

The Role of Ornaments among the Agikuyu: A Case Study of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu
Division. (1)

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By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Arts in Anthropology of the University of Nairobi.

1992

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents Mr. and Mrs. John Ndegwa Mwaniki and their grand children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The pursuance of my M.A. course in anthropology was made possible by the partial scholarship offered to me by the University of Nairobi through Professor G.S. Were, the then Director, Institute of African Studies. He kindly agreed to present my case to the Board of Postgraduate Studies. My most sincere appreciation unreservedly goes to him. For my second year research and write-up of the thesis, I became one of the beneficiaries of Norad scholarships. I would like to thank the organization most sincerely for their sponsorship.

Many thanks go to my two supervisors, Professor O. Odak and Dr. D. Hecht, who worked tirelessly in advising and reading my work to make it what it is. I cannot forget Dr. Wembah-Rashid, whose efforts in guiding, encouraging and also reading and editing my work went a long way to make this piece of work a success. Last, but not least, my commendation and appreciation go to Esther M Nderitu and Ann Gachingiri who gruesomely typed my whole work without a word of complaint, and all my friends who gave me warmth, comfort and encouragement throughout the course.

My parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Ndegwa Mwaniki, were a real source of inspiration in moral and financial support, especially in the initial stages of this course. I sincerely thank them.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a systematic attempt to critically analyse the use and functions of ornaments among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. It discusses the changes that have occurred in the significance of the ornaments, and the factors contributing to the changes. The main objectives of the study was to establish the degree of change in the use of ornaments and how far these changes are attributed to external influences.

This research was done in Kikuyu Division of Kiambu District, between January and March 1990. The data collection methods were interviews, group discussions, literary sources as well as artifacts and associated documents found in the National Museum in Nairobi. A qualitative data analysis procedure was employed.

The study arrived at two main conclusions. One, the environment is a major that contributes to the material culture of any society, in this case the Agikuyu of Kikuyu. Two, contact ^{byn} the non-Gikuyu and the non-African societies contributed to the in the significance and functions of ornaments among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Thus, it could be stated that the major factors that contribute to changes in material culture are environmental changes and interaction or contact of societies or society with alien ones.

This kind of study is an important source of information not only to the Agikuyu about their material culture (in this case ornaments) but also a good source of reference on the African traditions necessary to retain for pride and identity.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ornaments, objects of material culture, carry many functions in society. These include enhancing the beauty and indicating the social status of those who wear them. They act as symbols that convey inner meanings and perceptions of a people about certain elements of their ways of life. However, the functions of ornaments vary from one society to another and during different times within the same society. The use of ornaments vary between and among peoples of different sexes, ages and sections of the same societies.

The term 'ornaments' can be employed to mean those items used by individuals to adorn themselves. These items include those worn on the arms, the lower body and legs. The decoration of the body is, also part and parcel of ornamentation. In this case then, various forms of hairdressing, body painting, cicatrification and tattooing; nose, lip and ear- piercing; nail filing; teeth filing or extraction and other forms of mutilation of parts of the body, are in this study part of ornamentation and some are included here. Such ornaments and processes thereof symbolize an individual's membership to some particular group of people and thus serve the purpose of identification with a particular group. Ornaments also provide communal solidarity besides bestowing a sense of belonging.

Changes in the type and form of ornaments of a given people can be explained in several ways. Changes in the level of technology, form of social organization and ideology affect the type or form of ornaments used by a particular people at any one time in their history (cf. White 1969, quoted by Bohannan 1988: 337-355). Equally, the natural environment influences the form of technology, social organization and human beings and their ideology, which together make up social environment. Therefore contact between two or more culturally different peoples influence culture in general and ornaments in particular.

In this study, the author was concerned principally with two main factors in the history of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Firstly, it has to be borne in mind that the immediate ancestral home of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu was the slopes of Mount Kenya. The slopes of Mt. Kenya is in this study used to imply the area stretching from the present Kirinyaga region to the Muranga region known as Mukuruwe wa Nyagathanga. The environment of Mount Kenya is very different from that of Kikuyu Division. The Mount Kenya environment, then, provided different and varied raw materials that might have been used for making items of material culture. This difference between the present day Kikuyu Division and Mt. Kenya formed an important part of the problem of this study. There was need to explore how much the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division changed culturally on settling in their new found area of settlement. The emphasis was not whether they changed or not, for that is inevitable. Rather the author was interested in tracing the degree of change in material culture in general and ornaments in particular. In other words, what did the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division use as raw materials for manufacturing the types of ornaments their ancestors used to make while occupying the slopes of Mountain Kenya? Did they have to obtain raw materials and ornaments? If the latter be the case, how did this affect their social organization, belief systems and aesthetics?

In the course of the study, the author learnt about the historical development surrounding the movement of the Agikuyu section now in Kikuyu Division. That is, the author has obtained knowledge of the culture of the migrants which helped her in assessing the nature of changes that occurred in the new environment.

② The second major factor examined was the possibility of change through external influence. The author has considered the issue of diffusion of culture traits as an instrument for the enrichment of culture and as an agent of culture change (Campbell, 1979: 53). On settling in Kikuyu Division and, over years, the Agikuyu have come into contact with other people. It is, for example, known that during the past five centuries, the African continent

has witnessed radical cultural changes brought about by contact with foreign cultures. The foreigners mainly came from Europe and Asia. Within the continent, various African peoples have also been in great motion, thereby creating contacts of people who were hitherto isolated. In their course of migration from Mountain Kenya to their present settlement in Kikuyu Division, the Agikuyu came into contact with the Nilotic Maasai, with whom they are still interacting up to this day. Similarly, they have also been in contact with other Bantu-speakers, e.g., the Akamba and Waswahili of the Coast. Recently, European, Asian and Arab settlers have come right into the heart of Kikuyu Division as settlers, missionaries and traders.

The problem, therefore, was one of trying to establish the degree of change in the material culture of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division and the element which influenced change.

In other words, are there any elements in the present day ornaments of the Agikuyu which could have been borrowed from outside and, if so, from which particular people? These questions are important in view of the fact that ornaments can indicate historical connections between people through interaction.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

This study, which focuses on a section of Gikuyu people, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, is based on four objectives.

The first objective of the study was to identify the functions to which ornaments have been put by the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division at different periods of history. The study also featured on the role of ornaments as symbols among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Following the latter objective was the tracing of changes that have taken place in the form of ornaments and examining the causes of these changes. Finally, the study investigated the contemporary status of the utility of ornaments among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

1.3. RATIONALE

Post independent African states, including Kenya, have expressed the desire to go back to their roots in their efforts to create national cultures (OAU Charter 1961). They have shown the desire to revive and develop traditional African cultures which have progressively been eroded since the establishment of colonial administration in the continent. Many of these states have made attempts towards formulating national cultural policies in which ornaments have occupied significant places. The cause of this desire of change might probably be that the western civilization or cultures have failed to give the African peoples the satisfaction that a culture should provide. It is most probable that most of the Africans are disillusioned with the changes brought about by western culture, hence the need to find African cultural identity. The main issue is whether people would take the traditional way of adornment with a deep significance or just as a fashion geared to breaking the 'monotony' of the western styles. Is the traditional mode of adornment of any significance to the socio-cultural and structure of the society?

For purposes of convenience, the study deals with data stretching from 1900 to the present. Secondly, this study attempts to identify the changes and continuity in the ornaments. The study therefore is concerned with the kind of information that is relevant for understanding the Gikuyu ornaments (or at least a section of them) which can be considered to be relevant for the formulation of a national culture. The second contribution has to do with the general understanding that needs to prevail among the non- Gikuyu members of the Kenya nation on this issue. Kenya is a nation with very many different ethnic groups. These different groups have been interacting in many different places, e.g., hospitals, schools, market places, working places, residential areas, especially in towns, etc.

It is the author's view that an awareness of the role of Gikuyu ornaments would provide other Kenyans with an appreciation and tolerance of the Gikuyu culture and a base for meaningful intercultural relations within the national context. The study should also stimulate similar studies in Africa with analogous objectives.

The process of creating a national culture in a plural society such as Kenya should take cognizance of the positive elements of the culture of each ethnic group. The exercise of making a decision as to what can be considered "positive elements" is to be done democratically by the people through their leaders. This calls for not only the correct information on every ethnic group's culture, but also for a proper understanding of the same. Accordingly, it is imperative to document in detail the various aspects of traditional African culture.

The Gikuyu ornaments documented and analysed in this study can act as a source of information for creative artists and fashion designers. The highly publicized "primitive" way of adornment of the Africans as seen by the foreigners is an ideology which should be done away with right from the grass-roots of the younger generation. The younger people, through education, should be taught the importance and implication of ornaments in their culture. In fact, a well established local market, selling traditional ornaments, would go a long way in promoting the foreign market through tourism.

It has been observed that not many writers on the history of the Gikuyu have studied ornaments from a broader perspective. Most of the available studies are the traditional descriptive types. It is the author's view that, like material culture generally, ornaments can throw some light on a people's technological development, social organization, philosophy and ideology. This means that ornaments can tell a people's history, social ethics, aesthetics, political and economic organization, as well as religious beliefs.

The present study was stimulated by the current interest in traditional African values and African culture in general. Kenya is becoming more and more an integrated society due to modern education, easy travel, cultural diffusion, influences from mass media and foreign religions. Often, one sees African culture being referred to in the past tense as if it no longer exists. The fact of the matter is that African culture, and for this matter the Kenyan material culture, is still alive. However, what is happening is that African or Kenyan culture is

undergoing changes in response to the pressures or influences from present day realities. But change is a characteristic of culture and it is not necessarily a negative development. The concern of this study is to understand the nature of change that the nation is going through. Such an understanding can only be reached through studies such as this one. In turn, this kind of understanding should assist the planners and executors in making their decision.

Finally, this kind of study is important because the author believes that Africans should understand their traditional life styles and preserve the most important elements. This is essential in that it helps preserve and maintain the pride of Africans and, in this case, maintain their identity. Although it is obvious that it is impossible to revert to traditional African life styles, it is possible to adapt traditional systems to the changed circumstances. Individual societies must learn how to adapt and apply ethnic loyalties and new experiences to modern changes. For Kenya to be able to build a healthy plural nation in which every ethnic group will feel truly part and parcel, all acceptable cultural elements from the various ethnic groups must be accommodated. These are important bricks for building the Kenya of tomorrow and they should be known.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

To meet the objectives of the study, the author used various methods of collecting data. These methods had their shortcomings and strengths. Below, the author has mentioned the shortcomings of each method used and the justifications for using them. The author also mentions alternative methods used to compensate for the weak points discerned in the study. The study is basically historical in approach. That kind of approach provides an understanding of the usage of ornaments through time and space. It is with this understanding that the following methods were used.

1.4.1 Library and Archival Research

Library records and collections were a major source of information. This is because these

were often the only sources available for the earlier period i.e. the pre-colonial and colonial periods which are one of the most important areas of this study. Very few people, if any, who lived during those periods are alive today to provide first hand information.

The records that are available here were written by early explorers, geographers, missionaries, historians and anthropologists. These records help to make up for the scanty information that we get from the few survivors of the late 19th century. It is important to point out here that the author found it impossible to entirely rely on these elderly informants alone since, as Sieber (1989: Chapters 1-3) puts it, people tend to forget and sometimes confuse and give wrong information. With the information collected from written materials, it was possible to have more complete information in addition to that which was obtained from the people themselves.

The major shortcoming of the written records is that most of the authors were non-Africans and thus were unfamiliar with African life. These written records are also mainly descriptive. Systematic studies to find out the ideas behind behaviours are rare. Thus the literature is not a sufficient source of information for our study.

1.4.2.0 Interviews and Group Discussions

The other method that the author used for collecting data was the group discussions method. The author was interested in four age group: The very old group (75 years upwards); the 74-55 age group; the of 54-35 age group; and the 34-25 age group. In such informal discussions, people were encouraged to discuss freely. It was found that the informants were willing to co-operate. The purpose of the focused group method was to help discuss particular sets of issues or questions informally and from these the author hoped to obtain reliable data that would assist in an analysis of the use of ornaments among the Agikuyu.

The advantage of this method is that it provided the information that might have been difficult to obtain while informants were interviewed individually. Since many individuals were contacted at the same time, it was easy to tackle the problem of memory and that of

misinterpretation of facts.

1.4.2.1 Selection of people to interview

The informants were introduced to the author by the assistant chiefs of each sub-location. The assistant chief prepared a list of people whom he felt would be useful as informants. Discussions were generally held at the assistant chiefs' camp, but at times at a selected homestead. These discussion groups contained about 4-8 people, depending on the chief's discretion. There was an even representation of all age groups.

The emphasis here was on interviewing people who were identified with their local societies as being conversant with the history of the Agikuyu, the Gikuyu customs and forms of dress and ornamentation, people who were skilled in manufacturing ornaments, etc. Statistical representation, which sometimes is a research pre-requisite, could not be applicable in this study. It was not the issue of interviewing just anybody rather than the relevant people. And, since the people identified above are normally few in every localized community, all those who were identified were interviewed or invited to participate in the discussions.

Apart from those respondents suggested by the assistant chiefs, as the researcher became more and more acquainted with the area and people, new ones were identified. This indicated to some extent that some who would be respondents were left out by the local officials for reasons not revealed to the author. Some of them provided very useful information. The author is therefore hopeful that the information obtained was "representative" enough for the purposes of this study.

1.4.2.2 Choice of area/location

Random selection technique was used to make sure that every location was represented in the sample. To ensure that this was done, all the locations in Kikuyu Division were listed down on different pieces of paper, folded and put in a container. They were then shuffled and

two picked at a time, noted and returned in the container. This exercise was repeated ten times and the most frequently occurring combination became the representing sample. Then, within the two choices, each location's sub-locations were listed down, out of which two sub-locations were chosen from each location. Using this method, Lower Kabete and Muguga Locations were taken as representative locations. From these two locations, four sub-locations, Kibichiku, Lower Kabete, Gitaru and Kanyariri were randomly selected from Lower Kabete and Muguga locations respectively.

1.4.2.3 Key informants

Apart from the group discussion, the author also contacted a few individuals who were thought to be conversant with the information needed. These included elderly men and women who were over 55 years and who were believed to have gone through the traditional style of life. In this case the author was directed to these informants not necessarily by the assistant chief but by anybody whom the author may have come across and asked whether they knew of any informant of the type the author had in mind. In most cases, the author went to the homes of the key informants and spent some time with them.

The reason why the informants were felt to be important is that most of them are believed to have the information needed and could give it better while given enough time to think and express themselves. Some of these key informants could not go to the Chief's camp where discussions were held while others could not be free enough to talk in a group nor would they be given enough time to express their ideas. The author talked to four key informants each from every sub-location, who were selected on the basis of random sampling strategy outlined above.

1.4.3 Material Collection in the Museum

The author also spent some time to consult the ethnographic collection catalogue at the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi. In addition, the relevant materials, that is, the

ornaments, were viewed for detailed comparison and contrast because these items represented various periods. A number of photographs were taken of the ornaments for closer, detailed study and analysis. Use was also made of the ornaments contained in the material culture collection of the Institute of African Studies. Examination of detailed information in the catalogues of these institutions as well as material culture collection sheets, provided useful information for contextual analysis of a variety of ornaments from Kikuyu Division in particular and Gikuyu people in general. The method helped the author to compare the information given by the informants, and the collected materials together with the information written on the catalogue cards in the museum.

1.4.4 Research Duration and problems encountered

The author spent two and a half months collecting data in the field, but in the archives and library, the author spent slightly less the time spent in the field.

There were three major problems that the author experienced in the field. First, most of the people interviewed were not always able to rely on their memory. They were unable to remember the sequence of events and other small but important facts. This is one of the reasons why the library research, together with the museum and archival collections were very important. The second problem is that the people of Kikuyu Division, being near the city of Nairobi, experienced a decisive cultural change and this made it very hard for the author to get the proper information about the traditional style of life.

Most people in Kikuyu Division, which is near the city, commute daily to and from the town where they have businesses. It was not easy to find them in their homes when the author wanted to visit them for interview. Those who stay in the countryside throughout the day engage in intensive agricultural activities. Often they are in their farms although within the homestead's general area. The author was at times obliged to follow them at the places of work, e.g., in their coffee farms. The majority of the farms in Kikuyu Division are fenced

off, each encircling one individual's farm. This factor was the third problem which made the research rather difficult and time consuming because one had to go round and round to contact the people. The terrain of valleys and hills was not amenable to motor transport, and so the author had to cover long distances on foot.

1.4.5 Methods of Data Analysis

With the data drawn from the documentary sources together with interviews and observations, the author uses the qualitative data analysis method. This is done by taking each of the hypothesis used and testing it against the different variables found within the different Gikuyu localities of our study.

(i) The author takes the environmental factors and contexts that facilitate, enable or render it possible to have certain ornaments in one Gikuyu locality (original homeland) and not in the other (Kikuyu Division).

(ii) The different variants that influenced the migrants, i.e., different social contacts and environment, causing changes in the use and significance of ornaments.

1.5 Definition of terms

Ornaments: These are objects of material culture used primarily for decoration showing taste and good style, sometimes figurative or representing something else. Different types of attire are also here seen as ornaments.

Function: Utility or use; serve or operate as ... something.

Traditional: Faithfulness to the old style of life.

Imitation or continuation of the old mode of life. Representative of the old mode of life.

- Symbol:** Indication of, metaphor, representation of.
- Role:** Part played by an individual in the social structure.
- Status:** Classification; class in the society or social hierarchy that one belongs to.
- Form:** Shape size, design, or pattern of a given object.
- Type:** Quality of an item which is determined by the raw materials that the item is made of.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study's subject, that is, ornaments, falls under the general category of material culture and more specifically, adornment. Adornment is the "study of the social context of art" (Hunter and Whitten, 1987: 5). The wearing of ornaments is classified along with such practices as tattooing, hair decoration, scarification, and a variety of means of self decoration.

Material culture or specifically ornaments can be studied through various approaches. One such approach views ornaments within the context of symbolism whereby each society has its own set of meanings which its ornaments express. All in all, therefore, the wearing of ornaments indicates and reflects a number of sociocultural factors, e.g., age, sex, material condition, status, belief orientations and aesthetics.

In view of the foregoing circumstances, literature on ornaments, adornment, material culture, various forms of status, belief systems and aesthetics is often overlapping. Some prefer taking a museological and ethnographic approach; others are either art historians and critics, students of religion, or politics. Each one of these may have their own interests on the aspects of ornaments of their concern.

This study is an anthropological investigation whose focus is on the raw materials used in the manufacture of ornaments, the method of manufacture, and, more specifically, their function or use among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Embedded in that approach is the desire to understand the relationship between the changes that have taken place in ornaments worn by the Agikuyu and their deeper sociocultural changes and relationships. It is thus the author's view that for ease and more systematic handling, the review of the literature be divided into three

subsections, namely, literature on:

- (i) The raw materials used to make ornaments;
- (ii) The methods of manufacturing ornaments;
- (iii) The function and use of ornaments.

2.1.0 The raw materials used to make ornaments

The material culture of a people is very much dependent upon the kind of raw materials available either within their environment or some other place within reach. These raw materials can be of plant, mineral, animal or industrial origin. They can thus be from natural, domestic and industrial sources. During the period covered by the current study, it is known that the Agikuyu under study have lived in two areas, the slopes of Mount Kenya, and their current home, Kikuyu Division. It is also known that the two areas of settlement constituted and still constitute different ecological zones.

The selected inventory of ornaments worn by the traditional Agikuyu of Mount Kenya area settlement indicate that they were invariably made from plant, animal and mineral raw materials. There is no record of the use of industrially made raw materials; they were from both natural and domestic sources. That is to say they used materials from game they hunted, trees, grasses and materials they collected from the natural environment and the few animals and plants that they domesticated.

The first written records on raw materials which was written by Europeans placed interest in the flora and fauna of different countries outside Europe, and were made before the 19th century (Davidson, n.d.: 3). By the end of the 19th century, at the time Kenya's interior was being explored, the above interest had shifted to other things. As such literature on raw materials for the manufacture of ornaments is scanty.

Records at the National Museum in Nairobi date from around 1900. These describe the

ornaments themselves but say very little about the materials out of which they were made. The weakness becomes apparent in subsequent studies (e.g., Cagnolo, 1933; Kenyatta, 1944; Ocholla-Ayayo, 1980).

Given the foregoing, one is left with oral traditions as the only source of detailed information on the raw materials then available which were used by the Agikuyu for making ornaments in their first area of settlement.

2.1.1 The methods of manufacturing ornaments

In the previous section, the author has observed the paucity of detailed written records on the raw materials used to make various ornaments in traditional Kenya and the Gikuyu society. The same observation applies to information pertaining to details of how the ornaments were made. As Davidson (n.d.: 4) observes "the emphasis on form of non-European objects, which included ornaments, was reduced to the utility and function to stress the lack of technological advancement of these (non-European) cultures, exemplified by the primitiveness of their material objects". Further, it is important to stress that European material culture collectors had other reasons for their collections. Victorian England, for example, which became the colonial power over Kenya, believed that 'primitive' peoples would disappear soon. As such it was important to salvage ethnography. The more and varied collections a European nation had was seen to be a form of 'cultural capital' which indicated power abroad as well as at home. The material culture collected, its size and variety indicated how a European nation had managed to spread its political and economic power overseas.

However, during Kenya's colonial period, efforts were made towards systematic recording of detailed information on how various objects were made. Records at the National Museum in Nairobi are scanty and information not as detailed as one would wish to have. For example, an object under the name Board for Mbau with ACC number 1906 280 recorded to have been

collected by Sir Fred Jackson between 1887 and 1903, had no details other than the name, Game board, (Mbau); and with additional information that it originated from a tribe called 'Uganda'.

This kind of documentation improved only a little in the post-independence era. But even this new improvement leaves much to be desired. Take the case of an entry on an item under ACC number U/N 1970 364 (a) and (b) termed Two skin ornaments. The two items were collected in December 1970; the record claims that they originated from the Kikuyu 'tribe' where the local name is ndarua. Item No. (a) of the two is detailed as: a hairy skin from baboon, a kind that they called ngima in their vernacular language. Fastened by a long string, made out of cloth or thread Tied round the waist to cover the front and back. Worn during a dance called Mugoiyo.

While the foregoing description attempts to detail the materials used in making the "ornament", it fails completely to say anything regarding how the item was made. The mention of "a long string" to which it was fastened is also vague. The string is said to have been made out of cloth or thread. In fact, the author examined the item and what was described as cloth and thread was a twisted small strip of cotton cloth, plain calico.

The author went through several registration cards in the ethnographic section of the National Museum in Nairobi and formed the opinion that information available was wanting for detailed scientific study.

Another source of information for ornaments consulted was the Institute of African Studies' material section, previously in Education Building and now housed at Chiromo Campus. It appears that the formula used in collecting and documenting material items, particularly the ornaments, by the Institute of African Studies follows the Kenya National Museums tradition described above. Very little information, for instance, on the ways these items were manufactured, is available.

The Institute of African Studies also has been conducting holistic research in over twenty

districts in Kenya under the District Socio- Cultural Profiles Project. In this project, material culture is one of the topics researched which includes ornaments. Somjee (1986: 152) writing about Samburu female ornaments, the mboroo and ikiripia, had the following details:

The mboroo is made of giraffe's tail threaded with fine twine. The front is lined with dark red bead. It is worn in three pieces and is often oiled and ochred. The ikiripia collected is thirty centimetres and is made of seed beads, saen. It has a pattern in five colours: red, white, blue, green and orange.

It is clear from this description that there is no formula or method for documenting a museum object or ornament. Even the same author decides to mention no measurement when describing one ornament and does so for the other. Significantly, it appears that no effort was made to solicit information on the process of manufacturing the collected ornaments even as close as 1986!

It is this author's view that knowledge of the details of how ornaments were or are made is important for an in depth understanding of a number of things regarding the people who make and use them. In the first place, the methods of manufacture of ornaments, among other factors, constitute a technology. Technology as a sub-system or manifestation of culture is composed of the material, mechanical, physical and chemical instruments together with the techniques of their use by means of which society relates to its natural habitat. An appropriately detailed description of how the Agikuyu made their ornaments should provide students of material culture with information such as the kinds of tools used, the division of labour, or who make these ornaments and why. The latter element thus brings in the issue of social organization and relations.

Under this sub-section of literature review, emphasis is placed on the details of the actual

making of the ornaments. Specifically, what kind of technology or skills were needed to make certain kinds of ornaments, and what kind of organization of labour was required to make production possible. It also provides a picture of the kind of knowledge that people had about their environment; what could be recognized as sources for making ornaments; whether they had to go out and far or otherwise, to obtain those materials. If they went out and far, what was their understanding of their environment?.

For the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, these questions are important because they (the Agikuyu) have lived in two areas within the span of the period under discussion. The fact that they lived in different geographical entities should explain the nature of their ornaments and how much the environment has affected or contributed to the use and nature of their ornaments.

2.1.2 The Function or Use of Ornaments

According to De Rachewiltz (1963: 143), ornaments at the universal level are a result of the erotic instinct that unconsciously seeks to attract the opposite sex. But he goes on to assert that in Africa they have added functions. They satisfy the aesthetics of the wearer and, in some cases, they form part of magic intentions (e.g., the armlet). While this perspective carries a number of functions or uses to which ornaments are put, it is rather peripheral and restrictive.

Ornaments are part of material culture; in this sense they are tangible evidence of how human beings in their varied societies relate to their environment. They are used to add to the wearer's good looks in order to render him or her attractive to those who see them. The element of attraction is not, therefore, necessarily erotic or addressed to the opposite sex. Whether an armlet, or any other item similar to it, is worn to mean an ornament or a magic protective device is a question. However, most important is the fact that ornaments or items of material culture carry specific meanings within specific societies and at certain specific times in such societies' histories.

A number of anthropologists have emphasized the symbolic and communicative aspects of ornaments (Mauss 1950; Turner 1964; Seeger 1975; Vogel 1981; Soh 1984; Galichet 1988; Henderson and Ummuna 1988). The main advantage of this approach is that because of the wide scope of symbolism and communication, it provides a wider opportunity for dealing with ornaments. Vogel (1981: 100), for example, has in addition asserted that ornaments carry two major values, the aesthetic and utilitarian which he emphasizes by saying that "... in most African cultures, the position of an individual is apparent to a knowing viewer through a series of signs".

The signs in question include ornaments, body markings, hair arrangements and dress, among others. They distinguish the gender and status of a person, and they register a form of communal solidarity and a strong sense of belonging. Along with the foregoing items are ear-rings worn by certain age-groups; certain beads and armlets that signify a person's marital status; and ornaments that reflect economic or political status.

In agreement with Sieber (1972), Prins and Watters (1978), Vogel (1981), Jennings (1988), Henderson and Ummuna (1988) maintain that occasion and one's social status determine the kind of ornament an individual of a given culture will wear. The type of ornament one wears gives a picture of what a person is, in relation to the entire society or part of it. Wealth, high rank and royalty are associated with the kind of ornaments that are worn. All the above writers agree that African societies have gone through stages of transformation and that their ways of life, just like those of other societies outside Africa, have been influenced by external factors. This view can be misleading if not clearly explained. It is one thing to say that some African ornaments like those of many societies in the world can register certain external influences, and another to say that African ornaments have been influenced by external factors. The latter ignores the fact that all cultures possess an element of dynamism or even the possibility for decay. It also gives the impression that African cultures have always been on the receiving end which is an outdated

colonial diffusionist view. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division have definitely had both internal and external influences on their culture. The current study has gathered enough evidence to demonstrate such factors.

Jennings (1988), writing on the Nubian women's ornaments, has classified the role of ornaments into four categories. These are aesthetic, protective, symbolic and gift. He states that for the aesthetic element, the Nubian women decorated themselves with an amount of gold and silver jewelry and these materials portray a sense of wealth. He further states that the head ornament made of feathers and worn by chiefs is symbolic. Feathers are the imitations of branches of a tree and the tree trunk signifies leadership. The leader is like a mighty tree and the decoration worn is therefore symbolic of his power. The head ornament implies a living system.

Information provided by Henderson and Ummuna (1988) reflects the importance of symbols and the symbolic language. Anthropologists need to examine the latter from the view point of the fact that different people place specific meanings to similar things and such meanings could change with time and space. This study has, to some extent, examined these.

The earliest literature on the material culture and therefore ornaments of Kenyan peoples is from European writings. The picture one gets from such literature is that emphasis was placed on materials associated with leaders (e.g., chiefs and their families) and professionals (e.g., blacksmiths and medical practitioners or the so called witch-doctors). There was also interest in military attire and others to do with institutions such as initiation rites, marriage, death and burial (Routledge and Routledge 1910; Cagnolo 1933; Kenyatta 1944). It is suggested that this approach could have been influenced by the values of the time.

The role of ornaments on the ordinary Mugikuyu has also been emphasized. Routledge and Routledge (1910) produced a well documented descriptive study based on the Gikuyu

utilitarian value of ornaments. They covered almost all the Gikuyu ornaments that they came across, and even included photographs of the same to illustrate the text. They observed the importance of the Gikuyu ornaments from three major perspectives, namely, aesthetic, utilitarian and symbolic. The further claim that each item worn by a Mugikuyu has its own story to tell about the wearer. The different ways of adornment were described stage by stage as adopted by the initiates. This very important work did not, however, incorporate the meaning and importance of raw materials for these ornaments and the symbolism attached thereto. The authors wrote this book covering the particular period they lived with the Gikuyu people. This gives an impression that ornaments were used and have always been used as described by the authors. There is need to up-date this work by evaluating the use and changes in make and use of ornaments among the Agikuyu. This author feels that the different sections of the Agikuyu should not be lumped together as having the same usage of ornaments, neither would the changes in the use follow the same sequence.

Cagnolo (1933), employing a similar approach as the Routledges, maintained that ornaments serve as symbols of rank and status among members of the society and also as indicators of the social, economic and political status of individuals. This work is equally descriptive and the author feels that this could be up-dated and improved by an additional analysis of the functions of ornaments and the changes that the latter have gone through.

Gathigira (1942), whose book focuses on the habits and styles of life of the Agikuyu, failed to provide an analytical account of the Gikuyu customs. Though he has given a detailed account of the social life style of the Agikuyu, Gathigira has not mentioned the use of ornaments as one aspect of the social life, something that could have made his work more interesting and educative. Kenyatta (1962), Kabetu (1966) and others have written much about initiation and age-set organization yet they do not have a comparative analysis of these institutions. They have

in detail analysed the social stratification based on the principle of age, access to and control of resources, political status and privileges and rights. The symbols which used to accompany the above categories of the social ladder are important as they play a very significant role. By indicating the social status of a person, ornaments facilitate peaceful relations of each member, and the society is always made aware of the status of other persons with whom they interact. Little has been written about the significance of these symbols.

These two writers, unlike most of the authors discussed earlier, wrote about a cultural system in which they fully participated. This makes their work more interesting and creates an urge for more knowledge. Kenyatta (1938) discussed age groups, but he did not mention the symbols used to serve as outward indicators of age, rank, and status of individuals. It is surprising that the two authors in question did not discuss the symbolism attached to the Gikuyu ornaments and the role the latter played in maintaining morals, respect and cohesion. In his chapter on education, Kenyatta (1962), like Kabetu (1966), discusses the educational system of the traditional Gikuyu society, seeing education as the responsibility of the parent, on the one hand, and the society on the other. According to the above writers, children had to be educated on the importance of ornamentation in the social stratification. Aesthetics was related to the individual's relationship to his family members and the entire society. It also reflected an individual's progress from one state of maturity to the other, and the individual's potentials of being a reliable, responsible and active member of the society. All this had to be taught to the children as they grew up. There were signals that every individual gave by way of adornment which proved that they had achieved education to a certain level. Ornaments were therefore message carriers.

The writers in question failed in their description of the Gikuyu education system, for they did not indicate the significance of ornaments under the topic 'education'. The educators enlightened the young Agikuyu on the different kinds of ornaments and the symbols that those

stood for. Ornaments were important in the social fabric and also inter-personal relations within the society. Little about the role of ornaments has been written and the latter have not been seen as symbolic objects for educational purposes at different stages of life. Yet, Kenyatta stated that a Mugikuyu's life is marked and his position known by the steps which denote his progress from one stage to another. He did not discuss the objects which symbolize these different stages, nor did Kabetu.

To add to this description of the Gikuyu socio- cultural life style, anthropologists need to analyse ornaments as outward signs of progress, development and status. Leakey's work (1977) is a detailed description of the routine of the Agikuyu among whom he lived for many years. His contribution, which is in three volumes, includes a description of the Gikuyu social life. In this, he agrees with other authors who also discussed the Gikuyu social life, that life among the Gikuyu revolved around rites of passage. However, he, like the earlier mentioned authors, does not address the symbolic significance of ornaments in the different stages of the Gikuyu life cycle. He mentions in passing the use of ornaments by both sexes at different stages.

The importance of Leakey's work is in the enumeration of ornaments used in all stages of Gikuyu social life though he did not elaborate their functional parameters. However, because of its synchronic approach Leakey's work gives the impression that Gikuyu ornaments have been static. But from a different point of view, his material can be and has been utilized to compare and contrast with what is prevailing among the Agikuyu in Kikuyu Division today. In that way it has assisted in the author's understanding of the socio-cultural history of the people under study. Such an exercise has been carried out on the understanding that Leakey's work, though published in 1977, was in fact an accumulated information stretching many years back.

2.2.0 Theoretical Framework

This study operates within the realms of three different theoretical assumptions. The first

assumption is concerned with the evolution of culture, that is, the processes within which culture evolves. The other two are concerned with cultural change, that is, the characteristics within which changes take place. The first theory is derived from Julian Steward's notion of cultural ecology (cf. Hatch, 1973: 114-128). The second theory is based on the idea of diffusion of cultural ideas as explained by several diffusionists like G. Elliot Smith, W.J. Perry and W. Schmidt (Whitten and Hunter, 1987). The third theory is developed from Cohen's (1974) notion of cultural integration.

2.2.1 Cultural ecology

The emergence of cultural ecology, or ecological anthropology, is closely tied to the re-emergence of evolutionism in the 20th century. The father-figure of cultural ecology was an evolutionist, as well as a student of Kroeber's at Berkeley, i.e., Julian Steward. According to Steward, the meaning of ecology is adaptation to environment. He recognized, furthermore, that environment and culture are not separate but are interacting, involved in reciprocal causality. That is, environment and culture are each defined in terms of the other, and the environment plays an active role in human affairs. Julian Steward argued that environment influences not only the social structure of a people, but also their manner and customs, aesthetic products and motives, role and symbolism, and most of all creed and cult.

Adaptation to environment among humans is not primarily biological, but rather cultural. In all cultural systems it is possible to distinguish those institutions which are crucial to the way the system is organized from those which are peripheral. The core institutions are those most closely related to subsistence, to the way in which the culture adapts to and exploits the environment. While the core institutions may include technology, ideology and social structure, technology is by far the most important in defining and forming the adaptation that is made. Peripheral features, however, are not so critical, and may be explained by historical factors,

innovation, diffusion, as well as by the process of adaptation.

Steward did contend that his ecological framework provides the basis for a theory of cultural evolution. His approach shows how, first of all, cultural features and environmental features covary (that is, how they are functionally interrelated) and, second, that the same relations recur in historically distinct areas; different people in similar environments will show similar patterns of development and culture. This means that different environments produce different cultures.

It is with this view in mind and on the understanding that the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division have lived in two different environments, that the author has found this theoretical approach relevant for use in the current study.

2.2.2 Diffusion Theory

This is the belief that came into fashion among some European cultural anthropologists during the early 20th century. Essentially, diffusionists hold that all cultures began in one or a few places of the world and spread outward (Smith, 1933; Brown, 1968). In most recent years, the concept has been used or employed to mean the transfer and acceptance of cultural ideas from one culture to another. In this new version it is often viewed as being the same thing as the passing over of innovations from one culture or sub-culture to another (cf. Brown, 1968, 1981).

Basically diffusionism assumes the presence of two or more cultures which are different but in contact with one another. Originally it also carried the assumption that one of the cultures was superior to the other and therefore was the source of the flow of ideas towards the inferior one. This view is no longer true since anthropologists believe in cultural relativism (cf. Harris, 1973).

Therefore the present view on cultural diffusionism is as Whitten and Hunter (1978: 30-31) state:
A fundamental element of culture is communication, both within and between cultural realms ... When members of one culture learn new items of knowledge, new aptitudes, new solutions to problems, or the production and use of new tools, or they acquire any other new (to them) element of culture from another group, we say that these elements have

diffused from one culture to the other. Diffusion can take place directly through contact between both groups ...

The author finds this concept appropriate in the explanation of what happened to Gikuyu culture, in particular their ornaments, when these people had contact and communication with other cultures. It has thus been used as a possible explanation for changes that have taken place in the ornaments of the Agikuyu in Kikuyu Division where they had contact with non-Agikuyu cultures of African, Asian and European origin.

2.2.3 Cultural integration

The third theoretical framework is developed from Cohen's (1974) idea of the process of integration into nationhood in nation-states with plural ethnic groups. He suggests that there is nothing like complete integration among peoples of any one nation. Rather what can happen is a compromise, where a certain amount of norms and ideologies from each or some of those groups are retained or rejected. Cohen (1974: 176-177) emphasizes that " ... an ethnic group adjusts to the new realities by reorganizing its own traditional customs, or developing new customs under traditional symbols often using traditional norms and ideologies to enhance its distinctiveness with the dynamic contemporary situation". This process of integration demands that where two parties or more have to integrate one or some of them must accept a subordinate position while the other or others assume a superior one.

From the foregoing argument, it is suggested that this process of insubordination can be observed through the adoption or non-adoption of ornaments of other groups by one or some of the groups. The migrant Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division accepted a subordinate position vis-a-vis the cultural values, aesthetics and particularly ornaments prevalent amongst their neighbours. The argument here is that exposure to a new and different type of environment and contact with aliens forced the migrant Agikuyu to adopt, among other things, ornaments from their neighbours (e.g., Maasai, Asians and Europeans).

2.3.0 Hypotheses

In view of the objectives of this study, the literature reviewed, and with reference to the theoretical framework, the study generated the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis one:

Change in environment of the land of the Agikuyu has influenced changes in the ornaments they currently use.

Hypothesis two:

Contact with non-Agikuyu people has influenced changes in ornaments of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

Hypothesis three:

The adaptation by Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division of some ornaments from their non-Agikuyu neighbours is an act of socio-cultural subordination.

CHAPTER THREE

ENVIRONMENT, AND CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

3.1.0 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

3.1.1 Location

Kikuyu Division, the area where this study was carried out, is located in Kiambu District. It is situated on the western side of the capital city of Nairobi. To the south and the south-east, it borders Kajiado District, to the north, Limuru Division and to the north-east, again Kajiado.

The immediate neighbours of the Agikuyu of our area of study, were the Athi and Gumba. The Agikuyu, being mixed farmers, needed land for cultivating and as such they negotiated with the Athi and Gumba who were hunters and foragers. The latter two groups exchanged a portion of land with herds of cattle (Muriuki, 1974). Gradually, the Agikuyu became masters of the land and with the rapid growth of population, they assimilated the Gumba and Athi.

The Maasai living to the south and south-east of the Gikuyuland of this area of study, were neighbours of the Agikuyu. Their original settlement included what is now the city of Nairobi area, to the south- west of the present Kikuyu Division. The Maasai were pastoralists.

To the east of the present Kikuyu Division were the Akamba, whose main preoccupation was long-distance trading and smithing. The Akamba became quite helpful to the Agikuyu as they provided the latter with some of the ornaments obtainable from the Swahili traders of the coast.

Generally, the Agikuyu interacted well with their neighbours, and this had far reaching consequences, which included borrowing and assimilating some items of material culture. As Muriuki (1974: 98) rightly puts it, "... outward signs are mainly indicative of a more deeply rooted cultural exchange dating back to many generations".

3.1.2 Physical Features, Ecological Zones and Climate

Kikuyu Division lies between Ol Donyo Sabuk and Ngong Hills ridges, which rise to about 1,650 metres above sea level. Much of the Kikuyu Division area is characterized by scattered woodland, while the rest is dry savannah. Rainfall in Kikuyu Division ranges between 750 mm to 1500 mm . The land is hilly and has a number of forests, although today most of the forests are being cleared due to the high demand of agricultural land and also firewood and charcoal. The Kikuyu Division neighbours to the east and south-east, an ecological zone characterized by low, unreliable rainfall of between 500 mm and 750 mm per annum and has an open grassy plain vegetation. The area of study is part of an ecological zone which contrasts that of the slopes of Mt. Kenya region, the ancestral land of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, an area characterized by the forest ecological zone, and volcanic soils. This area receives a high rainfall ranging between 1,375 mm to 2,250 mm per annum and has an altitude of 1,800 metres upto 2,100 metres above sea level. Its abundant foliage supports such animals as buffalo, rhino, elephants, bush babies and colobus monkeys. The area is heavily populated due to its potentials for intensive agriculture.

3.1.3 Soil and Natural Resources

The soils of the area of study are volcanic in origin. Except in swamps, it is deep red in colour due to the breakdown of volcanic turfs and various types of lava. The soil was quite fertile by the time the Agikuyu of the area came to settle here because the whole land had been under a thick mantle of timber and bush before the Agikuyu bought it from the Athi and Gumba.

In the swamps and valleys, there is black soil which comprises decayed vegetation. This is suitable for such crops like sugarcane. The deep soil in this area has enabled people to dig over 12 metres without reaching bedrock.

There are a number of streams flowing into swampy areas of the east which originate from

areas of lava and volcanic ashes. In the swamps there is a heavy growth of papyrus. The swamps are rich in soil enriching earth (muunyu) which is valuable to the Agikuyu as a "salt lick" for their stock.

Besides the soda earth, and the natural rocks, Kikuyu Division had few minerals of any social or economic value. Their most valued mineral was the iron ore, of which there were vast deposits in the form of lateritic murrum. From this, the Agikuyu derived a large amount of iron which was used in making most of their iron implements.

Red ochre and poor quality potter's clay were also available. However, such essential minerals as soda for human use, good quality red ochre and diatomite had to be obtained from their ancestral homeland through trade (Leakey, 1977). The Kikuyu Division area was rich in trees and a large variety of fibre plants. The Kikuyu elders whom the author interviewed, said that the Agikuyu of this region had a wide knowledge of these kinds of trees and plants that naturally grew in their country. They used the plants and herbs to make drugs.

The author discussed with Wambui, an old Kikuyu woman of about 90 years old, whose husband was a medicine man. She said that her husband knew over 500 different plants and differentiated those that were useful for making drugs and those that were used in connection with magical rites and ceremonies. Trees were also used to make important implements like walking sticks, snuff containers, stools for old men, etc.

3.2.0 HISTORY OF THE AGIKUYU

The detailed history of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division was obtained from the information provided by the elders who were interviewed. Written sources (Kenyatta, 1938; Muriuki, 1974; Leakey, 1977) were consulted as well.

The entire Agikuyu are said to have migrated from the north, that is, Tigania and Igembe area during the 16th century. They moved into the slopes of Mt. Kenya (Kirinyaga) where they

are said to have intermarried with the Athi and Gumba, whom they absorbed (Waruhio, 1972; Muriuki, 1974). In the mid 19th century, the Gikuyu expanded to different areas in search of new lands to accommodate demands of their population increase. Muriuki (1974: 93-94) sees the main cause of Gikuyu migration as the shortage of land. He also maintains that the Gikuyu felt concerned about the behaviour and morality of their society. Severe punishment used to be meted out to violators of the Gikuyu laws or immorals and those who did not live up to the expectations of the society. Deviants, according to Muriuki (ibid), ran away to avoid punishment and looked for a different type of social set-up which would suit their ambitions. They were looking for a democratic kind of set-up which left the individual with a considerable extent of freedom. It is therefore implied that the migrants who ended up in Kikuyu Division were thieves, murderers, criminals and self-centred individuals whose interests were to enrich themselves and live their own life without any kind of harassment.

Upon arrival in the land of the Ndorobo and Athi which is the present Kikuyu Division, the Gikuyu persuaded the former to sell their land. The Athi were most willing to do so in exchange for animals (e.g., rams, sheep) or against tools such as axes, swords and food (e.g., bags of honey) (Waruhio, 1972). The Athi intermarried with the Gikuyu while the Maasai who lived to the south-east also interacted with them. These contacts contributed to changes which led to the formation of the present culture of the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

3.3.0 SOCIO-CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE AGIKUYU

3.3.1 Distribution of Land

All my informants agreed that the Gikuyu were mixed farmers - cultivating land and rearing cattle - at the time of their settlement in Kikuyu Division. The traditional land tenure and social system of the Gikuyu as practised by their forefathers changed with the dispersal of the lineage groups to different areas. However, though the land tenure and social system changed, the

importance of land had always been a common characteristic among the entire ethnic group. According to the Gikuyu customary law of land tenure, every family unit had a land right (Kenyatta, 1938: 13). Land was held under private or corporate ownership once bought from the Athi. The original picture of mbari or family ties was distorted by the increasing number of tenants (ahoi), who used the family land on grounds of usufructory rights.

In Kikuyu Division, an individual who bought land from the Athi, had the right to this land alone. He had the disposal right to part or whole of it. After death his land became the joint property of his sons. All his wives had an equal portion for cultivation and the uncultivated land was used communally as grazing grounds by the entire family.

On the other hand, land which had been bought jointly by brothers was their joint property. In this case the elder brother became the trustee as he was the one who carried out the negotiation at the time of purchase. His main role was to see that everybody had an access to land and that none of the brothers sold out a portion of land without the consent of the other brothers.

3.3.2.0 Social Organization

The social and political organization of the Gikuyu society had for long been governed by four principle units, which helped to maintain unity of the entire Gikuyu society. This was confirmed by the elders interviewed and also by the literature on the Gikuyu social and political organization (Kenyatta, 1938; Muriuki, 1974; Lambert, 1965).

3.3.2.1 Lineage(Mbari)

The Gikuyu society is organized and functions under the patrilineal system, where the father is the head of the family and ruler of the homestead. He was traditionally the owner, keeper and protector of the family and their property, and commanded respect and obedience from all members of the family. The prestige of the head of the family in the community depended

largely on the type of homestead he kept and how he managed it. To the Gikuyu, the ability to manage one's homestead properly and to organize the family and all activities, was an indication of capability in organizing public affairs. A man whose family was well behaved, organized, peaceful, healthy and wealthy (where wealth was measured in terms of number of children, cattle and size of land), was highly respected by the entire society.

The responsibility of being the head of the family was transmitted from the father upon his death to the elder son. Mbari, therefore, traces its origin from the ancestors of a male son's father, the latter being the founder of the mbari.

3.3.2.2 Clan(Muhiriga)

The Gikuyu society is said to have been composed of nine clans. Each lineage, mbari, traces its origin to one of the nine Gikuyu clans and so regards itself as a direct descendant of the mythical ancestors of the Gikuyu people (Kenyatta, 1938). For example, if the head of a given homestead claimed his forefathers to have belonged to a certain clan, it followed that his family belonged to this same clan. Kenyatta (1938: 3-4) defines clan as a group of several family groups who are believed to have descended from one family group in the remote past.

There was a strong bond linking clansmen and whenever they met, they were expected to assist each other. The migration that took place in the 19th century, together with the interaction with other societies, made it impossible to have the kind of solidarity that existed before.

3.3.2.3 Ethnic Group

Despite the wave of social and political changes that took place among the Gikuyu, ethnic solidarity in times of threat especially from the Maasai raids was common. An individual Gikuyu saw himself as belonging to the wider community in times of deep internal crisis, or when faced by external threats. As Muriuki (1974: 113) puts it, a good example of Gikuyu "identification was the rallying nationalist songs sung before and during the Mau Mau uprising".

3.3.2.4 Age Group

The other unifying principle which was also very important was the age group, riika. While all other institutions discussed above tried to unify the kinsfolk with the society, the age-group united and solidified the whole society in its activities. Almost every year thousands of Gikuyu boys and girls, went through initiation which involved circumcision for the boys and clitoridectomy for the girls, thus qualifying them to full membership in their society. It also unified all the members of one age-group irrespective of the mbari and muhiriga to which they belonged. They acted as one body in all social matters and had very strong bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood among themselves. Kenyatta (1938: 2-4) concludes in his analysis of the unifying factors that "... in every generation, the Gikuyu tribal organization is stabilized by the activities of various age grades of old and young, who act harmoniously in the political, social and economic life".

3.4.0 Initiation

Between the age of 12 and 18 years, both boys and girls had to undergo the initiation ceremony. This was a very important stage and individuals undergoing it formed an age-set. Every member of the society had to go through the initiation ceremony in order to join the social status that guaranteed full membership in the Gikuyu society. Circumcision and clitoridectomy were signs of maturity, strength and courage among the Gikuyu. They were very important cultural values. As different individuals became full members of the society, they took their roles in the society as responsible persons. Men protected society against enemies, worked hard to accumulate wealth and made decisions about the future life of their community. Livestock, especially cattle, was seen as a sign of wealth. They were also the providers of meat, milk and hides. The latter were used for beddings and for making straps used in tying and carrying loads of various kinds. Cattle were also a sign of prestige in the community.

After initiation, girls were regarded as being mature enough to get married and to become mothers. They were taught by their mothers how to behave as mature women do, how to take care of themselves and relate with men friends without getting into motherhood out of wedlock. They were also taught and prepared for their duties as wives and mothers and how to take care and manage homes. Most of all, young women were conscious about their physical appearance because marriage was an important social institution and men were very particular about looks. The girls had to be healthy, tidy and good looking. Young women wore ornaments that indicated that they were mature and initiated into adult community life. This indicated that they could be asked for a hand in marriage by any interested party.

3.5.0 Marriage

In marriage, values such as intact families and fidelity of partners, which in turn led to ethnic cohesion, were maintained. Responsibility in decision-making was also an important value which was embedded in the marriage institution. Ideally, a circumcised girl had also to have other qualities that made her eligible for marriage. She had to be of good morals, hard working and physically fit.

The Gikuyu society was a polygynous one. According to the Gikuyu, polygyny facilitated cohesiveness. A man had to have enough property in the form of cattle not only to enable him to pay bridewealth but also to enable him to acquire enough raw materials for making ornaments for all the members of his family, especially his wives and daughters (boys were expected to look for raw materials and make ornaments for themselves, in most cases). A polygamous man, who was able to adorn his family in an outstanding manner, was respected and was also very popular. He was seen as an able man who could lead the society just as he was able to maintain his wives and children.

Polygyny was also a sign of wealth. Many wives, children and livestock are the variables

to be considered when talking about a traditionally wealthy man.

3.6.0 ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

3.6.1 Agriculture

The present day Gikuyu are mixed farmers. They grow food for subsistence. The principal foods they grew were: maize, millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, peas, sugar-cane, edible arum, green grams, bananas and cassava. In addition to food plants, the agikuyu also cultivated other plants for various economic and social purposes. These were castor oil (mbariki), tobacco (mbaki), gourd plant and thatching grass (Leakey, 1977: 176).

Women planted and also harvested maize, beans, millet and sweet potatoes, among others. Weeding of crops was done collectively by both sexes.

3.6.2 Animal Husbandry

Domestic animals were of vital importance to the social organization and religious life of the community. They also contributed to the Agikuyu's principal diet by providing meat and milk. The Gikuyu kept cattle, goats and sheep, and in most cases a man's wealth and social standing was estimated in terms of the number of goats and sheep he possessed. Additionally, these domestic animals were required to supply raw materials for many of the objects of material culture used by the Gikuyu. The Gikuyu also kept bees. Men and boys tendered cattle, sheep and goats and slaughtered them when there was need. They also looked after the bee hives. Milking was done by young warriors, boys and, occasionally, women but no married man was ever allowed to milk cattle. Beekeeping was important to the Agikuyu because honey was needed for many ceremonial purposes especially for brewing special beer used in important functions. Beekeeping was a special profession of brave men who, besides not being afraid of bees, could also climb trees. Hives were a great source of wealth to those who had the courage of beekeeping.

3.6.3 Hunting

There were certain men who were hunters and trappers. The men and their families sometimes abandoned their agriculture for hunting and trapping, or combined the two modes of life. By the nature of their life, these men and their families had to abandon the normal Gikuyu taboo against eating game meat. Uninitiated boys were fond of trapping certain animals and birds, while warriors and ordinary Gikuyu elders attacked and killed animals that were dangerous to themselves or to their flocks. Those who specialized in hunting became rich through selling buffalo hides (for making shields) and ivory. The main animals hunted and trapped were elephants whose tusks were used by the Gikuyu to make ornaments, which were very valuable to the Gikuyu who preferred to use them for trade. A big tusk was sold in exchange for iron, brass, wire and beads. Buffaloes were also trapped for their horns which were used by the warriors as ornaments and musical instruments.

Rhinoceroses were hunted mainly for their hides which were in great demand for making collars used in hafting axe and chisel blades and also for such ornaments as the girls' bead belt (ciuma cia itina). Rhino horn was also in demand; it was used for making special arm ornaments and snuff-boxes. It was also bartered to the traders who came to Ngong for brass, copper and beads. Lions were also hunted and killed. Their mane was made into two thumbi head-dresses which were the property of the first two men to spear the animal. The rest of the skin belonged by right to the nearest medicine-man and the claws were highly prized for charms.

Leopard skins (and those of other animals of the cat family) were used to make dance dresses for boys prior to initiation. Impala skins were used as substitute for calf skins for making men's leather garments. Gazelle horns were made into containers for charms, while their (gazelle) skins were used for making leather garments (ithii) for men. Colobus monkeys were also trapped because their skins were valuable to the Agikuyu. Ornaments made from the skins of these

monkeys were used by men and boys in most of the important dances and any warrior who did not possess such ornaments would feel very ashamed at a dance. The blue monkey's skin (ngima) was used for making men's fur cloaks, while baboon skins were used to make headdresses (thumbi) by warriors who were unable to obtain a lion's mane.

Ostriches, nyaga, were in great demand. Ostrich egg shells were in demand for making various ornaments and also disc beads to be worn by babies, for averting evil eyes. Some ostrich eggs were never broken up; instead they were taken whole to the medicine-man who prepared them in a special way with one hole in the side and one at each end. The eggs were then slung on the leather thong, and a cow's tail was inserted into the hole at the side. This curious ornament was borrowed from medicine-men by boys and girls for certain dances prior to initiation, and also by warriors. Vulture feathers were in great demand among the Gikuyu who made them into a variety of dance headdresses and feather cloaks (riba), buzzard feathers were required for all boys who wished to be initiated. The vulture feathers made special headdresses (muhiiro).

3.6.4.0 Crafts and Industry

3.6.4.1 Basket work and wood work

The Gikuyu practised many crafts such as basket- making, hurdle work and wood work. Basket making and mat making was done by women while wood work was done by men, who made walking sticks, stools and other wooden items.

3.6.4.2 Wire workers

This was a specialized profession and a man wanting to become a wire worker paid dearly and qualified to be one after a long apprenticeship and payment of appropriate fees. Iron, copper and brass were obtained by barter from the Maasai and Akamba. Out of this, the wire worker made all the various thinner gauge wires which he needed. A person who wanted iron wire

ornaments or a chain made of iron wire either took thick gauge trade wire to the wire worker, or else he bought the finished articles direct from the wire worker.

3.6.4.3 Copper and brass work

Copper and brass work was rare in Kikuyu Division before 1870. After the establishment of the railway and the Indian business dukas, both metals were widely used.

Only wire workers handled copper or brass. Copper was called munyaka and brass was called mweru or gicango. The objects made from brass or copper were the coiled muringa bracelets, the upper coil called gituro, and finger rings. Chains were never made of brass.

3.6.4.4 Wood work

This was done by men specialists who made such wooden objects as ear ornaments and ndebe an ear ornament which was made from wood of muthithioi or mungirima trees. Other ornaments made were muti wa gutu, a wooden ear plug of polished mukure, murembu, or munungamai which were worn by warriors in the lobes of their ears. Muthigi, a wooden ornament, was the insignia of office used by council elders and made out of tuigi (long branches) of either mugirima or murigi wood. There were sacred sacrificial woods and stones which no one would dare cut or step over.

Finally, the walking stick was made by wood- workers.

3.6.4.5 Iron smelting

The Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division smelted a kind of iron ore called murram (muthanga) which was mined by the apprentices of smiths and smelters. Out of the pig-iron obtained from the smelted ore smiths made swords, spears, and other iron implements.

Good quality iron was obtained from the Gikuyu of the ancestral homeland (Leakey, 1977). This kind of iron ore was rich in decomposed granite from which was extracted a good deal

of micaceous clay matter strongly stained with iron oxide. This had the best quality iron called magnetite.

From this smiths made knives, razors, arrow points, axes, thick arm bracelets (muthiore), an iron ornament for women members of the smith's family, and kigamba, an ankle bell used by men when dancing.

Ira and red ochre of good quality (thiriga), were not available in Kikuyu Division and had to be obtained through barter from other sections of Gikuyu, [e.g., Murang'a and Nyeri (Routledge and Routledge, 1910; Leakey, 1977)], and the slopes of Mt. Kenya, the ancestral homeland.

The Gikuyu of the area of study were dependent upon trade with the other sections of Agikuyu around the ancestral land in order to obtain some of their everyday requirements. These included saddle-querns (mahiga ma gukia), good quality red ochre (thiriga) and blue powder (thegerme). This section of the Gikuyu from the ancestral homeland also used to bring down large quantities of tobacco, pig-iron and iron made into knives and swords, for the iron ore of the Gikuyu Division was inferior to that of the ancestral land. The tobacco grown on the granite soils of the slopes of Mt. Kenya was of much better quality than that grown in Kikuyu Division, and this made the former be in great demand. The Agikuyu of the ancestral land, on the other hand, needed soda as well as goats and sheep. Soda was not available in Kikuyu Division but was obtained from Maasai country, and was fetched regularly by special Gikuyu families who acted as middlemen for this trade. There were other special Gikuyu families who were directly dealing in soda and were called the soda people (amagata). They belonged to a special guild of 'soda diggers'. They were different from other Gikuyu in that they could not participate in the sacrifices of any Gikuyu family other than that of another 'soda digger'. Soda miners would commonly go to a mining expedition accompanied by their wives. They got soda which they

gave to the middlemen in exchange for sewn skin cloaks, goat and sheep skin, brass and copper wire and beads (which the Maasai obtained by trade from the Akamba), and cowrie shells (also obtained from the Maasai who got them from the Coast). The Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division also traded directly with the Akamba from whom they obtained copper, brass, cloth and chain work made by the Kamba jewelers. The Akamba obtained copper, brass and cloth more easily due to their being nearer to the Coast and hence had direct interaction with the Arab and Swahili caravans. The Agikuyu gave the Akamba ivory in large quantities which had come from the Gikuyu of the ancestral homeland who exchanged it for soda among other things. The Akamba were therefore the middlemen between the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division and the Waswahili and Arabs at the Coast.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the Arab and Swahili caravans, which had already been trading with the Maasai and the Akamba, began to come to the borders of Kikuyu Division in order to trade directly with the Agikuyu. They especially frequented the area around the present Dagoretti and Ngong and the Maasai side of Mbagathi river. They wanted ivory and rhino horn, and also grain for food for the caravans on their return journey to the Coast. This direct interaction between the two parties, had great consequences for the Gikuyu social life style.

3.7.0 Construction of the railway line and its consequences

Towards the end of the 19th century when imperialism was at its height in Africa, the present Kikuyu Division was directly affected. The Europeans had already shown great interest in the area, the present Kikuyu Division. The Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), had set up company posts at Kiawariua (present Dagoretti) and later Fort Smith. Between 1890 and 1902, the IBEAC searched for suitable land to settle and also improved means of transport and communication. All-weather roads and tarmac roads were constructed along the areas the

European aspired to settle, and a railway line was constructed. The Europeans had used the Indian coolies in railway and road construction.

During this time, most of the land in Kikuyu Division was still unoccupied and undeveloped and following the plague and famine which resulted in many deaths of both human-beings and cattle. The Europeans who occupied part of Kikuyu Division with little resistance were most welcome by the poorer class of the Agikuyu whose cattle herds had been completely depleted, who had no crops on their farms. This latter group had been depending on the richer Gikuyu group of the area who employed them on their farms in return for food. The richer group of the Gikuyu had been enjoying trade with the Akamba and Swahili traders who had now penetrated the interior of Gikuyuland (Kikuyu Division). The poorer Agikuyu were beneficiaries of the settlement of the Europeans in Kikuyu Division and saw the Europeans as their saviour. They were employed by the latter as wage earners on their farms and houses. They did odd jobs in the European schools and churches. Their children were brought up in the European environment and were also introduced to western culture. These low earning parents took their children to mission schools, where the latter became Christians and were taught western values.

The richer group of the Gikuyu became puppets of the Europeans and took advantage of the occupation on their land. Being aware that the wealthier group was more likely to resist their settlement the Europeans befriended them by giving them presents in form of cloth and ornaments. Later, the Europeans gave the rich Gikuyu the power and glory they so much wanted by making them chiefs or rulers over their (Agikuyu) fellow-men. This elevated the status of this group.

The railway line and improved roads were all destined to facilitate a commercial network. Some Indian immigrants, who were encouraged by the Europeans to carry out business along the railway, settled along it and set up small dukas where they sold all kinds of jewellery. They also

sold cotton cloth which replaced the skin cloaks that the traditional Agikuyu wore. The settling of the Dukawalas had two major results. First it helped in raising revenue and also changed the values of the Agikuyu who traded with them. The trade of the Waswahili and Akamba slowly declined as the Agikuyu developed relations with new traders, the Asians and Europeans. The Gikuyu also adopted a new religion and values and generally changed the traditional Gikuyu socio- economic and cultural modes of life.

Land was an important economic factor that had a bearing on ornaments and was affected by the settlement of foreigners in Kikuyu Division. The Gikuyu who were traditionally mixed farmers obtained their materials for adornment from their farms. The Europeans who settled on the land of the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division appropriated for themselves large portions where they put up mission schools, churches and hospitals. The other remaining portions were placed under intensive farming. The Europeans convinced the Gikuyu that they would teach them better methods of farming and so introduced large- scale farming, zero-grazing and cash crop growing (pyrethrum and coffee). The revolution in land utility resulted in drastic changes in the social structure and division of labour among the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

Time spent on looking for raw materials to make ornaments by young people was no longer available; neither was adornment as significant a factor as it used to be before. The entire society was turned into capitalist producers, and they were totally brainwashed to set up a social structure that suited the capitalist mode of production. Rites-de-passage which called for particular ways of adornment were no more, the traditional class of blacksmiths, witchdoctors and circumcisers (a-ruithia) and their ornaments were no more. The society was busy planting, weeding and harvesting, while the youth were students in the mission schools and the educated adults were given white-collar jobs as messengers, lowly paid teachers, cooks and housekeepers. Wage labour and payment of taxes were introduced by the Europeans. This forced every adult person

to work for Europeans and Asians in order to get pay for taxes.

The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, therefore, having interacted closely with the Europeans, copied western life-styles. They bought ornaments similar to those of their employers which represented the western values. They were also given presents in the form of ornaments which they wore, thus identifying themselves with western culture.

3.8.0 VALUES

The cultural values of a given society determines its socio-cultural, economic, and political systems. Ornaments are an important part of material culture, the symbolism of which reflects the values of a society such as that of the Agikuyu . One of the arguments of this study is that since there is a relationship between ornaments and cultural values, changes of these values imply the change of the ornaments that represent them. Ornaments act as indicators of the role and status of an individual within certain institutions. Such cultural values like tribal cohesion and expansion, family responsibilities and fidelity among partners, morality and mutual respect are protected and safe guarded by such institutions like age-sets or age groups and marriage, religion and leadership.

One of the characteristics of the Gikuyu social organization are the different stages that an individual is identified with as he/she grows older. An individual joins one institution after another as he/she moves from one stage to another. Every stage of life is marked not only by a rite, but also by certain kinds of ornaments that identify one with his/her age, institution and responsibility. Some of the important rites are circumcision and clitoridectomy, which qualify one to be a member of an age-group, and indicate acceptance for membership into the society. Closely following the circumcision and clitoridectomy rites is an institution that marks and indicates adulthood and responsibility. The Mugikuyu had to observe all the cultural values and

live by them, short of which one was ostracised and became an outcast. To be readmitted to the society, one had to undergo a cleansing ceremony.

The most important cultural values of the Gikuyu were solidarity, morality and cohesion. Ornaments were used as objects of reminding the people about those cultural values. The socio-economic organization of a society is also important in the understanding of the use and importance of ornaments. The latter are seen as important signs of age, role, rank and status of an individual in the society. They are signs that reflect the individual's position in the social stratification thus portraying the values of the society.

This chapter is the backbone of the entire thesis. It gives a detailed introduction of the group of Gikuyu of our study, their geographical position, neighbourhood, ecological position, social, cultural and economic modes of life.

The section on location, neighbourhood and ecological zones of Kikuyu Division is important in that it helps to advance the argument that foreign interaction and change of environment resulted in changes in the modes of life of the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Following this is the analysis of the raw materials available in the new area of settlement (i.e., Kikuyu Division) as compared to the raw materials used in their ancestral homeland. This information is important as it shows how environment is a determining factor in the material culture of any given group of people. This helped in formulating the hypothesis concerning change and adoption.

The information given on the socio-cultural organization of the traditional Gikuyu is also important. There can never be a discussion of change of a given mode of life without the knowledge of the past modes of life. The causes of change are not only seen in the height of the changed environment, but also the interaction with foreigners especially Asians and Europeans is seen to have played a great role in change as discussed in Chapter 5. An analysis of the construction of good roads and railway line and the settlement of Asians and Europeans

clearly explains the change of the material culture and values of the Gikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

Values are also analysed here, as ornaments portrayed cultural values in the traditional society. By analysing the traditional values, the author hopes to create a picture of the functions of ornaments in the structure of the traditional Gikuyu society. This information helps the reader to understand the changes discussed in Chapter 5, where western religion, western education and the capitalist mode of production, are seen as the determining factors of change.

The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that it provides the information that is used in the formulation of the hypotheses of this study. It is also important in that it helps to coordinate the information in the other chapters that follow.

CHAPTER FOUR

ORNAMENTS AND CULTURAL VALUES

In this chapter, the author examines the relationship between ornaments and cultural values in a historical perspective. To make the work more systematic the discussion is divided into sections which correspond with the traditional life cycle of the Agikuyu. The discussion is on ornaments associated with the various stages of the traditional life cycle or the rites de passage with their accompanying ceremonies. The main sections considered are: initiation rites for both boys and girls; attire for unmarried young women and men; attire for wedding; ornaments of the married; and professional attire.

Under this chapter too, the changes that have taken place in the ornaments used in the past by the Agikuyu are observed, documented and commented upon. Of particular interest to this study is the understanding of the nature of the changes, that is, the context in which they took place, and the forces which have been or still are at play.

Notwithstanding the internal dynamism of the Gikuyu culture, it seems that the change in environment, have brought a lot of weight on the type and form of ornaments made and used by the Agikuyu in the last two or three centuries. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division are known to have moved into the area from Mukuruwe wa Gathanga, in present Muranga District, and settled in the present area. The former and the latter are different geographically, thus the material culture produced in these areas is basically different. In their new land at Kikuyu, they have been subjected to contact pressure from their Bantu neighbours, Nilotic Maasai, Europeans and Asians.

4.1.0 Initiation

One of the ways in which an individual was initiated into a new stage in the Gikuyu social 'hierarchy' was by circumcision. Boys were circumcised at the age of 18 years while girls a little earlier at the ages of 12 or 13 years. Circumcision for both boys and girls among the Agikuyu was (and in some cases still is) a symbolic act that forms part of the

transformational exercises which the youth have to go through. After going through circumcision and other related activities, the youth were and are considered members of another community, that of young adulthood. They are no longer children. This being the case, the ornaments worn by uncircumcised boys and girls were different from those they wore after they were circumcised. The two sets of ornaments had different functions and symbolism and therefore played particular roles.

For the medicine men and the circumciser, muruthia, to be able to perform the rites involved in circumcising certain objects had to be made available. Some of these were magic materials such as powders known as uuma, ira and njeru. None of these powders were available anywhere around Kikuyu Division. Ira, for example, was only obtained from the area around Mt. Kirinyaga. Transporting ira and even other magic powders was cumbersome, and communication systems were then very poor. The magic powders were important as they adorned the ornaments that the initiates were to be given by the muruthia during the circumcision ceremony. The powders, believed to have magic powers, were mixed with other ingredients to form ointments. It was also believed that the ornaments that were associated or covered with these powders and ointments through mixing or contact, transferred their powers to those items. The powders had strong preventive powers to wade off misfortune in favour of the initiates as they underwent the painful surgery. The shortage of these magical powders made the rite in which they were used very costly; as such it was performed rarely, especially in the area of study. The parents of the initiates had to pay a fee for the initiation of their children to the medicine man, who had to obtain a sufficient amount of these powders. Goats were slaughtered and their hides used to make strips which were wrapped around the boys' wrists. This ornament was said to have magical power to prevent excessive bleeding of the initiates' circumcision wound.

Anklets which were made of twisted roots of muriira and kihinga (see glossary) and covered with the three magic powders, were put on the left ankle of each girl. This was to

prevent any possible onstart of menstrual periods for the initiates during their initiation term.

These were basically the ornaments that the initiates were given for the ceremony. Unlike the situation in Kikuyu Division, initiation back in the Gikuyu homelands (the forefather's home) was not so expensive. Raw materials like magical powders were easily available. The initiates were even more adorned with ira and thiriga (white chalk) which was easily available around the area. The whole body of the initiate was covered with the magic powders; in Kikuyu Division only the ornaments were covered. Caster oil was also very important in this rite and was supposed to be used together with the magic powders. The forefathers of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division did not only anoint the initiates with the magic powders and chalk all over the body but the initiates were also anointed with castor oil from their head to their toes. This was not done in Kikuyu Division although a bit of castor oil was mixed with the magic powders.

Some of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division had to adopt the Maasai ukabi way of circumcision and way of adornment. This was partly because they could not bear the cost of having to look for the necessary raw materials needed for the Gikuyu style of initiation, and partly because they had already become much influenced by the Maasai in the course of their interaction. However, the author observed that the Agikuyu adopted only certain elements of the Maasai way of initiation, the use of some raw materials and the system of circumcision. In other words they did not adopt the symbolism attached to these raw materials.

It is also interesting to note that there were no major differences between the Maasai circumcision ceremony and that of the Agikuyu. Both ceremonies were meant to signify the transition from one stage of life to the other. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division adopted the Maasai way of initiation but followed the Gikuyu customs. The difference between the two is that the Maasai laid greater emphasis on the importance of stock products than agricultural products. This is explained by their economic system. Raw materials, (e.g., the magic

powder, ira) were not of great importance to them. Also such materials like roots of murira and kihinga (see glossary) which were used in making various ornaments, such as wristlets and anklets meant for the occasion were not necessary to the Maasai. The latter used thiriga to smear on their body and they wore many bead ornaments. For ointment, they used milk and water which were said to be symbols of purity and blessing. The milk was sprayed all over the body of the initiates before they went to meet the surgeon. This was copied by the Agikuyu but instead of milk they used beer made from the sugar cane they grew.

The Gikuyu surgeon had to wear very special garments for the ceremony. He wore a long, heavy gown made from an ox's skin. He had to adorn himself with ira and ochre and wear a long hat of fur of a wild cat, studded with long ostrich feathers and plumes. Around his legs and hands he wore wristlets and anklets with small bells. The Maasai surgeon, on the other hand, was identified by many well arranged black beaded necklaces. A headdress was put on his head with well arranged black beads. This was believed among the Maasai, just as was the case among the Agikuyu, to be a religious rite. These black beads were symbols of the sky and of God (Leakey, 1977; Routledge and Routledge, 1910). He also wore a goat skin, preferably black and white in colour.

The Gikuyu forefathers made the initiation ceremony very colourful. They not only adorned the initiates and the surgeon but also the gates of the compound where the initiation was to take place. To make the entrance, the Agikuyu used two stalks of sugar-cane, tied together with the muriira roots so as to make a single pole. Next, two holes were dug each on either side of the entrance of the homestead and in every hole was put the already mentioned magic powders. Later two muthakwa forked sticks were put into the holes as side posts of the gateway. The sugar-cane posts made earlier were hoisted up to rest on the forked sticks of muthakwa. This gate was symbolic and magical. The stalks of sugar-cane used did not only symbolize that there was a great feast (sugar-cane and sugar-cane beer were usually used when there were big ceremonies or feasts), but they also symbolized the stages of

initiation where the young were now being initiated to the stage of adults. The sugar-canes used were not the already ripe and old ones but those young stalks that had just become ripe. The muriira roots and muthakwa sticks used played the role of protection. It was believed that the muriira and muthakwa had magical protective powers and that no misfortune befell those that used them. By making the gate with these, where all concerned passed through, it was believed that the whole party inside the ceremony area was well protected from any misfortune. The gate was thus seen as a magical gate and those who passed through it automatically became insulated with protective powers within it.

4.1.1 Attire for Unmarried Boys and Girls

The young and unmarried girls wore rings on all fingers but the thumb. These were worn especially during the mixed dances for both boys and girls. Such rings were mainly for purposes of adornment. They were removed after marriage as young married women were no longer expected to catch the attention of other men.

There was also another type of ring called ngome which was made of iron or copper. It was worn by men on the third and fourth fingers of the left hand. This ring indicated wealth.

Apart from the finger rings, the young unmarried girls had other kinds of ornaments that indicated their status, such as anklets, worn on both legs and known as ndogonve. After they got married, they immediately removed these anklets to show that they had moved from one stage of life to another. Unmarried girls also wore bead bands on their forehead indicating maidenhood (Plate 1). The bead bands were made of white and blue beads. The beads were obtained through trade with the Maasai who most probably got them from external traders.

Colour symbolism among the Agikuyu was not extremely emphasized although white was a colour of purity and maidenhood. It also indicated holiness. Blue and black were seen as identical and they were mainly symbols of beauty. Along with the bead band, an engaged

girl was given as a present, a collaret, made of copper wire called muhunio. It was the first betrothal present or token corresponding to the western engagement ring. It was worn by both men and women around the neck as an adornment that indicated their betrothal statuses (Plate 2). Adding to this, an engaged girl wore a necklace made of black and white beads. The necklace was made for her by her mother-in-law (fiance's mother) and given to her as a sign of acceptance to the new family that the young girl was soon to be a member.

The ornaments a young woman wore added personality to her natural beauty (Plate 1). She wore as many necklaces as possible around her neck, ranging from those made of cowry shells (white) or beads, to those made of plant seeds and pieces of maize stalks. She also wore ear-rings in the form of pendants, rings and cylindrical beads. Her forehead was covered with pretty bands of beads, some of which were long and hung down to almost near the eyes. She also wore armlets and bracelets and also leglets (Plate 3). Her body was painted with ochre and fat and her head was partly shaven (from the front to just before the mid of the head). This style of shaving was called gitwiririri.

On the other hand, a man who wanted to marry had to have enough wealth. Wealth among the traditional Agikuyu meant herds. The more cows, goats, and sheep, one had the wealthier he was. It was this wealth that a man needed in order to pay the bride-wealth or dowry. The wealth was acquired by means of raids and inheritance. If a man was involved in a raid in which a number of cows, goats, or sheep were obtained, he was given his share after the raid. A rich man also was obliged to share some of his wealth with his sons, and the latter made sure they took care of their herds, and that the latter multiplied and were well fed. A young man became popular within his own age- group and the society at large depending on how active, hard-working, and attractive he was. His potentials were displayed during dancing time and in his involvement in mock battles.

After initiation, a man was promoted to different stages or grades. At first, he immediately became a junior warrior after initiation. This grade carried spears, shields and

swords and were called njama ya anake a mumo, the warriors who had just been circumcised. Here the young warriors were mostly involved in dances and in mock battles as they prepared themselves to join the next age group -that of senior warriors. In the latter stage the young men were involved in raiding and formed councils of war njama va ita. Success in raids was a major step toward prestige and wealth. A warrior who killed an animal (especially a dangerous animal) or killed an enemy, was practically honoured and given special symbols in the form of ornaments. He was given a specially made shield and spear, which were made for him as a token of appreciation for his good efforts. Both junior and senior warriors carried a long spear and wore black feathers on the head and also carried a long knife in a leather sheath painted bright red and situated on the side of the belt. Also at the other side of the belt was placed a club and the whole body was smeared with fat and ochre.

Their hair was long, arranged like a bundle of strings, kuogothuo, and painted with ochre and fat. This was just a way of the warriors' daily attire as they wanted to attract attention. The ears of the warriors were heavily adorned with rings fitted into the holes in the ear-lobe (Table 1). In the lobe, the ornaments called ritiena (rings with bits of chain hanging from them) were worn. In the upper ear, the young warriors also put ngichiri thangagara and ngocorai (Table 1). The last type of ear ring, ngocorai, was worn in the lower part of the ear in order to swing when the warrior danced gichuukia, a dance for warriors and initiated girls (see glossary). Around the neck was a little leather collar, which was a combination of beads of different colours, showing intersecting triangles, circles and other geometrical designed-kinyata. This was a nice piece of work, showing certain skill of stitching. Sometimes this was done by the owners of the ornaments themselves. Warriors wore leglets like njingiri (Plate 8) and ibata and also bracelets of brass wire miringa (Plate 5) which they wore around their wrists and elbows (see glossary, Plate 6). On their arms these young men wore iron and brass bracelets and ngaguana armlets of leather decorated with beads. Sometimes they wore an ornament made of ivory ngotho, if available (Leakey 1977: 415- 40).

The way of adornment portrayed the creativity, imagination and cleverness of young warriors who made some of the ornaments for their own use. It portrayed their youth and physical fitness; and all these were elements that were of great importance to the individual young man not only in view of his popularity or good name in the entire community but also in his desire to get a wife and start a family and a home. They were good and highly valued elements or characteristics which every good and self-esteeming woman looked for in a man.

4.1.2 Wedding Attire

There was no ceremony performed on the day that a girl was first taken to a man's home as wife. The first day the bride was taken to her mother-in-law's house until her own house was constructed. The first marriage ceremony was performed the day that the bride was moving from her mother-in-law's house to her own house. This ceremony called for special adornment.

According to the forefathers of the Agikuyu, the bride had to wash herself before leaving her mother-in-law's house. She also had to adorn herself with castor oil all over her body. The washing and adornment were symbolic in that they implied the end of the previous way of life, where a girl was questionable and dependent on her parents, to starting a totally new life. The latter life was characterized by responsibility.

Next to her bed in her house, were spread the intestines of a goat. The intestines were symbols of union between the ancestors and the bride. She had to trod on the intestines in order to be blessed by the ancestral spirits, hence with their favour in her new life that she was to start. On the day that followed, the bride shaved the hair of the bridegroom, and her own hair was shaved by another woman. The shaving identified the beginning of family life and end of the maidenhood and bachelor life. More castor oil was prepared and mixed with powdered ochre and the bride was again adorned. Red ochre was poured all over her body from head to feet. The newly married woman then removed the ornaments called ndogonye

and discarded the practice of being referred to as muiritu - girl. She now joined the marriage institution and her rightful status was mutumia, woman.

4.1.3 Age-groups After Marriage

The third stage of manhood was marriage, following the first and the second stages of junior and senior warriors. At marriage, the young man was expected to join the council of elders, kiama. The first grade of eldership was kiama kia matimu, which means spears and signified that the carriers of spears were warriors, who had not yet been given the staff of office, the muthegi, sacred leaves, and matathi, (Kenyatta, 1938: 107). This stage of eldership was characterized by undertaking the rituals of the kiama. The young men in this grade acted as messengers to the kiama and helped to skin animals, to light fire, bring firewood, roast meat for senior elders and carry ceremonial articles to and from the kiama assemblies. At this stage, the young elder was now expected to behave like a father, a responsible man. He was now a family man and his life's activities were centred around the family needs. He had less leisure time to think of physical appearance and attraction. His adornment, though like before, did not take most of his time. He was not very particular about his hair and in most cases he kept it short. He wore the usual armlets and leglets and also earrings.

Next was the kiama kia matathi, that is the council of peace. When a man had a son or daughter old enough to be circumcised, he qualified for the kiama kia matathi age group. He was offered the staff of office, muthegi and the sacred leaves matathi which meant that he was now a peaceful man, no longer a carrier of spears and shields, nor a pursuer of various wars. He had now attained the stage where he had to take the responsibility of carrying the symbols of peace and to assume the duty of a peace maker in the community.

Men in the foregoing group formed a council of elders where matters concerning the welfare of the entire society in general were discussed. Decisions were also made by members of the same grade. These elders wore two particular ear rings which signified their

age. These were mindu and icuhi cia matu (Fig. 2). They wore these rings in the hole made on the upper part of their ears. On their arms and legs were few armlets and leglets miringa. They also wore a ring on the last finger (small finger) to identify their status as elderly men. Around their neck was a small container like a bottle which they hang with a string, mukwa. The mukwa was made from the skin of a goat. This container was called kinya kia mbaki, and in it was the snuff that the old men used. The container was itself an ornament and also functioned as a container of snuff. It was made of good wood by a specialist or the individual himself. The snuff-box also identified men as old since no young men used snuff.

The last grade of elders was the kiama kia maturanguru - religious sacrificial council. A man joined this group when he had all his children circumcised and his wife or wives had passed the child bearing age. They adorned themselves like the preceding class of elders but they wore long cloaks made of the skin of a calf (Plate 6). This was because the calf skin is soft, tender and warm. They also carried walking sticks, mutirima, as part of their daily attire, and a third leg for support besides the maturanguru leaves which was a sign that they could now lead the sacrificial ceremony. The leaves meant that the carrier was holy and a high priest. The men also carried stools (Plate 7) which were small and light. These were part of their attire. They were well curved and meant to be used by elders only. The latter went everywhere carrying the stool since their work, besides sacrificing, was to advise the society. They sat on the stools during long hours of conversation. It must be noted that these stools were seen as part of their attire because they held their discussions in homesteads where seats were available but the old men had to walk around with their own stools as an indication of their age and responsibility as advisers, counselors and fathers of every member of the society. They could be consulted at any point, that is, anywhere and any time. An old woman wore ear-rings hanging down her ears, hang'i, and her head was clean-shaven. She also had very few other ornaments on other parts of her body. Due to her age, an old woman, a grandmother, could not afford to have many ornaments and keep them in good

condition. The shaving of the hair indicated that she was physically unable to maintain it. By maintaining is meant to keep clean and tidy.

Old age was a stage to which honour, respect and great responsibility were attached. The values were aspired by every Mugikuyu.

4.1.4 Professional Attire

There were few ornaments that were worn as indicators of an individual's professional role in the society. Blacksmiths, for example, were very special and respected people in the society. They wore a kind of ornament called muthiore around the wrist as a symbol of their class of blacksmiths. No one was supposed to quarrel or fight a blacksmith as they were believed to be special people sent by God. Their special skills were given to them by God in order to serve the entire society.

A charm made from the horn of a male Thomson's gazelle was worn around the neck by the traditional doctors. In the charm was the magic powder believed to protect the traditional doctor from all kinds of harm. A medicine man carried as part of his daily attire a diviner's gourd (Fig. 6) in which were important things that he used in the course of his duties. Among them was a candle, rumuri, which he used whenever he needed light in connection with his work. He also wore a raw hide ring on the small finger of his right hand, which symbolized his profession. In addition, he wore the ordinary attire worn by men of his age as discussed earlier.

Religious men who performed ceremonies of sacrifice had no special attire. Usually they were the old respectable men in society; they dressed as described above. Mid-wives had to be clean shaven and past child bearing age. They wore no rings, bangles or bracelets nor did they have long nails. When performing their duty they greased their hands with fresh castor oil.

Individuals of different ranks and status were not allowed to mix freely especially on

certain occasions and in certain situations. The Gikuyu society was very particular in observing the group differences, the institutions of the society in which cultural values were portrayed, protected or safeguarded. As a result of this categorization, each individual, young and old, ordinary and of higher social rank and status and male or female, knew their position and role in society. Each person was important in society in their own way, whether they were big or small. These elements facilitated stability and cohesion in the society and they were symbolized by ornaments.



Plate 1

Unmarried Gikuyu Lady

Source: Cagnolo 1933 (Front Page)



Plate 2

A gikuyu Young Man Ready for Marriage

Source: Kikuyu Stamperia Artistica

Nazionale - Italy N.D.



Plate 3

Young Gikuyu Girls
Source: Routledge and Routledge
1910:160



Plate 4

Young Gikuyu warriors
Source: Routledge and Routledge
1910:36



Plate 5: Bango

Source: Material culture collections,
National Museum Nairobi



Plate 6

Source: Routledge and Routledge
1910:32



Plate 7

Traditional Gikuyu stool
Source: Material Culture collections,
National Museum Nairobi



Plate 8

Njingiri - Traditional dancing instrument
Source: Material culture collections,
National Museum Nairobi



Plate 9

Nyori - Gikuyu Traditional ear-ring
Source: Material culture collections,
National Museum Nairobi



Plate 10

Muringa - A traditional Gikuyu leg-let
Source: Material culture collections,
National Museum Nairobi

ORNAMENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

PLACE OF DECORATION	NAME OF ORNAMENT	FUNCTIONS OF ORNAMENTS	AGE AND SEX OF WEARER	TIME/PERIOD WORN
HEAD	1. Headband	The head band was made of cowrie shells and beads of white and blue. This indicated maidenhood.	Young girls before and after initiation.	Before initiation during the preparatory ceremony of initiation. After initiation continued wearing it until she got married.
	2. 'Mukwa wa Hangi' well decorated strip made from goat skin.	This was hung on the middle by the middle of the head, across to reach the ears. It used to help in supporting the weight of the many earrings called 'Hangi' that the women wore.	Worn by married women both old and young.	The 'Hangi' were worn immediately after a woman was married until the individual was too old and unable to have them on the ears.
	3. Gituku-Hat made of feathers	It was mainly for adomment and especially during the dancing of the 'Gichukia'.	Worn by the circumcised young men who were warriors.	During the periods when these young warriors were relaxed and were not going out for battles. Started wearing the kind of ornament even before the external trade began.
NECK	1. 'Mugathi wa Njurio' Necklace	Indicated that a young girl was accepted by her boyfriend's mother.	Engaged woman.	Immediately after a girl accepted a man for marriage. This was worn until her old age.
	2. 'Muhunio' Nicklace	It was an engagement present indicating that the wearer was ready to start a home anytime.	Engaged men and women	This kind of necklace was worn by the owner from the time of engagement until old age.
	3. 'Kinya Kia Mbaki' Snuff-box	This carried the snuff which the old men used throughout the day.	Worn by both old men and women.	The snuff-box was worn by a man after joining the age group of "Kiama Kia Mhuri Igiri". They wore this until death.
	4. 'Githitu' - Charm	This was used for carrying magic powder.	Old men who were witch doctors.	From the time of initiation into this class to their dying day.

ORNAMENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

PLACE OF DECORATION	NAME OF ORNAMENT	FUNCTIONS OF ORNAMENTS	AGE AND SEX OF WEARER	TIME/PERIOD WORN
NECK	5. 'Kinyata' Type of neck ornament, made of beads of different colours.	Was used as an adornment during mixed dances.	Worn by circumcised men and women who participated in the mixed dances. Was not worn by old men and women.	Was worn only between the time one was circumcised and the time a man joined the Kiama kia Mhuri Igiri". After joining this age group, a man and his wives could not wear this kind of ornament again.
WRIST	1. 'Ngeke' - A kind of bangle.	This was worn for adornment only.	Worn by circumcised women of all ages.	It was not supposed to be removed unless one wished especially old women.
	2. 'Muthiore' - A kind of bangle.	This was a sign of the class of blacksmiths.	Worn by circumcised men.	As long as an individual was a blacksmith, he had to have the "muthiore" on his wrist.
	3. 'Icango' - A kind of bangle.	A sign of age. Was also used for adornment.	An old woman whose children were big.	Was worn by women who belong to the "Nyakinyua" group - elderly mothers.
	4. 'Gachomoya' - Wristlet	For adornment only.	Small girls (uncircumcised)	The kind of wristlet was given to small girls before initiation and for decoration only.
ARM	1. 'Ituro' - A kind of bracelet made of iron wire or copper.	For adornment. Indicated that a woman was circumcised.	Women of any age from circumcision.	Was used before and even after the external trade started.
	2. 'Rukwa' - An armlet.	Worn for adornment especially during the dancing ceremonies.	Worn by both men and women who were initiated.	During the dancing periods and by young and middle aged people.
	3. 'Ngaguana' - An armlet	These were mainly for adornment.	Worn by mature girls.	These were worn during the dancing ceremonies.

· ORNAMENTS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

PLACE OF DECORATION	NAME OF ORNAMENT	FUNCTIONS OF ORNAMENTS	AGE AND SEX OF WEARER	TIME/PERIOD WORN
WAIST	1. 'Mutotia' - belt	Ornament during the dancing ceremonies Gichukia, Kibara, Mogoiyo nguru dances.	Worn by old men.	An old man whose children had been circumcised wore this only during the dancing time. Was used before the external trade started.
	2. 'Thira' - belt	During the dancing period - the Muumburo dance.	Young boys preceding circumcision.	Worn before the boy was circumcised but after dancing the muumburo he removed it.
	3. 'Kiinii' - Waist ornament	Dancing before circumcison for a dornment and during the initiation ceremony.	Worn by girls preparing to be circumcised.	After circumcison ornament was not to be worn again.
	4. 'Munioro wa Itina' - The girdle	For adornment.	Only by women who were circumcised.	Used before the external trade started.
ANKLE	1. 'Ndaretu' - A kind of anklet.	For adornment especially during the dancing time. For attraction especially by "lady-killers" "Kiombani".	Young circumcised men.	Worn during the big dancing ceremonies only. Was used before any kind of external trade was started.
	2. 'Ndogonye' - (Worn round the ankles)	Indication of maidenhood.	Young circumcised but unmarried girl.	Before marriage uptill she got married. This ornament was removed on marriage.
	3. 'Miringa' & 'Nyarurunga' (worn below the knee)	For adornment only.	Worn by women of all ages apart from uncircumcised.	"Miringa" ornament was worn until the wearer was tired of having them on the leg - especially the old women - grandmother.
	4. "Njingiri" - worn round the ankles.	For dancing; for identification.	Young boys and middle-aged men.	Worn during dancing ceremonies as musical ornament. Worn during war time for identification. Removed after the war was over.
	5. 'Kigamba'	A musical instrument for dancing ceremonies.	Young circumcised men.	During the big dances by young warriors. Removed after the dances.

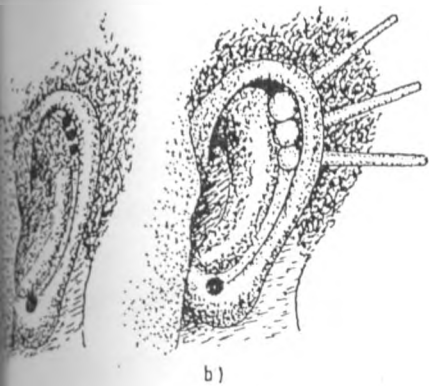


FIGURE 1
Kikuyu Boys' Ear decoration



FIGURE 2
A Kikuyu old man's ear decoration

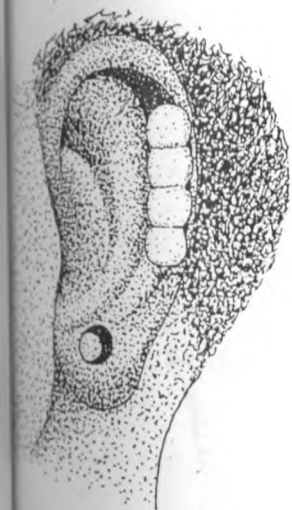


FIGURE 3
Kikuyu girls' ear decoration is the same
as a boys'

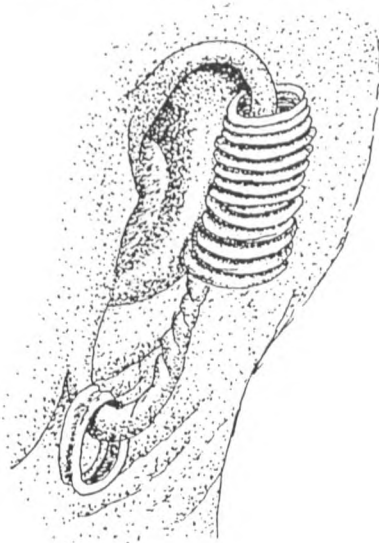


FIGURE 4
A Kikuyu old woman's ear decoration

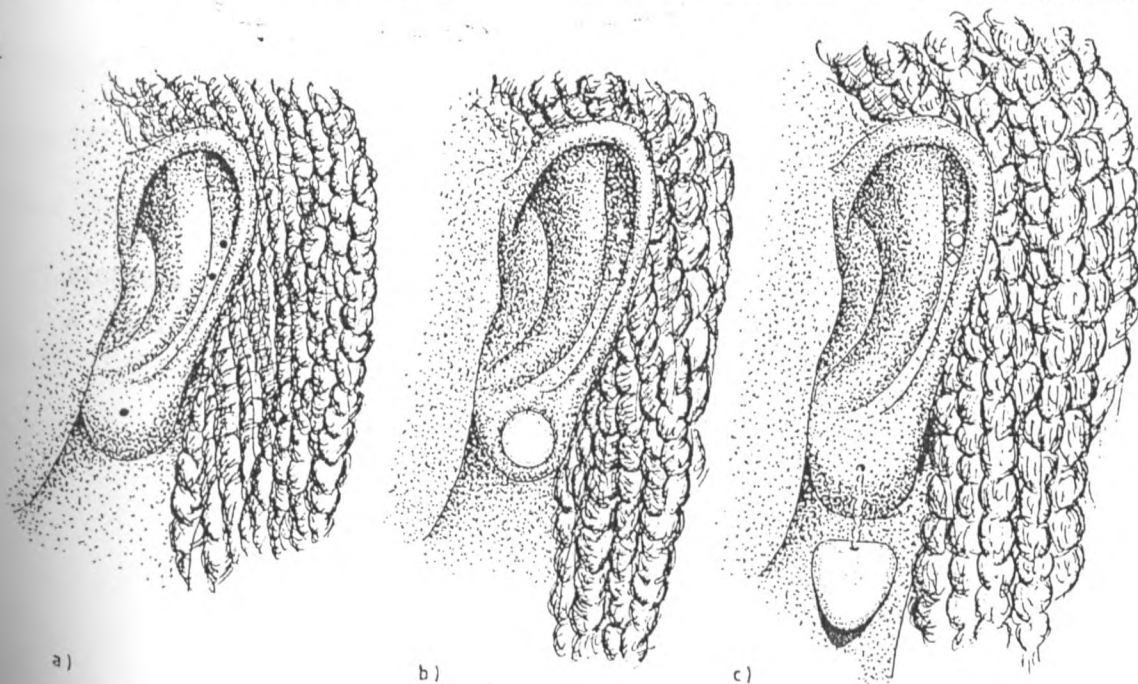


FIGURE 5
Modern Ladies' ear decoration



FIGURE 6

A traditional medicine-man

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE USE OF ORNAMENTS

In the previous chapter, the author described some selected ornaments that the traditional Agikuyu of the ancestral homeland used, and the changes that were made in the manufacture and use of such ornaments by the Agikuyu of the area of study. In this chapter, the author aims at:

1. Systematically identifying those elements of the Gikuyu traditional ornaments that have still persisted in their present corpus of ornaments.
2. Identifying the external elements or ornaments which they have adopted (i.e., the Agikuyu of Kikuyu).
3. Identifying the factors which influenced the observed persistence and change.

It is the author's view that among other factors, changes in the environment, introduction of formal education and Christianity are the main influencing factors in this process of change and continuity. It is hoped that an examination of the impact these elements have had on the Agikuyu will bring out the degree and extent of the said process of continuity and change.

For ease of references, the discussion will centre around the various types of ornaments as identified and described in chapter 4, namely, ornaments for initiation rites, youth attire, wedding ceremony attire, ornaments for post-marriage age- groups and professional attire.

5.1.0 Initiation Rites Ornaments

It has been observed in this study that the role played by initiation rites has greatly changed in current years. The major initiation rites of the past included the circumcision for boys and girls. Circumcision was seen as a sign of courage and responsibility and marked the beginning of new life of responsibility. Boys' circumcision has not been abandoned but most (if not all) Gikuyu parents of this area of study do not take their boys through the traditional procedures of

initiation; instead circumcision is carried out at hospitals. Female circumcision is today seen as ungodly and has been abandoned by most of the Agikuyu of the area of study particularly the Christians who are the majority.

These developments have rendered the need for ornaments and associated forms of dress obsolete. Traditionally, circumcised individuals wore particular ornaments, e.g., nyori, (Plate 9), kinyata, ndebe, etc. (Table 1). What one observes is that the boys of today in the Gikuyu society under discussion wear no ornaments except, perhaps occasionally, some finger rings. In other words, there is nothing to distinguish the circumcised Gikuyu boys from the uncircumcised ones by way of adornment. Similarly, it is impossible to single out the Gikuyu boys from the other Kenyan boys during the circumcision age since there are no special ornaments that are worn for identification.

On the other hand, although the girls adorned themselves with an assortment of ornaments during the traditional circumcision age, their ornaments have greatly changed. Since the majority of contemporary Agikuyu of the area do not practise circumcision for girls, the ornaments that indicated girls readiness for initiation, hang'i and nyori (Fig. 1), are not worn today. The traditional ornaments have been abandoned and new types adopted. The girls of circumcision age today wear ear rings, finger rings, bracelets and bangles, necklaces, hair attachments or treat, and dress their hair in style, but this form of adornment is more national or international rather than being localized to the Agikuyu under discussion (Fig. 5).

It must be emphasized that external influences, diffusion, particularly as a result of contact with European missionaries, Asian traders and more recently tourists, modling and fashion schools and media have played a major role in being about changes.

5.1.1 The Youth Attire

The foregoing discussion leads to the next topic that the author addressed herself to earlier, that is, the form of ornaments used by the circumcised boys and girls before they were married. It was indicated that boys became circumcised at the age of 18 years or thereabouts. Girls' circumcision took place when the initiates were between 12 and 13 years of age.

Contemporarily, these are the ages when boys would be either in higher institutions of learning, i.e., colleges or Universities. In schools, in most cases, they simply never adorn themselves with any ornaments, as this would be against the school rules and regulations. In higher institutions, the youth are free to adorn themselves with ornaments; so are the youth in day high schools during the weekends, and all others during school holidays. Few individuals will wear items of ornamentation such as chain- necklaces with or without pendants, bangles, arm chains or leather bands. Boys and men are, however, not supposed to wear many jewels according to the European culture. The American culture allows the wearing of ornaments by boys and this is being copied by the youth in the area of study.

Girls of the age mentioned above are likely to be in high schools and hence would wear ornaments during the holidays. However, weekends are good days for those girls to wear ornaments. They may wear ear- rings of different shapes and sizes, (Fig. 5) bangles of different forms, necklaces and finger- rings.

As observed in the previous chapter , the traditional society wore ornaments to indicate status and age. Some of these ornaments are worn today but sometimes they are in different forms and they are worn for different purposes, not necessarily the traditional functions. Finger-rings, for example, worn by unmarried girls on all fingers during dances and only for adornment are today worn by the youth on one or two fingers and for adornment only. They are made of copper, gold, plastic and beads. An individual chooses to wear the kind of ornament he can afford. The

traditional unmarried girls also wore ear-rings such as hang'i, a big round ear-ring worn to indicate maturity. They were worn in the holes along the cartilage (outer side of the ear). Today, round ear-rings are worn by the youth, but they are made of different materials such as copper, gold, or plastic. The size is not as big as that of the traditional hang'i, but they are round and very light. This kind of ear ring copies the western style and fashion and is worn on the cartilage as was the case with the traditional type. The modern ones are worn in small holes, pierced at the ear lobe end and sometimes hang downwards, swinging with the movements of the head (Fig. 5). This kind of earring is worn one on each ear, unlike the traditional earrings which were worn several on the same ear depending on the taste of the wearer. The most fashionable traditional youth wore as many earrings on one ear as possible.

The interaction between the western and the Gikuyu cultures in Kikuyu Division resulted in a turnover of the once important values of the Agikuyu. There occurred a clash between the traditional ideas and cultures, with European values. The missionaries in the first place did not see why the ear as an object of decoration should be as over-burdened with ornaments as to be disfigured. The Agikuyu, on the other hand, saw this as beauty and a sign of membership to a particular group of people in the society. On their part, the Europeans interpreted this as painful and over-burdening. So they persuaded the Agikuyu to abandon their way of ornaments. According to them, the Gikuyu way of adornment was cumbersome and afflicted much pain, yet there were less painful ways of enhancing one's looks according to the western style of adornment. Secondly, the Europeans did not see ear-rings, bangles and necklaces as having any other function than that of adornment. To a Mugikuyu wearing ornaments went beyond adornment. They wore certain ornaments and pierced their ears or adorned themselves in any given way not for decoration only but also as signs of transition from one stage of life to another. On their part, the Europeans saw women as the only people in the society who ought to wear

jewels. This was based on the western belief that women were supposed to be admired by men and as such should be smart and good looking. Contrary to the Gikuyu traditions, men ought not wear jewelry.

Youths in Kikuyu Division wear any kind of ornaments as long as they can afford them. These items of ornamentation are actually associated with western culture, particularly North American, which came in through tourist contacts and the media like movies and videos which are common in Nairobi and all the major Kenyan towns. It is obvious therefore that Kikuyu Division, in addition to having been influenced by contacts with foreign newcomers who settled and worked among the people, is now receiving this influence from the city of Nairobi. Two methods are paramount in the form of contact going on at the moment. One is that commuting youths see and learn things in the city and take them back to their rural homes. The second one is that through the media they get informed of what is happening in Nairobi and the rest of the world almost daily.

5.1.2 Wedding Ceremony Ornaments

The author has described in detail ornaments related to traditional wedding ceremonies and the post-marriage period. The number and complexity of one's ornaments at a wedding ceremony signifies an esteemed social status, prominence and wealth. It can be stated categorically that wedding ceremonies dresses and ornaments have changed significantly. The traditional forms have been abandoned except in a few cases where a couple may decide to add a necklace or bracelet on top of what can be a western European form of wedding dress and ornamentation. Most wedding ceremonies take place in Christian churches, some at the civil courts and still a few may take place in the traditional setting. However, often the latter case has sought to "bless" the marriage rite by doing a repeat ceremony in church or to "legalize" it

by going through the civil courts.

The typical Gikuyu wedding dress today in Kikuyu Division is white in the usual western European style often with a hat or a head cover, gloves and shoes to match. There will also be ear-rings, and a bead necklace among the essential ornaments. There may be two wedding rings usually made of gold which the couple exchange. The bride is escorted by bride's maids also meticulously dressed in line with the bride's attire.

The bridegroom is also dressed in a western style suit, shirt, tie and shoes to match and sometimes with a hat. He may or may not wear gloves. He is usually escorted by his own group of young men corresponding in number to the bride's maids. Both the groom and bride are generally managed by a best man and best woman, respectively, during the ceremony. These companions are also dressed in fashion to match the wedding couples decorum.

There is no doubt that contemporary wedding ceremonies of the Agikuyu are greatly influenced by western European aesthetics which have been indirectly inculcated through the Christian churches. One might add that probably very few young people of less than 30 years of age have seen an indigenous wedding ceremony or know that there used to be a different form of ceremony other than what they see today.

5.1.3 Ornaments of Post-Marriage Age-Groups

In chapter four, the author has indicated that after marriage during the traditional times, a young man was expected to systematically work his way through established age-groups. Marriage, of course, was considered a third stage already in this hierarchy of age groups which began with circumcision through the youthful stage of premarital status. As they worked their way to the uppermost grade, they became members of kiama kia maturanguru, a religious council charged with matters related to sacrifice and appeasement of the supernatural powers. Post

marriage male age-grouping was essentially a way of assigning political, administrative, religious and economic duties to society members. With these duties and corresponding groupings, it was important to design appropriate attire and ornaments for the groups. Warriors, elders, religious leaders, all had distinct ornaments befitting the aesthetics and symbolism of their group.

Today political, administrative and economic guidance and programmes' execution are directly under the national Government. These are no longer issues dealt with parochially at the ethnic levels. Consequently, a good deal of ethnic oriented activities tend to have lost significance. Religion is no longer that of the ancestors in Kikuyu Division where Christianity is nowadays very predominant.

Of course, political leaders have their own symbols relevant to their positions, and so have the administrators and religious leaders. But, as has been argued earlier in this chapter, these symbols, most of which pass as part of the attire rather than ornaments, cannot be considered typical of those or are not necessarily originating from the Agikuyu. The only exception one might consider is the flywhisk which seems to have been popularized by the first President, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. He used to carry a walking stick that was usually elaborately curved and decorated. These two items, whose origin may not necessarily be attributed to the Agikuyu, have been, to some extent, adopted by Gikuyu politicians as well as others of non-Gikuyu origin. It may be plausible to suggest, therefore, that they are symbols of political elderhood at both local and national levels.

Administration among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, like anywhere else in the Republic, is represented by the District Officer, Chief, assistant chief and members of the police. These do not constitute an age-group as was the case in the past. They do, however, have some distinct uniform relative to their positions which, in a way, have replaced the ornaments of their traditional counterparts.

Ornamentation associated with religious age- groups or leadership positions of the past has no room in the Christian Gikuyu society. Consequently Christian leaders can be identified by new forms of dress particularly during occasions they are called for duty. Again the new dress cannot strictly be considered in terms of ornaments although such items as crucifixes, the neck bonds or necklaces and the rosary are symbols.

5.1.4 Professional Attire

Among the professionals whose attire consisted of items which can be rightly categorized as ornaments were blacksmiths, midwives, and traditional medicine practitioners (Fig. 6). Although these professionals can still be seen in some villages of the area, their attire and items of ornamentation, their numbers and significance seem to be greatly on the decline.

5.1.5.0 Influence of Western Culture on Traditional Ornaments and Contemporary Status of Ornaments' Utility

This study has observed that ornaments reflected the Gikuyu values which determined the social and economic structures as well as the stability of the society. Chapter 4 of this study discussed the environmental forces that caused changes in the forms of ornaments. This part of the study aims at discussing the contribution that the outside world has, that is, the Europeans and Asians, made on the ornamentation in Kikuyu Division. The influence of such factors as formal education, Christianity, economics (e.g., trade links with the outside world), new methods of agriculture and improved means of transportation are discussed here. The author has shown the impact of all these outside factors on values, norms and aesthetics of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu with reference to ornamentation. This will be discussed under two headings:- social and economic aspects of change.

5.1.5.1 Marriage and Adornment

An example of a social institution that has been subjected to change as a result of these influences is marriage. Marriage was an important institution which carried such values as cohesion and morality. By two families becoming kinsmen through marriage, cohesion was assured. The traditional Gikuyu society encouraged polygyny as this gave way to a man having many children, a sign of wealth. Polygyny was also an important agent of cohesiveness. A man was supposed to ensure that he was able to adorn his wives and daughters properly and in the expected standards. As such he, head of the family, had to have enough property in the form of cattle in order to buy the required raw materials for making ornaments.

As observed earlier (Table 1), women and girls had many different ornaments that were worn at different stages of their lives. A father ensured that his wives and daughters were well adorned as this contributed much to his reputation. Some of the ornaments that women and young unmarried girls required like headbands, mukuwa wa hang'i, mugathi wa niurio, muhinio, muringa, nyori and ndebe, among others, listed in Table 1, and their functions outlined. A person adorning himself with complicated and expensive ornaments was seen as belonging to a wealthy family. Rich men and women also wore kinds of ornaments that the poor could not afford. A ngome finger ring worn by rich men is an example of ornaments symbolizing wealth.

A polygamist who was able to adorn his family in an outstanding manner was respected and very popular. Today, a man who marries many wives is seen as an uneducated person, mucenji. Talking to an old woman of Kabete Sub-location, I observed that monogamy has always been associated with western values. It is considered synonymous with education. A man with one wife is referred to as muthomi, an educated and enlightened person.

A married woman had a particular way of adornment which indicated that she was no longer a maiden. A maiden, on the other hand, had her own way of adornment. All the different kinds

of ornaments worn by both the unmarried and married women are presented in Table 1. According to the traditional Gikuyu society, newly married women and elderly women were not supposed to interact. The mark distinguishing one from the other was the type of ornaments worn. Thus, icuhi cia matu was an ear ornament worn by men and women (Fig 2) whose children had all been circumcised; and icango was a kind of bangle worn by elderly women whose children were mature and married. A kinyata was worn by young women during mixed dances. Women whose husbands belonged to the kiama kia mburi igiri also wore this ornament. Finally, the kinya kia mbaki was worn by elderly women who had joined kiama kia mburi igiri.

The two groups of women, kang'ei and nyakinyua (see glossary), had different experiences and attitudes to life. For that reason they were not allowed to socialize as they had nothing in common.

In a Christian monogamous marriage both a woman and a man could choose to wear a finger ring as a symbol of marriage, or to do without. The western idea of marriage emphasized mutual trust, faith and confidence of couples. To the latter an outward sign of marriage in form of an ornament is not essential. An individual woman is free to interact with a married woman of any age or an unmarried woman so long as they have things in common.

In Kikuyu Division, therefore, the value of ornaments changed with the spread of Christianity and Western education. Ornaments are mainly seen as objects that enhance beauty but their functions do not extend to checking morality. Unlike in the traditional society, the marriage institution is not seen as facilitating the important values of cohesion and peace. It is no longer in the interest of the society that an individual gets married or marries. The marriage institution is important today only to those parties involved. Cohesion, peace and morality are not determined by marriage. The ornaments which were related to marriage are today not important and personal conscience and commitment replaced all these ornaments which used to symbolize

marital status.

5.1.5.2 Economic Significance of Adornment

In the past, it was a man's responsibility to adorn his wives and daughters. His wealth determined the kind of ornament that he was to buy for his family. The differences in the values attached to wealth between the traditional and modern societies can be explained by the changed ideas of marriage education, religion and direct interaction by way of trade and settlement with foreigners. In the modern society, wealth is accumulated in the form of capital, and people adorn themselves with ornaments made of expensive materials like diamonds, copper and gold just as in the traditional times. Though this is a good sign of wealth, the fact that people receive ornaments made of these expensive materials as presents or gifts, cannot be ruled out. Therefore not every individual who wears a golden ring or necklace can be classified as belonging to the class of the rich but it is a fact that wealthy people adorn themselves with expensive ornaments.

The present society, which is monogamous, does not give a man the responsibility of adorning his wife and daughters. Individualism, one of the characteristics of the modern society, leaves an individual free to adorn himself if he feels it worth the effort. Female children are adorned by their mothers who do not see ornaments as important for children. They have to wait until they are mature enough to decide for themselves what ornaments to wear. Monogamy therefore releases the man from the traditional duty of adorning his family.

In the traditional society, a man accumulated wealth in order to marry more wives and adorn them well. In the modern society, on the other hand, a man accumulates wealth in order to feed, clothe and educate his family in the western style and to raise the standard of life of his family above the ordinary man's standards of living. The present day society is a competitive one. Everyone wants to be the richest and attain the highest standard of living. The western style of

life has been copied by the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, and the more conversant with the latter style, the more alienated one becomes. Adornment is not a priority as it used to be although, just like the traditional society, the present society has a way of adornment which reflects wealth.

The construction of the railway line and improvement of roads influenced the ways and means of adornment among the Agikuyu as these facilitated trade in a variety of objects, some of which had ornamental implications. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, particularly those who lived near to the trading centres, were easily convinced that western objects of adornment obtained through trade were better than the traditional ornaments. Other Agikuyu farther away from the shopping centres, especially those educated in the Western and Christian ways, were also ready customers for these foreign ornaments portraying foreign values.

In this chapter, it has been observed and concluded that cultural values were significant in determining the kind of social, political and economic organization of any given society. The chapter also highlighted some of the Gikuyu values and noted that such traditional values like solidarity and respect, among others, were maintained by the social institutions of the society. Changes of attitudes towards ways of life of a society (that is, values and goals) implies changes in the socio-cultural structure and organization.

The concept of individualism, freedom of speech, expression and choice, Western education and religion, all these affected the entire Gikuyu socio-economic, cultural, political and religious arrangements as well as the values inherent in these institutions. Some of the traditional Gikuyu values are still found in the modern society of Kikuyu Division, but they are modified just to fit in the contemporary social structure. It is therefore incorrect to say that ornaments have disappeared with the social values that they represented. Instead, we can note here that the social values have changed just like the use and significance of ornaments. Changes have also occurred in the symbolism attached to any given ornament worn and in the materials and size of these

ornaments.

The Agikuyu of this area adopted western values and western styles of life, including ornamentation, much more easily than any other section of the Agikuyu. This was due to historical circumstances which created the necessity for easy and quick association with foreigners. Proximity to Nairobi also played a role in this direction. Consequently, people of Kikuyu Division became alienated from their traditional culture. The majority lived in towns or were employed in the business centres by the Europeans, or they worked on the European farms in the latter of which they worked as cooks, shamba boys or gardeners, etc.

The interaction between the Agikuyu and the Europeans, the construction of the railway line across the present Kikuyu Division, and the coming and settling of Indian labourers and later the Dukawalas who started small businesses here, contributed a great deal to the loss of traditional values of the Agikuyu of this area of study. The Indian Dukawalas set up small shops, dukas, along the railway line where they sold sugar, clothes, rings, ear-ornaments, etc. The Agikuyu who worked in European homes copied not only the wearing of the ornaments but also the values that they represented.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Data Analysis

The main objective of this chapter is to review the material presented in previous chapters against the hypotheses set out at the beginning of the study and present the findings in the form of conclusion. Three hypotheses were presented, the first of which was that changes in the Gikuyu ornaments in Kikuyu Division today have been partly influenced by the change in raw materials used in making them as a result of migration from their ancestral Mt. Kenya settlement. In other words, the kind of raw materials found in the new environment contributed to the changes in form of ornaments and their use and the meaning attached to them.

This hypothesis has been supported by the findings of this study. The explanation given for the differences in the forms of ornaments used in the two areas is based on the variety of raw materials available. Given that the physical setting and environment of the ancestral homeland and that of Kikuyu Division are different, the raw materials available for making the ornaments in the two areas are bound to be different. This is discussed in considerable detail in the foregoing sections to provide a picture of how the availability of certain kinds of materials or the lack of them in some areas contributes to the kind of ornaments made and used. For a systematic analysis, this part of the study will be divided into sections in which raw materials will be analysed.

6.1.1 Iron and Murram

In the ancestral area were very many rocks which were broken down by water to yield the iron bearing sand. This sand consists of much decomposed granite from which a good deal of micaceous clay matter strongly stained with iron oxide is obtained (Routledge and Routledge 1910). When this sand is properly washed with water, the Agikuyu of the ancestral area got

magnetite ore which consists of granite quartz grains and magnetite. With this, the blacksmiths were able to produce heavy and durable ornaments like gituro, mukanga and ndanga (see glossary).

The Kikuyu Division area did not have the same kind of raw materials. After heating the sand available in Kikuyu Division, the product was a kind of pig-iron, but often the iron produced was a lump of fused iron and stone filled with air bubbles. This product or kind of iron contained ilmenite, a kind of black mineral which is composed of iron titanium and oxygen. This product was the material for some metal ornaments which were strong yet light. In contrast with the ornaments made in the ancestral homeland of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu, the ornaments made in Kikuyu Division were less shiny, less strong and slightly lighter.

6.1.2 Copper, Brass and Iron-wire

Wire was drawn from pure iron and was used to make the necklaces and ear-rings (Table 1) worn by elders. Since the kind of iron obtained in Kikuyu Division was not the type that made wire, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu did not have wire for making their ornaments. They imported the wire-made ornaments from their ancestral homeland. The wire-workers at the ancestral homeland of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu made beautiful ornaments out of copper and brass that were available at the slopes of Mt. Kenya. Ornaments like muringa (Table 1) were decorated with copper and iron wires all round. This way of decorating ornaments was called kuhunya. Such decorated ornaments were very hard to get since decoration was a time-consuming exercise. Accordingly, most wire workers avoided it. When made, however, such decorated ornaments were very expensive and only wealthy people could afford them, and as such, they were even more expensive for the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division.

In the course of the fieldwork it was observed that the Agikuyu of the area of study wore

ornaments made of copper and brass wire. Although copper and brass were not locally available, the Agikuyu here got ornaments made of these materials through the Maasai and Akamba who had received them from the coastal traders. Though these ornaments (that is, bangles, bracelets, and leglets) from the coast were made of brass and copper, like those made in the ancestral homeland, the skill and finishing were different. Ornaments originating from the coast were smoother, shiny and lighter than those made by the Agikuyu of Mt. Kenya area.

The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division adopted the copper and brass made foreign ornaments from the coast and forgot about the ornaments they had been receiving from their traditional motherland. Ornaments like gituro and ndanga made of iron and used by the Agikuyu of the slopes of Mt. Kenya region differed from those known by the same names and used in Kikuyu Division. These ornaments did not differ in shape but in form. Nevertheless, the ornaments retained their symbolism and entire significance.

6.1.3 Iron and Diatomite

The above mentioned ointments were used during the great occasions like circumcision and purification rites. However, ira was only available around the slopes of Mt. Kenya (Kirinyaga), and it was not easy for the Agikuyu of our area of study to obtain it. They (Agikuyu) sometimes obtained ira by trade, although generally they never got enough to cater for the entire ritual ceremony. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division therefore substituted ira for diatomite which was available in Kikuyu Division.

6.1.4 Red Ochre and Saline Earth

The above two were important ointments and were commonly used by the Agikuyu. The latter smeared ochre and saline earth on their bodies and garments especially during special occasions like dances. Good quality ochre, thiriga, was only found in the northern part of

Gikuyuland, that is, the ancestral homeland (Leakey 1977). In the southern part of Gikuyuland, and Kikuyu Division in this case, the poor quality ochre called muunyu was available and could be used in place of thiriga. The former ochre (muunyu) was not considered suitable for anointing the body, and the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, having no good substitute, ignored the importance of ochre altogether.

From the foregoing, the author observed that the first hypothesis of this study was confirmed. The kind of material culture a people have is determined first and foremost by the availability of raw materials of a particular natural environment. For a society of non-industrial technology to produce certain types of ornaments, the raw materials used must be readily available within their immediate environment. Given that the Agikuyu of the area of study had moved from Mount Kenya slopes to Kikuyu Division which involved settling in a new environment, drastic changes must have occurred in their form and variety of ornaments. Therefore, the changes in Gikuyu forms of ornaments prevalent in Kikuyu Division today have been partly influenced by the changes in the raw materials used.

The second hypothesis was that historical contacts with peoples who are culturally different affect the material culture of a given people. This hypothesis was confirmed on the basis of discussions and interviews with the people of Kikuyu Division. Analysis of data based on such discussions and interviews confirmed that cultural adaptation constitutes a process of integration involving acceptance of some form of subordination. In this case, cultural items (ornaments for this case) or styles of manufacturing them, can only be adopted by another people if these styles (of what is being adopted) were perceived to be superior to those possessed by the adopters. The relevance of the hypothesis is seen in the relationship between the Agikuyu of our area of study and the foreigners who settled among them. Thus, due to lack of necessary raw materials for making ornaments, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu were compelled to acquire their ornaments through

trade. This trade was with the Gikuyu kinsmen back in the ancestral homeland or with the local traders and neighbours who obtained their products from the coastal traders. Later, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu started trading directly with the foreign traders, the Arabs, Indians, the Waswahili and Europeans who finally settled in Kikuyu Division.

As Cohen (1974:94) states ..." an ethnic group adjusts to the new social realities by adopting customs from other groups, or by developing new customs which they shared with other groups". The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division adjusted to the new environment, borrowed and used the foreign ornaments, but maintained the traditional symbolism attached to them. Key informants from Gitaru location observed that the ornaments the Agikuyu of our area of study obtained from the external traders were only used as the last resort. Lack of the necessary ornaments and ornaments pushed them to borrowing foreign kinds of ornaments. The informants narrated how barter trade with their kinsmen at the ancestral homeland was tiresome and demanding as the distance was long while the items (ornaments) of trade were heavy. As a result, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu opted for trade with their immediate neighbours.

An informant, Mr. Njenga Kamau (65 years), from Kabete Sub-location, narrated how the Agikuyu obtained snuff-boxes and neck chains from the Akamba: "Ikamba ni riokaga guku rikuite tunya twa mbaki, migathi ya njurio, matimu, na indo ingi. Manengera Agikuyu indo icio, nao Agikuyu makamanengera irio ta mbembe, mboco, na ngwaci". (The Akamba came to the Gikuyu area carrying the items they made like snuff-boxes, neck chains, spears and arrows and other items. In exchange for these items, the Agikuyu gave the Akamba foodstuffs like maize, beans and sweet potatoes).

An elderly woman, Mrs. Wambui Muthungu, compared and contrasted the bangles and bracelets that the traditional Agikuyu made and those that they obtained from foreign traders. She noted that those ornaments made by the Agikuyu of the ancestral homeland were heavy,

cumbersome and not as beautiful, shiny as those obtained from the coastal traders. According to her, the latter were more beautiful, attractive, and less cumbersome. "Mathaga maria mathondekagiruo Kirinyaga mari ma waya nyumu na nditu, na waya icio tiiria ikengaga. No mathaga maria marehaguo ni Arabu mathondekaguo na cuma huthu na itari nyumu muno ona niciakengaga muno". (Those ornaments we got from our ancestral homeland were made of hard and heavy iron which was not shiny, but those ornaments that were brought by the Arabs were made of light and soft material, and they were beautiful, shiny and attractive).

Wambui further remarked that they nicknamed the bracelets and bangles from the coastal traders mweru (see glossary) and munyaka (see glossary). Her views were shared by other informants.

Njenga's and Wambui's remarks closely support Cohen's (1974) theory of cultural integration. Njenga maintained that though they used the Kamba designed snuff-boxes, they continued to stick to the Gikuyu function and symbolism of the kinya kia mbaki (snuff- box). Cohen's (ibid) idea of integration holds that "an ethnic group adjusts to the new realities by reorganizing its own traditional customs or developing new customs under traditional symbols often using traditional norms and ideologies ...(p. 7)". Wambui's view of the traditional ornaments vis-a-vis the ornaments they received from the coastal traders supports Cohen's argument that where two parties have to interact, one of them must accept a subordinate position while the other assumes a superior one.

The author's argument is that the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, faced with a new environment and disadvantaged in that they did not have an appropriate technology, were forced to adopt some of the material culture items from the societies they interacted with. The coming and settlement of the Europeans among the Agikuyu of Kikuyu meant much to the latter's socio-cultural and economic life. As Muriuki (1974: 93) states"the Gikuyu of southern Kikuyuland

were undergoing rapid change not only because of the trade contacts with the coastal traders but also because of the establishment of the British Company Posts at Dagoretti and Fortsmith". This saw the beginning of the end of the traditional attachment with the Agikuyu of the ancestral homeland.

In a different part of Kikuyu Division, the author discussed with another group of people about the initiation ceremony. The purpose of this discussion was to find out whether the adoption of foreign ornaments went hand in hand with the adoption of foreign values. In this discussion, the group of key informants observed that traditional circumcision rites were time consuming and hectic. The initiates had to acquire so many different ornaments which were required during and after the circumcision ceremony. It was concluded that the practice of circumcision as carried out by Europeans was less painful and not hectic. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu preferred the latter's attitude to circumcision because it was less demanding. The fact that the Agikuyu of Kikuyu ignored the traditional rite of circumcision also meant that the traditional ornaments were also ignored and hence their value lost. According to my informants, the western education and religion were the main forces that facilitated the change of the Agikuyu's attitude towards their traditional rites.

Wangari Muchai (69 years) of Kanyariri Sub- location emphasized that traditional ornaments were important in that they reflected much about an individual's age, rank, and responsibility, among others. Distinguishing between the western way of adornment and the traditional way of adornment, Wangari Muchai noted that traditional ear ornamentation was achieved through a painful process. She complained about the pain that children of 8-10 years went through as they had their ears pierced in order to prepare for the wearing of all kinds of ear ornaments. Wangari commented that the Agikuyu of Kikuyu dropped their traditional method of ear ornamentation on seeing a better method which was less painful. Asked whether piercing of the ear had any

other function apart from adornment, Wambui responded that it was a sign of courage and maturity. She noted that today's style of piercing the ear was admirable. "It is less painful and a willing courageous girl goes through it quickly and less painfully, yet, piercing of the ear the western style plays the same role of adornment as did the traditional ear-piercing". As for pain and courage she said, no coward would today agree to be pierced, and so the fact that a girl has been pierced on the ear today shows that she is courageous "though there are lots of other ways today that reflect courage". Wangari further observed that the value of maturity and courage were today not measured by piercing the ear. To her western education had brought with it new ways of judging maturity while courage was measured by way of an individual's behaviour when faced with a difficult challenge. On the wearing of leg and hand ornaments, Wangari admired the foreign hand and leg ornaments obtained by the Agikuyu through trade. She held the view that the bangles, muringa (Plate 10, see glossary) and rings bought from traders, or obtained as gifts from the European settlers were very beautiful and light. They obtained them easily and that is one reason why they preferred using the European other than traditional ornaments.

All the informants seemed to agree with Wangari that those people who adorn themselves traditionally in Kikuyu Division today (if any) are the uneducated (acenji) while the majority of people in Kikuyu have adopted the European style of adornment and are educated to a certain extent (athomi). The people of Kikuyu saw the European items of adornment as superior and always looked down upon people who did not adopt the western style by calling them the stupid or uneducated (acenji).

The foregoing information reviews the issue of social structure. The fact that there were now two groups of people within the Agikuyu of Kikuyu the athomi and the acenji, proves that the interaction between the Agikuyu of this study area and foreign societies (Asians and Europeans) contributed to changes in the social structure which, invariably, implies the existence of change

in the traditional values. The division of labour and the definition of wealth changed. The fact that the ornaments used were obtained through foreign trade meant that:-

- (i) No more time was used in looking for raw materials needed for making ornaments. This meant that the raw materials that made the ornaments were also foreign.
- (ii) The young boys whose main activity was to make ornaments for themselves did not have to do this any more.
- (iii) With the direct interaction between foreign traders and the Agikuyu, barter trade was no more and a new currency that measured wealth or value was introduced.
- (iv) The class of blacksmiths and artisans was no more.
- (v) All the ornaments made and worn during different Gikuyu traditional rites were no longer needed as the rites were no longer important.

The traditional social structure completely changed, as is shown by the division of labour which in turn is determined by the level of technology. There is a relationship between technology and the social structure and the data collected confirm this point.

White (1988) defines technology as the act of harnessing energy which frees human beings from being the source of energy themselves. Raw materials are the first determinants of the level of technology, followed by innovation and creativity. The technology which also involves division of labour to a large extent determines the social structure of the society. Since the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division lacked the necessary raw materials needed to maintain the traditional ornaments, they opted for interaction with foreign societies in order to get the ornaments needed. This contributed much to the change of the social structure of the Agikuyu, on the one hand, and their ideology and values, on the other. The traditional ancestral rites were done away with and the Agikuyu of our area of study turned their attention to western education

and Christianity which brought with it new economic activities like wage labour, zero grazing and intensive farming. The socio-cultural set-up of the Agikuyu also changed with the introduction of formal education, monogamy and Christian beliefs which in turn affected the values of the traditional Agikuyu. Yet, the ornaments were still an important element in the society.

The Agikuyu of Kikuyu adopted and integrated into their material culture and socio-cultural life in general, the European styles of adornment. There was also the integration of some western values symbolized by the western ornaments worn. The author noted that although the Agikuyu of Kikuyu borrowed and copied the western ornaments and values, most of the Gikuyu values still remained. Such traditional values like bravery, maturity and solidarity were maintained by the Agikuyu of the study area. The rites of passage, like circumcision and marriage, and the values they stood for were maintained although the kind of adornment that went with these rites were ignored. New styles of adornment were copied from the Europeans to represent the Gikuyu values. For example, circumcision, age-group and marriage were three institutions that represented certain values. These values were portrayed by certain ornaments. With the western education and religion, important traditional practices like wearing hang'i, an ornament for a mature girl, or calling a witch-doctor mundu mugo on certain occasions like circumcision or marriage, singing and dancing traditional ritual songs where dancers had to adorn themselves using ochre, njingiri, and feathers were considered non-Christian and a sign of being uneducated. However, new ornaments for a married woman were introduced. The ring, on the second finger of the left hand side indicated marriage. There were no special ornaments for already circumcised boys and and circumcision for girls was not permitted by the western standards which the Agikuyu copied.

The author observed that in Kikuyu Division, the society was divided into three groups as

far as their views regarding Gikuyu tradition were concerned. There was the older generation group of 75 years upwards, the group of below that age upto 55 years and from 55 years to the teen age group. According to my findings, the oldest age still honoured the traditional life-style, and although some of them were converted to Christianity, there was a limit to which they could go. This group observed the traditional values and refused to sacrifice them in the name of western education and Christianity.

Kinuthia, 77 years old and a retired teacher, noted that it was not the intention of the Agikuyu to discard the traditional values. According to him, interaction and trade with the Europeans could not be avoided since these have contributed much to the welfare of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. Wearing foreign ornaments and adopting western styles of adornment was a sign of development and flexibility, as far as the Gikuyu society is concerned. However, doing away with the traditional values meant losing identity, leading to lack of honour and respect to the Gikuyu God and ancestors. Kinuthia further mentioned that wearing western ornaments to represent Gikuyu values was acceptable but copying the western and discarding the traditional values was not tolerable. He stated that the Karing'a independent church was founded with the aim of preserving the Gikuyu values.

The second group of the Agikuyu of our study ranges between 75-55 years. They had undergone more intensive Western education but were well aware of their traditions besides having at one time been active in the traditional rites, and making, wearing, or using the traditional ornaments and ointments. However, they now see the western style of adornment as a sign of 'civilization', and anything to do with tradition as a sign of 'backwardness'. They understand and admire the western values and though they identify themselves with the traditional lifestyle, consider it uncivilized. This accords with Cohen's (1974) theory that culture as a process of integration involves an acceptance of some form of subordination.

The last group that is of interest to know is the group of the ages from 54 to the teen-age group. This age group is not conversant with the tradition, although they learn from the written literature and at times are told by the older generation about the tradition of their fathers. This group cannot identify with the traditional culture because they do not know it. They were brought up in the western style and so identify themselves with the western values. To them the traditional Gikuyu ornaments are foreign and meaningless.

From the information gathered, it is evident that the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division went through a process of integration through which they lost most of their traditional forms of adornment and social values. The teen-age and youth are ignorant of the traditional modes of life and they comfortably identify themselves with the western culture. To them anything that is traditional is backwardness and uncivilized. This shows how much alienated the group of Agikuyu of this study became after migrating from their traditional homeland.

6.2 Conclusion

The task of this paper was to reflect the importance of material culture (in this case ornaments), the factors that dictate the type of material culture that a society adopts, together with factors that influence changes that occur within a given material culture. The main problem of the study is that the Agikuyu who had the same origin are today living in different ecological zones. The author's main objective was to survey the material culture of the different sections of Agikuyu and trace the factors that determined their kind of material culture. In chapter one, ornaments have been defined as items of material culture used by individuals to enhance beauty, and functioning as symbols of certain cultural values of a society.

The literature review on ornaments has been done in chapter two. The author's observation is that much has been written about ornaments and their functions. However, the author feels that much of the literature, especially on the African adornment, has not satisfactorily analysed the

functions of items of adornment, that is, ornaments; rather the available literature (e.g., Cagnolo 1933; Kenyatta 1944; Leakey 1977) is more descriptive than analytic. The review of literature led to a new line of approach in the understanding of the use of ornaments among the Agikuyu, not only of Kikuyu but the entire Agikuyu group, and all African societies. It is the author's view that culture (in this case material culture) can be understood mainly by looking at it in historical perspective. It is with this view that the hypotheses and theories used here were formulated.

This study has used three theories in order to analyse the factors determining a given type of material culture and change. Steward's (cf. Hatch, 1973: 114-128) theory of cultural ecology is essential in understanding the role environment plays in the social structure and material culture of a people. Using this theory, the author tries to show how the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division adapted to the environment around them to form the kind of material culture that was suitable to the society. It is evident from this that different environments produce different cultures.

The diffusion theory as developed by Smith (1933) and Schmidt (1939) holds that culture is spread through diffusion from one society to another. Cultural ideas and innovations are transferred and accepted from one culture to another. This was interpreted and used in this study to show how contact, direct or indirect, between different cultural groups lead to borrowing. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu had contact and communication with other societies and through this contact, their material culture changed.

The third theory used in this study is Cohen's (1974) theory of integration. This theory shows how changes in the environment forced the Agikuyu to give up their traditional ornaments and adopt those used by their immediate neighbours.

All these theories help to explain why culture is not static. They seek to explain why

societies with a unified culture have changed into societies exhibiting some form of cultural pluralism. To explain a given society's material culture, it is important to study each individual group using the historical approach. It is crucial to understand the personality of an individual group of a society and to know as much as possible about the past experience, even those for which no conscious memory is retrievable. The more one knows about significant past events in a particular society, the better one comprehends certain peculiarities of the present observable social phenomena.

With the foregoing understanding, the author reserved chapter three for a historical background of the area of study. The study is a comparative one where two regions of the Agikuyu are analysed concurrently. The reason for this is to create a good scene on which to interpret changes of the material culture of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division as compared to the Agikuyu of the ancestral homeland. The geographical set-up of the land of the two groups of the Agikuyu mentioned above, and their socio-cultural set-ups are analysed in this chapter.

The major objectives of the study are brought out in chapters four and five. Chapter four identifies some of the ornaments used by the Agikuyu and analyses the latter's functions. A general view of how ornaments were obtained and who wore what, is made here. Ornaments are seen as symbols that mark different statuses and ranks to which an individual belongs at different times in the course of his life. They are also seen as objects of enhancing beauty. The functions of ornaments are here explained in two phases. First, the importance of ornaments to individuals (self), that is ornaments worn purely to serve the interests of an individual. For example, a young girls wore the best ornaments she could afford in order to enhance her beauty and catch the attention of men; likewise young men wore the kind of ornaments that would make them look attractive, beautiful and popular. The second phase is the importance of ornaments to the entire society. For example, as an identification of marriage, a married woman removed the ring of

ornament called ndogonye (see glossary) which signified maidenhood. This was a good gesture which promoted morality, fidelity and respect for partners. In this case every member of the society is aware of who is who in the society and is able to identify with those of the same age and status.

This analysis paints a picture of the social structure, kind of interaction, values and norms of the Agikuyu society. By emphasizing the ornaments worn by the Agikuyu of the ancestral homeland and those worn by the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division, the author portrays a kind of continuity of the use and significance of ornaments among different sections of the Agikuyu. Despite the adoption of new traits which are caused by a new social and natural environment, the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division still maintain their identity to a certain extent.

The other major objective of this study was to trace the causes of changes in the use and significance of ornaments and to trace the extent to which these changes have taken place. This was done in chapter five where the outside factors, like foreign trade, western education and religion, are all seen as factors that facilitated changes in the values of the Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division. The effects of the construction of the railway line is discussed in chapter three while chapter five is the data presentation which explains why the Agikuyu of this area of study preferred the foreign ornaments to their traditional ornaments. A highlight of the values now attached to the ornaments used today in Kikuyu Division is given. The spread of Christianity in Kikuyu Division together with formal education meant the end of not only the traditional social structure of the Agikuyu but also their traditional social values. The theory of Cohen (1974) of adoption and integration is supported by the data provided in this chapter.

It is hoped that the historical approach and comparative analysis have succeeded in meeting the objectives of the study. This study is a good source of information to the present generation who have not witnessed the Gikuyu traditional life style and who have been much influenced by

the western culture. The great desire of going back to the roots of our African societies and to find cultural identity, calls for an understanding of the traditions of our forefathers. Such an understanding is necessary as it helps the present generation to understand their present life style, know their origin and have a sense of identify. It is important that this kind of literature or information regarding every ethnic group in our country is available as it contributes to the understanding of each other and leads to mutual tolerance in favour of peace within a nation.

Further, the expression of the desire for the post-independent African States to go back to their roots in their efforts to create a national charter (OAU Charter, 1961) can only be met after a proper understanding of our African traditions. This concern is a healthy measure but lacks the acclaimed base of going back to the roots. All policy makers in Africa should understand their traditions and also try to understand what they see as non-African elements in the socio-cultural structures of their societies. This would help them to formulate policies which are accommodative and thereby create a Kenyan nation whose peoples are proud of their traditions and identity.

This study has contributed in providing the information that is relevant for understanding the Gikuyu ornaments (or at least a section of them) which can be considered while formulating some policies concerning national culture (e.g., formulating curricula for schools). The second contribution of the study has to do with the general understanding that needs to prevail among the non-Gikuyu members of Kenya nation, in order to create a society with a cultural tolerance and appreciation.

At another level, Gikuyu ornaments or material culture documented and analysed in this manner can act as a source of information to creative artists and fashion designers. Having our own African art and fashion would uplift our dignity and pride.

From the economic point of view, it is ironical that Africans have not been using their own

items of material culture (ornaments in this case), but have been importing such items at higher prices, while their own items are exported at lower prices. Africans have been taught (since colonialism) to see their items of material culture as belonging to the remote past or being primitive; hence they turn to the foreign market for the items they need. This has facilitated an 'unequal trade' between the Africans and the foreign market where Africans have always gained little or nothing. This is a good sign of underdevelopment where a society drops its own material culture and culture in general, to adopt a foreign one. Whereas there is nothing wrong in producing items for foreign markets it is the ideology that goes with that kind of process which is disturbing. Anthropologists should write more about African material culture in order to throw light on the importance of their own material culture. While still maintaining their culture, the African societies must learn to assimilate foreign traits and so develop their country greater heights. This capability portrays independence of mind, creativity, confidence and development, a great source of pride.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

1. Anake: Young, unmarried, initiated youth.
2. Ciuma-cia-itina: This was a girl's bead belt made of four or six strings of blue and white beads. The beads were not sewn onto leather but kept in correct position as a belt by their division into sections by strips of hard leather made from buffalo hides.
3. Ciuma- cia- mutue: A girl's (uninitiated) head ornament made of about ten rows of beads, each bead string being fixed at each end to a leather string (see Plate 1).
4. Gichango: Ornament made of brass wire, worn on the lower arm of married women. The Agikuyu of Kikuyu Division used brass gichango, but those of ancestral home used iron made gichango.
5. Gichukia: A dance for warriors and initiated girls. They danced at night by moonlight and never by fireside. During dance men wore iron and/or brass bracelets and ngaguana (armlets of leather decorated with beads); they also wore ngotho, an iron ornament, if they could afford. On the leg below the knee were worn brass ornaments and a colobus monkey fur maruku. The whole body was covered with ochre. Girls wore ciuma-cia-mutue on the head and the circle of hair on the crown of the head was anointed with red ochre and oil. Ndebe (wooden ear-rings) were worn also.
6. Githii: Men's garment, rectangular in shape, made from the skins of calves, sheep or goats. The amount of skin required depended on the size of an individual, and age. Young men wore only short cloaks reaching about half way between the waist and the knee, while married men's githii reached below the knee.
7. Gituiririri: Is cutting of hair leaving a patch, round unshaven patch of hair on the back of the woman's or girl's head. Cutting of hair on the forehead leaving the rest uncut.
8. Gituku: An ostrich feather headdress worn on the back of the head and stuck into a

- frame consisting of two hoops of leather which are sewn together. It was fastened to the back of the head by thin soft leather tapes tied round the forehead above the ears.
9. **Gituru:** A thick iron bracelet for men; it is worn below the armpits and is made from a thick wire with about eight coils.
 10. **Hang'i:** Ring of wire measuring 7.6-8.2 cm in diameter which is threaded with small coloured beads. It is worn in great numbers by married women and initiated girls on the ears.
 11. **Ichuhi-cia-matu:** Small spirals of iron wire wrapped with thin gauge wire worn on the ear-lobe by men.
 12. **Ira:** A mineral white clay mined near the slopes of Mt. Kenya at the foot of Kirima-kia-ira hill (The hill of ira). It was traded to other parts of Kikuyu-land.
 13. **Ithii/Githii:** Refer to Githii.
 14. **Kiama:** A council of elders.
 15. **Kiama-kia-matimu:** The first grade of elders composed of recently married men with at least one child. To be admitted to the kiama, one had to pay a goat or sheep and thereafter one carried a spear. Kiama-kia-matu provided the core of the army (see njama ya ita).
 16. **Kiama-kia-maturanguru (Religious Sacrificial Council):** Reached when a man had all his children circumcised and all his wives had passed child-bearing age. These were senior elders with highest religious and political authority. They carried maturanguru and wore icuhi-cia-matu.
 17. **Kibati/ibata:** An ornament worn by small boys for the mumburo dance.
 18. **Kiibata:** A dance for warriors; more of military exercise than a dance. The warriors smeared paint of white saline earth over the body, and on the face they rubbed dry ochre powder on one side and on the other a little ira. On the head they wore a

gituku.

19. Kigamba: A knee bell made in shape of a pea with one side slightly open. Inside this iron pod, were a number of pellets called ngaragari.
20. Kinya kia mbaki: A snuff-box made of wood, a small gourd or rhino horn. It was carried by old men who used snuff and was a kind of daily attire hung around the neck by means of a leather strap or a chain.
21. Kinyata: It is a collar made of leather and decorated with five beads. It was worn on the arm by men and girls and is similar to, though smaller than, ngaguana.
22. Mbari: A group of related people who trace descent to a single ancestor.
23. Mindo: An ear-ring in the shape of an eye, made of 1/8 gauge of wire.
24. Mugikuyu: A person of Gikuyu ethnic group. Plural of Mugikuyu is Agikuyu.
25. Mugoioyo: A sexually paired dance after the long rains when food like beans and maize were about to be harvested. It was danced by men and mature girls. While dancing it, men wore ornaments like the ones worn during the gichukia dance but without clothing.
26. Muhiiro: This was a dance by boys and girls who were ready to be circumcised. The objective of muhiiro dance was to seek permission from elders for initiation.
27. Muhiriga: Is a clan.
28. Muhunyo: A coiled wire ornament similar to muringa and made of a thick wire worn on the arm between the wrist and the elbow only by rich men as a sign of wealth. Sometimes a rich man gave the same ornament to his wife.
29. Muiritu: Is a mature unmarried circumcised girl.
30. Mukua: A leather strap made from an ox's or cow's skin. A smaller one was made to keep the hang'i in position.
31. Munyaka: A Gikuyu nick-name for copper and brass wire. An ornament made of copper or brass wire was called munyaka, e.g., gichango ornament.

32. Munyoro: Leather belt worn by warriors and decorated with parallel rows of beads around the belt.
33. Munyu: Munyu was a substitute for ira which was found in several areas of Gikuyu Division. It was a kind of saline earth, dug for cattle and sheep, and used by men and boys during certain dances, e.g., kibata.
34. Mutirima: Is a walking stick used by old men and women for support due to their weak legs and backs, it was seen as a third leg, part of the daily attire for old men and women and a symbol of age.
35. Mutumia: Is a married woman or woman who had reached the age of being married.
36. Muthanga: Lateritic murrum, found in decomposed granite. It was smelted to obtain iron used in making ornaments.
37. Muthiore: An iron ornament made by the smith for himself and his family. It was made from a thin iron and by the smith and his wife to symbolize profession.
38. Muringa: A coiled iron wire bracelet of up to twenty or more coils. Made by a wire worker and worn by some men on the left hand below the elbow. Women and girls wore it on the lefthand leg below the knee.
39. Mweru: A light-coloured object; or ornaments made of wire (e.g. aluminium/zinc).
40. Ndebe: A round ear wooden ornament made by specialist wood workers, from woods like muthithioi, muthuthi and worn by married women in the ear lobe.
41. Ngaguana: This was identical to kinyata and was worn on the arm.
42. Ndogonye: Plain anklet of strong wire worn by unmarried girls.
43. Ndoho: Broad scabbard worn by women after childbirth; it is a belt to which the sword scabbard is attached.
44. Ngiciri: Triangular ear ornament made of tin and aluminium and worn by men at the top edge of the ear.
45. Ngocorai: White metal oval disc worn by young women on the upper part of the ear.

46. Ngotho: Armlet with two upright horns, made of rhino hide, buffalo horn, or ivory and worn by men on the arm.
47. Ngunyi: A crowd of feathers made of a string and worn by men and boys during dances.
48. Njama: Manpower, organized or unorganized; potential people for a task, those waiting to serve an individual group or country.
49. Njama-ya-ita: Young men or warrior grade who served as military and police force.
50. Njama-cia-ita: Organized regiments of warriors.
51. Njama-ya-aanake: Council of warriors parallel to the orders' council with military and civil functions.
52. Njama-ya-aanake-a-mumo: Council of junior warriors.
53. Njama-ya-ituika: Body of representative elders chosen customs connected with the periodic transfer of governmental responsibility.
54. Njama-ya-bururi: Manpower available in a country.
55. Njingiri: Ankle bell with small iron balls inside, worn by young men, boys and men. A number of these could be worn together.
56. Nyori: A stout rod stalk of thatching grass or millet worn in the holes made in the ears of females sometimes with beads threaded on them.
57. Riika: A single age-set or initiation group; a series of annual initiation sets, regiments, generation set. Each riika derived its name from the events taking place at the time of circumcision (e.g., riika ria kibandi, an age-set that was circumcised at the time that the Europeans introduced the kipande system or the pass-book).
58. Riba: A warrior's ornament made of feathers, attached to a leather worn around the neck and shoulders.
59. Ritiena: Gicuhi kia ritiena, ear-ring with attached pieces of brass chain.
60. Rumuri: Crude candle of wax used as lamp by medicine-men in certain homestead

ceremonies.

61. Thangagara: An ornament for young warriors and young men. It was worn during gichukia dance.
62. Thira: A waist ornament made and used by boys for initiation dance. It was made of a leather base from which a number of strings were hung. Each string of the fringe was threaded with grass stems called thage. At the end of each thage was fastened a seed of the wild banana (ngobo).
63. Thiriga: A kind or good quality of red ochre found around the ancestral land and brought to Gikuyu Division through trade. It was mixed with oil to form liquid paint for anointing and adorning a person.
64. Thumbi: A kind of crown or head ornament made from the mane of a lion and used by warriors when going to raid.
65. Uuma: Medicine to stimulate bravery.

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