home where the negotiation and the rest of the other oku jeza ceremony happens, including seating arrangements
- ii. Presence of religious symbols like bibles and their use
- iii. Are their invocations like prayers (traditional or Christian), salutations and or symbolic gestures
- iv. How are the items of the oku jeza negotiated? Money or items in kind?
- v. The bargaining styles, who speaks, do the parties sit face to face or they sit apart and are coordinated by mediators?
- vi. Do they use Christian articles like the bible? How? Are there references to the bible in the negotiation process?
- vii. Involvement of the female gender, who leads the negotiation? A man or woman? Do women have the right and freedom to talk? Are their views respected?
- viii. Are the negotiations intergenerational, involving both the young and elders?
- ix. Church involvement- are churches and church leaders given a role in the event?
- x. The type of transfer, is it a one-time lump-sum transfer? Are installment payments allowed?
- xi. How are the negotiations and items paid documented? Is it done orally, or is there paperwork?

- xii. How is the oku jeza celebrated? Is it done instantaneously? Is it planned for another time? What are the moods of the celebrations? Are there foods and drinks? What type?

### **Ethical considerations during the observation**

The researcher, with the utmost respect, kept the identity of the participants anonymous and rather used pseudonyms and respected holy and private moments in the event. Only do audio recording if permitted by the participants, and provide feedback to the communities.

## APPENDIX VII ETHICAL CLEARANCE



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

26/01/2023

To: Julius Tabi

Uganda Christian University  
0782716168

**Type:** Initial Review

**Re: UCUREC-2022-411: Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of oku jeza among the Lugbara Christian community in Ma'di/West Nile Diocese, First, 2022-11-01**

I am pleased to inform you that the Uganda Christian University REC, through expedited review held on **25/01/2023** approved the above referenced study.  
Approval of the research is for the period of **26/01/2023 to 26/01/2024**.

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval **prior** to the activation of the changes.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or any new information which could change the risk benefit: ratio must be submitted to the REC.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by participants and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Continuing review application must be submitted to the REC **eight weeks** prior to the expiration date of **26/01/2024** in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. You are required to register the research protocol with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for final clearance to undertake the study in Uganda.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by Uganda Christian University REC:

No.	Document Title	Language	Version Number	Version Date
1	Protocol	English	First	2022-11-01
2	Data collection tools	English	First	2022-11-01
3	Informed Consent forms	English	First	2022-11-01

Yours Sincerely





Peter Waiswa  
For: Uganda Christian University REC

# APPENDIX VIII TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

## Julius Izza Tabi

### Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of Oku Jeza among the Lugbara Christian Community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile

 Quick Submit

 Quick Submit

 Uganda Christian University

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#### Document Details

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52,007 Words  
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A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

APPENDIX IX  
POST VIVA FORM



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**  
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

**SCHOOL OF RESEARCH & POSTGRADUATE STUDIES DISSERTATION  
CORRECTION COMPLIANCE FORM (POST VIVA FORM)**

Date: September 17, 2025

Name of Candidate: **Julius Izza Tabi** Reg. No: **RJ18P35/152**

**Title of Dissertation:** Bridewealth Revisited: The Practice of *oku jeza* among the Lugbara Christian Community in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile

**External examiner**

S/ N	COMMENTS BY EXTERNAL Examiner	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1.	<b>Abstract:</b> While the abstract hints at a problem, that is: bridewealth harming church marriage, it doesn't clearly articulate a research problem statement early in the abstract. The candidate could refine this to help readers get a clear understanding of what the core issue is from the beginning.	a) The abstract has been reviewed to articulate the research problem as suggested by the examiner	xv
2.	<b>Methodology:</b> Consider condensing repeated references especially on concepts like qualitative research, Swinton's framework, and the practical theology model.	a) Repeated references have been condensed b) Structural clarity of the methodology has been	Pg (14-18)

	<p>Improve structural clarity by revisiting and designing clearer subheadings or sections. Consider the relevance of, for example, subheadings like: Research Approach, Design, Role of Researcher, Theological Framework etc.</p>	<p>reviewed by creating appropriate headings as suggested.</p>	
	<p><b>Literature and References:</b> Unfortunately, its synthesis is limited, because it sounds more descriptive than analytical, it summarizes sources well but doesn't clearly and critically engage or connect them effectively. It would add value if the candidate would consider adding new insight, improve organizational flow, so that it makes it easy to follow the argument's development. .</p>	<p>The literature review has been designed to be more descriptive to allow space for appreciating the problem addressed.</p>	
3.	<p>Data Analysis: While the candidate has described well the data collection activity, I see have noted minimal explanation of how the data were analyzed or how themes were derived. The candidate may look at this again before submitting a final version of the dissertation.</p>	<p>The data analysis section has been improved to include the method of analysis used (inductive coding)</p>	24
4.	<p>Clarity and fluency: (a) Sentences which are quite long. These could be broken up for clarity. b) Repetition of phrases like "Lugbara Christians in the Diocese of Ma'di-West Nile" can be reduced by using synonyms or pronouns after the initial identification.</p>	<p>The researcher has read through the entire work to address issues of clarity and fluency. Where necessary, longer sentences were broken down.</p>	All pages
	<p><b>VIVA RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>		
5	<p>a) What is new in your work?</p>	<p>a) The study has proposed for re-orientation of bridewealth as Love Gift, a</p>	

	b) What is going to be implemented from your findings?	<p>theological approach introduced by the study.</p> <p>b) The proposed re-orientation of bridewealth as Love Gift in appreciation will be disseminated to the church for implementation</p>	
6	<p>a) Do you have any Theological method in your work?</p> <p>b) Recommendation to flesh up the concept of Love Gift</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Theological method used in the work is hospitality, conversion and critical faithfulness by Swinton (2016).</li> <li>Three paragraphs have been written to throw more light on the proposed Love Gift as a re-orientation of bridewealth</li> <li>A recommendation paragraph focusing on the re-orientation has been written</li> </ul>	<p>139-141</p> <p>158-159</p>

**Internal examiner on**

S/N	COMMENTS BY Internal Examiner	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1.	<b>Abstract and Chapter 1</b>		
	(a) The ABSTRACT should include the research objectives/questions, some detail on the methodology, results going hand in hand with the objectives set, conclusions and	a) The abstract has been reviewed majorly considering the external examiner's views and it has	

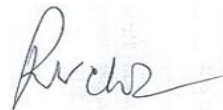
	<p>summary of recommendations from the research report</p> <p>(b)The actual work should be written as per the format of the examiner’s report. I mean chapter One : Introduction, Chapter Two: Literature review, Chapter Three, Methodology, Chapter Four, presentation and analysis of Data etc. With this, a reader follows it in a better way.</p> <p>(c)Paragraph 2 should be the starting point. Thus, see you could incorporate paragraph one to the <u>justification for the geographical scope</u></p>	<p>elements noted by the internal examiner.</p> <p>b) The study chapter have been organized systematically. Contents on each specific objective has been organized in separate chapters with the view that the reader follows it in a better way.</p>	<p>1</p>
		<p>c) Paragraph 2 has been interchanged with paragraph 1 as suggested by the internal examiner to improve on the start of Chapter 1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p><b>Chapter 2</b></p> <p>Nonetheless, chapter 2 is redundant! Which objective or research question is it based on? The data, presentation and its discussion should base on objectives! It is superfluous.</p>	<p>Chapter 2 of this thesis is not the presentation of the field data, it provides detailed literature in appreciation of the context of the problem addressed.</p>	

3.	<p>By format, this is a problematic part!</p> <p>a) The presentation and analysis of data and discussion - all are bundled together in Chapters 2-5! All the objectives/research questions should have been catered for here! Instead there are chapters 2, 3, 4 &amp; 5 respectively!</p>	<p>The Chapter organization of the study was designed in a way that each research objective was developed into a thesis chapter instead of having all the findings discussed under one chapter. This was intentional generally agreeable.</p>	
4.	<p>The introduction given for this section is unnecessary.</p> <p>a) Simply conclude and recommend based on objectives and findings. Simply begin on 6.2</p> <p>b) No need for details!!! Be straight to the point since there was an earlier presentation and discussion!</p> <p>Thus, be brief!</p>	<p>This chapter being summary, conclusion and recommendation, it is necessary to have a chapter introduction. Certain aspects of the summaries of the findings have been shortened and other sections moved to the respective chapter based on the objective.</p>	



Julius Izza Tabi

RJ18P35/152



The Rev. Prof. Byaruhanga Christopher

Supervisor