

THE ROLE OF THE AGIKUYU RELIGION
AND CULTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE KARING'A RELIGIO-
POLITICAL MOVEMENT, 1900-1950
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE AGIKUYU CONCEPT OF
GOD AND THE RITE OF
INITIATION

by

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for the Degree of
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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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THE ABSTRACT

The central hypothesis of this study is that the Agikuyu religion and culture played the primary role in the development of the Karing'a religio-political movement and that the missionary religion and education and the colonial rule played a secondary role in the development of that movement. The study intends to investigate whether or not the statement that the Karing'a movement was retrogressive and advocated a complete return to the Agikuyu 'conservative traditionalism' and of what the missionary and the colonial authorities called a 'return to paganism' is valid.

The field data mainly from Kiambu District of Central Province, Kenya has been utilized to test the central hypothesis of this study. The major argument is that the missionaries' campaign against the female circumcision and other cultural and religious practices of the Agikuyu was aimed at penetrating the core values of the Agikuyu; and that the Agikuyu responded to this campaign by forming their own schools and churches where their core values could be encouraged, promoted, and maintained.

The present study is historical-anthropological. It is historical because the events which led to the rise of the Karing'a movement were invariably historical.

These events have been traced in their chronological order in this study. The study is also anthropological in that it attempts to study man in relation to his culture and the social organisation of his society at a particular point in time. The study shows how a 'cultural group' - in this case, the Agikuyu - were able to utilize certain elements inherent in their culture, religion, and social organisation in the midst of forced acculturation. The utilization of these cultural, social, and religious elements became the foundation of the Karing'a movement.

The study concludes that the traditional beliefs and practices that were utilized by the Karing'a movement constitute "progressive traditionalism" or "cultural and social flexibility" inherent in the Agikuyu religion, culture, and social organisation; that by effectively utilizing "progressive traditionalism", the Karing'a movement was able to control the forces of change, and thereby, encouraged modernity without making modernity look foreign and alienating; and that through "progressive traditionalism" the claim that the Karing'a movement was a return to "paganism" is thereby invalidated.

The present study is relevant in understanding the dynamics of culture change in a crisis situation.

The study is important to those interested in understanding the nature of the African resistance-cum-religious movements. Lastly, the study of this nature is relevant in enriching our knowledge of the role of the African cultural and religious heritage in modernising African societies.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	-	African Inland Mission
AIPC	-	African Independent Pentecostal Church
AOC	-	African Orthodox Church
CMS	-	Church Missionary Society
CSM	-	Church of Scotland Mission
D.C.	-	District Commissioner
D.O.	-	District Officer
EAA	-	East African Association
GMS	-	Gospel Missionary Society
KA	-	Kikuyu Association
KACS	-	Kenya African Church Society
KTC	-	Kenya Teachers College
KAU	-	Kenya African Union
KCA	-	Kikuyu Central Association
KISA	-	Kikuyu Independent Schools Association
KKEA	-	Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives

KPA	-	Kikuyu Provincial Association
LNC	-	Local Native Council
NITD	-	Native Industrial Training Depot
P.C.	-	Provincial Commissioner
P.C.E.A.	-	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
PKP	-	Progressive Kikuyu Party
YKA	-	Young Kikuyu Association

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the Karing'a religio-political movement, referred to hereafter as the Karing'a movement. The study attempts to analyse the extent to which the Agikuyu religion and culture helped in the development of the Karing'a movement and to investigate empirically the validity of the claim that the Karing'a movement was retrogressive and advocated a complete return to the Agikuyu "orthodox traditionalism" and "paganism".

The hypotheses of this thesis can be stated as follows: that the development of the Karing'a movement could be explained by the inherent ability of the Agikuyu religion and culture to respond to religious, socio-economic and political changes; that the Agikuyu culture was an integrated whole and interfering with one aspect of their culture meant interfering with the whole culture, thereby causing the disintegration of society; and that interfering with the core beliefs of the Agikuyu or a people's culture leads to the rise of a resistance movement.

The researcher's initial interest in the problem and hypotheses as stated above was aroused when he read Professors Ranger's and Kimambo's book: The Historical Study of African Religion in 1973.

Ranger and Kimambo have argued that in the past there has been an "assumption that only political institutions and external trade relationships changed in pre-colonial Africa, and that it is possible to discuss religious or social contents and structures in terms of some external and unchanging 'world view' of the people under study."¹ This assumption which Ranger and Kimambo have disapproved, would appear to be fairly correct because when one looks at the work of Basil Davidson, for example, one is struck by the fact that in his book The Lost Cities of Africa,² there is hardly any mention of religion and its role in the building of the ancient Kingdoms of Africa. But when one picks a book on say A History of Israel by John Bright or Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of Roman Empire³ one is struck by the role of religion in effecting changes in those societies.

Although during the colonial period African religion and culture became increasingly recognized, it was nevertheless treated purely in descriptive terms "and in the idiom of a timeless ethnographic present."⁴ Indeed, during this period some scholars claimed that African religion does not have a theology or a philosophy. For example, Williamson has written of the Akan religion as having "not a theology or a philosophy, but undifferentiated number of rites and

practices."⁵ Professor Mbiti, writing in post-colonial Africa, has claimed that African religion has no missionaries, no converts, no prophets, and no martyrs.⁶ Although Mbiti does not hold Williamson's view that African religion has no philosophy and that it is merely ritualistic, he nevertheless, sees very little hope for the African religion in modern Africa.

John Taylor, on the other hand, calls African religion "primal religion" because "so many features of African religion occur elsewhere in the globe and in the history of human beliefs that we may reasonably claim that we are dealing with the universal, basic elements of man's understanding of God and of the world."⁷ And Professor Vansina has described "the core of most African religion [as] rituals," ritual being defined as "sets of actions aimed at improving or safeguarding man's lot, actions which make sense only if understood in terms of an underlying symbolic system and often presupposing beliefs about the [supernatural]."⁸

On the other hand, some scholars have attribute the "success" of Christianity in Africa to the fact that African religion is less organized. For example, E.G. Parrinder has concluded that "Christian missions have been much more successful

in replacing the ancient faith than they have in India or China, because African religion was less-organized."⁹ Yet Parrinder is at a loss to explain why "in the innumerable villages of Africa the ancient religion is still held by millions of people Even in the towns, and among those who have accepted the new religions, there is a great subtraction of traditional beliefs."¹⁰

Other scholars have claimed that the study of African religion and the so-called primitive religions is necessary for it might help the Western people to understand the nature of religion including Christianity. For example, Evans - Pritchard has observed that

Primitive religions are species of the genus religion, and that all who have any interest in religion must acknowledge that a study of the religious ideas and practices of primitive peoples ... may help us to reach certain conclusions about the nature of religion in general, and therefore also about the so-called higher religions or historical and positive religions ... including our own /meaning Christianity/ ¹¹

At the other extreme, there are those who have predicted the extinction of the African people if

they hold on to their traditions. They warn that such an extinction can be avoided if the African people accept Christianity. Placide Temples, for example, has observed that Christianity is the only choice left for the Africans. After his study of the Baluba religion and philosophy, he concluded that:

We arrive, therefore, at the unheard of conclusion that Bantu paganism, the ancient wisdom of the Bantu, reaches out from the depths of its Bantu soul towards the very soul of Christian spirituality. It is in Christianity alone that the Bantu will find relief for their secular yearning and a complete satisfaction of their deepest aspirations.¹²

Similarly Jahn has expressed the sentiments and the views of the critics of African religion and culture. Although he does not hold their views, he has nevertheless pointed out that these critics agree,

that a fully Europeanized Africa will be the end product of the process [of transition]. Europe is ... to provide the model, Africa to copy it; Europe to be spiritually the giving, Africa the receiving partner.

Since Europe is held to be the teacher and Africa the pupil, Europe

is to decide when Africa is ripe: ripe for a faith, ripe for action, ripe for freedom. Europe [knows] what is good for Africa, better than Africa herself.... Whether Africa accepts the doctrines one recommends or those one warns her against, she must give up her own traditions, there are no other possibilities to be considered.¹³

The negative views held by these scholars aroused the researcher's interest in making an extensive investigation into the role of the Agikuyu religion and culture in the development of the Karing'a movement. However, he was disappointed to find out that there exists no literature that deals specifically with the role of the Agikuyu religion and culture in the development of a movement that led to the rise of nationalism in this country. He also found that no thorough study has been done on the Karing'a movement. The little that has been done is mostly negative and misleading.

Historically the Karing'a movement started in 1933 following the female circumcision controversy. But in due course there emerged two separate groups, namely, the Karing'a and the Independents. The scanty literature available deals mostly with the Independents and not the Karing'a.

Rosberg and Nottingham, for example, have a chapter in their book dealing with the rise of cultural nationalism among the Agikuyu. But in the whole chapter, there are only two paragraphs dealing with the Karing'a. They have argued that "the Karing'a movement was mostly closely associated with those who had broken with the C.S.M. [Church of Scotland Mission] at Kikuyu; [and that] Karing'a... could never boast the quantitative achievements of [the Independents], but from the beginning it represented a more politically oriented approach to the solution of its problems."¹⁴ For Rosberg and Nottingham, Karing'a and the Independents constituted "an integral part of an ongoing, rationally conceived nationalist movement"¹⁵ in Kenya that later led to the rise of the Mau Mau war. While they have traced the cultural origins of the two groups, they have not shown the continuity of the Agikuyu culture in the development of the two groups.

While Rosberg and Nottingham see the Karing'a movement as politically motivated, John Anderson sees it as educationally motivated. He argues that the claim that the Karing'a was a more "politically oriented body than KISA [Kikuyu Independent Schools Association]" is not "completely satisfactory" because the Karing'a was a small organization close

to Nairobi "where it could keep in close touch with the emerging nationalist thinking [while on the other hand KISA was a bigger organization] and had a more complex task confronting them, developing ... churches and schools ... over a much wider area."¹⁶ For Anderson, KISA and Karing'a were one movement of Independents whose aim "was to provide knowledge in order to improve Africans' understanding and status [and although in the early 1950's] these schools became more overt, [their aim remained the same] educational development, not military resistance."¹⁷ Anderson does not, therefore, discuss the cultural and religious factors that motivated the development of the Karing'a movement nor, does he make any clear distinction between the Independents and the Karing'a.

On the other hand, Harry Kovar takes a slightly different approach from that of Anderson. Kovar sees the Kikuyu Independent Schools movement as an interaction between education and politics. He therefore, attempts to interpret the movement "against the background of African nationalism in Kenya."¹⁸ Kovar traces the origins of the Independent schools in Gikuyuland to the Agikuyu reaction against the missionaries' interference with their customs and traditions, and, therefore, these

schools were a manifestation of the Agikuyu cultural nationalism.¹⁹ He, however, does not go into great detail to discuss the nature and the content of what he calls 'cultural manifestations.'

Unlike Anderson who sees the Karing'a and KISA as one group, Kovar tries to make some distinction between the two groups. He describes the Karing'a as having "unco-operative attitude"²⁰ towards the colonial Government and the Education Department. He further states that "this militant and contemptuous attitude towards the government on the part of the Karing'a ... was not shared by the KISA who were making a genuine attempt to co-operate with the Education Department."²¹ In other words, Kovar simply makes an observation similar to that of Rosberg and Nottingham that the Karing'a group was more politically militant than KISA.

Similarly, Ndung'u in his article on the Agikuyu independency in church and school dwells more on the internal conflicts between the two groups. He stresses the fact that one of the major causes of the conflicts was "the traditional rivalry between the Kikuyu of Kiambu, and those of Murang'a."²² He does not discuss the nature of that rivalry. He goes on to point out that the term

Karing'a "was tribalistic and exclusive and defeated the KISA objective of spreading the [Independent Schools] movement to neighbouring areas such as Ukamba."²³ Then he dwells on the conflict between KISA and the Karing'a on the question of the ordination of Arthur Gatung'u, a Karing'a candidate who was considered by KISA to be "disorderly [in his] private life and a strong supporter of Archbishop William Alexander."²⁴ Ndung'u's scanty information on the Karing'a can, of course, be attributed to the fact that his article deals primarily with the Independents.

At the other extreme we have F.B. Welbourn who describes the Karing'a movement as "anti-Christian and politically subversive."²⁵ He writes that the aim of the Karing'a movement was to return to "paganism" and to restore what he calls "autonomous tribalism."²⁶ Karing'a means 'pure', writes Welbourn, "and there seems little doubt that along with its concern for education, the Karing'a wished to return to the purity of tribal custom."²⁷ Kovar supports Welbourn's view.²⁸ Welbourn describes the leader of the Karing'a African Orthodox Church, Arthur Gatung'u, as "a convicted felon ... a drunkard and adulterer to boot."²⁹ Then he accuses the Karing'a of having influenced the pro-government Independents to be

militant and subversive. He writes, "as far as the independent movement was won over to Mau Mau, ... it was through the gradual emergence to power of the Karing'a elements."³⁰ Apparently, Welbourn seems to argue that a return to the Agikuyu religion and culture meant a return to "paganism" and "backwardness". He, therefore, sees no positive role that the Agikuyu religion and culture played in the development of the Karing'a movement.

Corfield supports Welbourn's views. He refers to the Karing'a movement as "seditious" and the Karing'a Kikuyu Education Association (KKEA) as

a purely secular society under the influence of the Kikuyu Central Association and hence, in general opposed to any form of Government or mission control. Its primary object was the provision of a school system which would satisfy Kikuyu nationalists and separatist ambition and its predominant desire was to avoid the notice of, or interference from non-Kikuyu influence.³¹

On the other hand, Corfield observes that KISA's policy "favoured a loyal attitude and a degree of co-operation with authority."³² Like Welbourn, he sees no positive role for the Agikuyu religion and culture in the Karing'a movement. He laments the

fact that whenever a KISA school fell under the influence of the Karing'a, that school "turned from its basically Christian outlook to the Kikuyu worship of Gikuyu and Mumbi and their local prophets."³³ He goes on to argue that the religious instruction given in the Karing'a schools was perverted and the children were "taught not only to sing hymns and offer up prayers in which the name of Jomo Kenyatta had been substituted for that of Christ, but also to take the repulsive oaths which were repugnant ... to religious sensibilities."³⁴

What has emerged from this review of the literature indicates, among other things, that no thorough study has been done on the role of the Agikuyu religious beliefs and cultural practices in the development of the Karing'a movement. However, it is very important to note that all the authors discussed above except perhaps Welbourn and Corfield agree that the Karing'a movement, and of course the "Independents", contributed to the rise of the nationalist movement in Kenya in the 1950's. Welbourn and Corfield see the Karing'a movement as atavistic and subversive. Of course, one has to consider the fact that Corfield's Report took a very pro-colonial government stand while Welbourn's book took a pro-missionary stand.

On the other hand, Anderson, Kovar, and Ndung'u have tended to stress the desire for the Western form of education as one of the major contributing factors in the development of both the Karing'a and KISA. Rosberg and Nottingham have argued that the two groups were politically motivated.³⁵ They have observed that "the long-term effects of the circumcision crisis went far beyond any question of the successful establishment of an Orthodox or Pentecostal Church or an independent educational system."³⁶

Lastly, although the works of Jocelyn Murray and Jomo Kenyatta do not deal with the Karing'a movement per se, it is important to point out a few factors. Murray's excellent study on the Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy exemplifies the dynamics of cultural confrontation between two different cultures during a crisis situation and the different roles that the antagonists play during such a situation. It also demonstrates quite clearly how a people will react when their core belief and value system has been threatened by the forces of change. Murray argues that although female circumcision is practised among the several communities in Kenya - such as the Gusii, the Kuria, the Somali and the Maasai - the missionaries did not

campaign vigourously against female circumcision among these communities because they did not have "any leverage to implement change among [them]." ³⁷ This was particularly true with the Maasai. However, among the Agikuyu, the missionaries thought the campaign would work because of their flexibility to change. By holding this view, the missionaries underestimated the importance of the female circumcision rite among the Agikuyu. As Murray has observed this rite "constituted the essence of "Kikuyu-ness" and could not be lightly discarded." ³⁸ In other words, it constituted the unquestioned core beliefs and values of the Agikuyu. Murray takes the view that it is because the Agikuyu were dis-united on the female circumcision issue that the controversy arose. This view is not very convincing given the fact that the number of the Agikuyu who signed the Thogoto Declaration was comparatively small and the fact that the campaign was aimed at penetrating the core level of the Agikuyu value system - a level that is very hard to penetrate as we shall see later. In fact Murray has indicated this clearly. She has concluded that "female circumcision is ... a deep-rooted custom which has not been eliminated after seventy years of exposure to Western education and Christian teaching." ³⁹

While Murray's work is important for the understanding of the dynamics of cultural confrontation, Kenyatta's work is important for the understanding of the organic nature of the Agikuyu society.

Kenyatta has strongly stressed that the Agikuyu culture was an integrated whole and that "no single part [of it was] detachable; each had its context and [was] fully understandable only in relation to the whole."⁴⁰ He has further discussed briefly the implications of each aspect of Agikuyu culture in relation to the whole. For example, he has observed that land is "the material symbol that holds family and tribe together." To take land from the Agikuyu would therefore mean to cut "away the foundations from the whole of Gikuyu life, social, moral, and economic."⁴¹

While Kenyatta might have overexaggerated the organic nature of the Agikuyu society and underestimated the flexibility inherent in their social organization, it is quite evident in his study that the interference with the Agikuyu culture and religion by the missionaries and the colonialists was the major contributing factor in the rise and development of the Karing'a movement.⁴² However, Kenyatta has not shown in great detail how this interference took place. In fact he has only hinted

about it in his concluding remarks. This thesis is an attempt to show how this interference led to the rise of the Karing'a movement, and how, indeed, the Agikuyu culture and religion were the major contributing factors in the rise and development of the movement.

Field Research Methodology

Since there is no literature dealing specifically with the role of the Agikuyu culture and religion in the development of the Karing'a movement other than what the researcher has mentioned above, extensive field work was carried out for this study. However, the researcher has used written records especially in the first three chapters which outline the nature of the Agikuyu society and explain the historical factors that led to the rise of the Karing'a movement.

Kiambu District was selected as the major area for field work because initially it was the stronghold of the militant Karing'a politics. It was in Kiambu District that the famous Thogoto Declaration was drafted and later circulated to other mission areas; it was in Kiambu that the famous dance song Muthirigu originated; and it was

also in Kiambu that the first Karing'a School was built. Second, originally Kiambu District was constituted of the frontier Agikuyu who became the new innovators of the Agikuyu traditions. Third, the district suffered more land alienation than say Murang'a and Nyeri. Lastly, the district was closer to the city of Nairobi, thus giving the people in the district more access to new ideas and values.

Murang'a and Nyeri Districts were grouped together as areas where the Karing'a movement was not essentially strong. Consequently few informants from those districts were interviewed for this study. Ironically although the founders of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) were what Murray calls 'Kahuhia men', it was this group that mellowed down and sought relationship with the Church Missionary Society in 1933 during the height of the female circumcision controversy. Murray argues that unlike at Thogoto and Kabete missions the Kahuhia men "were in central positions and were able to dominate the pastorate council. [Therefore, the CMS did not push them] to breaking point."⁴² However, one cannot exaggerate this point because Murang'a and Nyeri districts produced such men as Jesse Kariuki, Joseph Kang'ethe, Johanna Kunyiha, James Beuttah, to mention only a few.

The selection of informants was based on several criteria. First, those who gave information on the Agikuyu traditional society were expected to be very knowledgeable on the cultural and religious practices of the Agikuyu as well as the social organization of the Agikuyu society. Second, those who gave information on the Karing'a movement were expected to have been very active members of the movement and to have been either members of school or church committees or teachers or preachers. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to interview many preachers of the African Orthodox Church because at the time he was carrying out the research, Bishop Gathuna, the head of the African Orthodox Church, had instructed them not to give any information to anyone. Consequently, the researcher had to rely on the lay members of the church. The third criterion was for those informants who were the abolitionists. These informants were expected to have signed or supported the Thogoto Declaration. Fourth, some informants who did not belong to any of the above groups but were familiar with the events that took place in the period covered by the study, were also selected.

By using the above criteria, several informants

were eliminated while others satisfied the above criteria. The process of selection was carried out through a contact informant, Munyui wa Gichura who was very familiar with most of the informants in Rironi, Ndenderu, Karura, and Kabuku areas.

Out of the forty four informants that were interviewed, twenty seven of them were active members and followers of the Karing'a movement; the rest were abolitionists, neutralists, and Independents. Thirty three of them are from the Kiambu District where the militant Karing'a politics was strongest as already pointed above.

All the interviews for this study were carried out from September, 1974 to September, 1977. This might appear to be a long time but as a full time lecturer at the Kenyatta University College, field work could only be sandwiched in between terms. All the interviews were taped except a few. The tapes were then transcribed on index cards and coded accordingly. However, all the interviews conducted by the research assistants were hand written.

Initially the researcher used to tape and take notes at the same time. This method proved unsuccessful and frustrating to the informants. It involved taking notes while the informant was talking. As the interview progressed, the informant

would be frustrated because he had to repeat several times what he had already said. This method was discontinued and the taping method adopted throughout the period of the field work.

Most of the informants were interviewed individually. A few were interviewed in a group. Although the group interviews were more lively, informants tended to compete with each other - each wanting to prove that he knew better than the other. Sometimes two or three people would be talking at the same time. It was rather hard to transcribe their information from the tape. On the other hand, group interview is a very valuable research method because one can easily cross check the information in the process of the interview. This method proved quite useful when the researcher was collecting information on the Muthirigu dance song, for example.

However, the researcher would like to point out one of the weaknesses of the field Research Methodology experienced in this study. When he was in the field, he found out in almost all cases that the informants tended to be very subjective and sometimes mythical when narrating certain events. This was especially the case when they talked about the differences and similarities between the Independents, K.C.A., and the Karing'a. The same case applied when they talked

about migration to Southern Kiambu, land purchase from the Ndorobo, and forced migration to the European tea and coffee plantations.

In a research such as this where there are no primary sources, the researcher is confronted with the difficulty of extracting historical data from the mythical and very subjective data. In the process of doing this, his presentation may appear subjective. But his subjectivity comes primarily from the subjective nature of the material he is dealing with.

In order to overcome this problem of subjectivity, the researcher has attempted to supplement anthropological data with historical data mainly from books, archival materials, and journals. This is one of the basic reasons why he has used historical-anthropological approach in this study. The second reason is to provide a theoretical framework to this study. Central to this approach is the argument that interference with the core beliefs and practices of a people's culture inevitably leads to the rise of a resistance movement. This resistance can take many forms depending on various causal factors - such as racial, cultural, political, environmental and economic factors - and also depending on the intensity and degree of culture change. It can take the form of either messianism, prophetism, millenarianism or nationalism.

The anthropological approach to this study does not mean that this study is a study on culture change per se. However, some of the theories dealing with

culture change will be mentioned briefly in an attempt to explain why the Agikuyu resisted forced culture change. Second, this study is not a study on the African Independent Church movement per se. Although the historical origin of the Karing'a movement can be traced from the African Orthodox Church and the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association, the development and the nature of the movement was more nationalistic than religious. Jocelyn Murray, for instance, has described the African Orthodox Church and its counterpart African Independent Pentecostal Church as nationalist churches which "emerged out of the political, educational, and cultural struggles of the 1920's and 1930's."⁴⁴ However, the fact that the Karing'a movement emerged out of a 'nationalist church' does not necessarily mean that the movement cannot be grouped together with the other resistance religious movements in Africa which have had similar origins. In fact Turner has included the African Orthodox Church and the African Independent Pentecostal Church in his bibliography of religious movements in Africa.⁴⁵ It is, therefore, necessary to look at some of the methods and theories that have been used by various scholars in the study of resistance movements whose origins have been religious. We shall limit our analysis to those studies done in Africa.

Sundkler is probably one of the leading scholars in the study of the African Independent Church movements. In his book the Bantu Prophets in South Africa, he has analysed sociologically and religiously the rise of independent churches among the Zulus in South Africa. His primary objective is to "discern tendencies that could be utilized in the practical task of building Christ's Church in Africa."⁴⁶ He argues that the major causes of these churches are: the Natives Land Act of 1913; the missionary policy of encouraging separate Christian Churches where Africans can develop their own congregations and leadership; the apartheid policy; and Bantu syncretism.⁴⁷ He views Bantu syncretism as a serious problem for the Christian Church in South Africa because it is through this syncretism that Africans are "brought back to heathenism."⁴⁸ In structure and leadership, these churches are tribal. According to Sundkler, their tribal structure symbolizes an active form of tribalism. Their leaders try to win 'tribal' chiefs to be members of these churches. And since one of the objectives of South African government is "to build up and strengthen the powers of the chiefs", the presence of a chief in the congregation means that the church and her members are loyal to the government. Consequently, these churches are not political. They are primarily

religious.⁴⁹

According to Sundkler, Independent Churches in South Africa can be divided into two types, namely, the Ethiopian and the Zionist types. The Ethiopian type are those churches that have broken from the white missions on racial grounds and have as their motto "Africa for the Africans." However, their theology is very much a carbon copy of white protestant churches.⁵⁰ The Zionist type are "patterned on the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion founded in 1896 at Zion City, Illinois, by John Alexander Dawie and Wilbur Glenn Voliva, using Mount Zion as a symbol of liberation and presaging a New Jerusalem."⁵¹ According to Sundkler, their main expression of faith is through healing, speaking in tongues, purification rites and taboos.⁵²

While Sundkler's analysis of the Independent Churches is interesting and illuminating, his methodological approach is primarily sociological and religious. It is also typological. His use of this method contributed to the conclusion that these churches are tribalistic, and apolitical, and that they symbolize a return to "heathenism".

On the other hand, Harold Turner has used a historical and typological approach in his study

of Independent Church movements in West Africa. He categorizes these churches into three types, namely, neo-pagan, semitic, and Islamic. The neo-pagan are those which "remain essentially traditional even though they also appear as part of ... Christianity."⁵³ The semitic churches can be divided into three groups, namely, the Hebraist, the Israelitish, and the Judaistic. The Hebraist are "those showing a radical breakthrough from traditional animism or polytheism, and the associated magic practices, in favour of faith in the One God ... of Old Testament."⁵⁴ The Israelitish are those that grow around a prophet with a gospel similar to that of the prophets in Ancient Israel. And the Judaistic are those that put emphasis on laws and rituals instead of direct revelation from a prophet.⁵⁵ The Islamic type are those that have broken away from orthodox Islam. Turner has not dealt with Islamic type of movements in his study.

Turner has concluded that these churches are "fundamentally religious in nature, and must be so understood."⁵⁶ Unlike Sundkler, he does not see them as tribalistic. For example, he has described how the Church of the Lord (Aladura) has spread from Nigeria to Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Britain.⁵⁷ Like Sundkler's approach, Turner's typological and historical approach does not help us to understand the cultural and political dynamics that are

inherent in these churches particularly a church like the African Orthodox Church, hence the weakness of his approach.

David Barrett has attempted to formulate a working theoretical framework for the study of the Independent Church movements in Africa. He has formulated his theory from the study of "two hundred and ninety African tribes [where] over six thousand religious movements [have risen] in the last hundred years."⁵⁸ However, although the Kikuyu people are included in his study, he has not included African Orthodox Church and the African Independent Pentecostal Church in the list of Independent Churches in Kenya.⁵⁹

According to Barrett the African Independent Church movement is "primarily a tribal phenomenon and can therefore legitimately be studied by means of a tribal analysis."⁶⁰ Kuper holds the same view.⁶¹ In this approach, the analysis must take African traditional background seriously by studying in depth the cultural and religious beliefs and practices of the African people. Second, the role of the missionaries and the colonial administrators must be studied in depth. Other variables that must be considered include the presence of too many missions in one area, liberal versus orthodox missions, white

presence in an area, the ancestral cults, the problem of polygamy and ethnicity, ignorance of African psychology, the discrepancy between missionary Christianity and biblical religion particularly after the Bible had been translated into the vernacular, the lack of sensitivity by the missionaries towards African cultural traditions and beliefs, and the failure by the missionaries to extend brotherly love to the Africans.⁶² Thus for Barrett there are multiple causes for the rise and development of these movements. However, in spite of the many causes that account for the rise of these movements, Barrett concludes that they are essentially Christian and that they reflect an attempt by the Africans to "create a genuinely indigenous Christianity on African soil."⁶³ Consequently, six major themes are dominant in these churches, namely, biblicalism, Africanism, brotherly love, resurgence of African customs, acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour, and the affirmation to be fully Christian without any outside control.⁶⁴

Barrett's thematic and interdisciplinary approach can be a useful tool in studying what he calls 'African Independency' but it is too general and too religiously orientated. Definitely not all of these movements are Christian and not all of them are religious. Can we, for example, argue that the Kimbanguist movement in Zaire and the Mwana Lesa

movement in Malawi were essentially religious and Christian? Certainly, these two movements were religio-political as Lanternari has observed.

Perhaps Lanternari's approach to the study of what he calls the 'religions of the oppressed' sheds more light on the nature of the 'African independency' than Barrett's, Sundkler's, et al approaches. Lanternari is critical of theoretical approaches that view the 'African independency' as strictly religious and Christian. He argues that this approach "merely fulfils a preliminary and structural purpose, which, if taken as an end in itself, would make it impossible to evaluate these movements as a part of human history, which they are."⁶⁵ He is also critical of what he calls phenomenological approach in which the main concern is "mainly with discovering and identifying the universal and unchanging religious structure."⁶⁶ This approach ignores the secular nature and the cultural background from which the movement originated. And even when the secular nature and the cultural background of the movement have been studied, the aim is to discover and to identify the universal religious phenomenon. If such 'universals' are lacking the movement is termed tribalistic and a return to heathenism. Sundkler, Corfield, and Welbourn have used this approach.⁶⁷

Similarly Lanternari is critical of the morphological approach to the study of the 'African independency'. The morphological approach which Turner, Jocelyn Murray, and Sundkler have used places "all religious manifestations, regardless of the cultural level on which they occur, into certain clearly defined categories, grouping them indiscriminately under certain common [types] ... even if they occur against very different historical background."⁶⁸ While this approach is good for comparative studies, "it tends to obliterate the fundamental differences between movements and minimizes growth."⁶⁹

Accordingly, Lanternari has used a historical approach "to explain the religious phenomenon and therefore to justify it." By justifying a religious phenomenon, he means "to explain its nature, its function, and its genesis as well as its internal and external dynamics due, respectively, to factors inherent in the culture and to the impact from other cultures and external forces."⁷⁰ This means that a religious movement can only be understood by tracing its historical origins and by analysing it in relation to 'concrete secular conditions.'

Lanternari has traced the historical origins of such movements as Zionism and the Ethiopianism in South Africa, Kimbanguism in Zaire, the Mwana Lesa

movement in Malawi, John Chilembwe uprising in Nyasaland the Tonsi movement in Western Angola, the Aladura and Seraphim and Cherubim movements in West Africa, and the Agikuyu uprising in the 1920's.⁷¹ He has then analysed these movements in relation to political, economic, cultural, and racial conditions under which each movement developed. He calls these movements nativistic religious movements. He also considers them to be liberation movements. By "nativistic movements" he means "a conscious organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of [their] culture."⁷² According to Lanternari nativistic movements are in most cases against the western culture and they tend to establish a cult for the exclusive use by their own people.

However, the fact that these movements are nativistic in nature does not mean that they are tribalistic in nature as Turner, Sundkler, and others have argued. Rather they can be considered as liberation movements. According to Lanternari religious independence in Africa has been caused by colonial oppression and the impact of racism and imperialism on the colonized masses of Africa. Religious independence makes the African people "strive to fight the racial segregation, forced acculturation, or destruction of tribal life imposed both by the missionaries and by the colonial administrators."⁷³

Second, the religious nature of these movements reveals some of the characteristics of African traditional societies. Lanternari argues that in traditional societies, "if the indigenous way of life has been subjected to misery, persecution, and other adversities, the people seek relief ... in religious ways - in many cases even before attempting to do so by political means."⁷⁴ This was definitely the case with the Karing'a movement in its initial stage of development. However, while Lanternari's hypothesis is valid for pre-independence religious movements, it does not go far enough to explain the post-independence religious movements.

Another important point that Lanternari brings out is the fact that although the factors that lead to the rise of these movements are external, the internal factors play a major role in the development of these movements. The impact from the outside "which produces a crisis within society compels the internal forces of that society to make a choice between changing to traditions rendered obsolete by events, or developing new patterns of culture better able to meet the new challenge."⁷⁵ However, in the case of West Africa where the land and the racial problems have almost been absent, the religious movements have emerged from within "to meet critical conditions of purely internal origin"⁷⁶ such as witchcraft, magic, and

problems of psychosomatic and psychologically related diseases. They are, therefore, more religious than nationalistic.

In the present study Lanternari's historical approach has been adopted. His approach has been combined with an anthropological approach to explain some of the cultural dynamics that lead to the religio-political movements in Africa. This is necessary because Lanternari, for example, does not explain how and when a society reaches a 'crisis stage', what specific 'internal forces' are utilized by that society to develop an independent religious movement, and up to what level a society will accept or reject forced acculturation.

The historical-anthropological approach used in this study has attempted to explain, through the use of historical and oral data, the religio-cultural and political phenomena that emerged among the Agikuyu in the late 1920's - known as the Karing'a movement. The researcher has tried to justify the religio-cultural and political nature of this movement by tracing its origin, its nature, and its role in the development of cultural nationalism in Kenya. To do this, the researcher has identified certain cultural and religious beliefs and practices that were utilized in the development of this movement. He has further

tried to identify the level of culture change in which these beliefs and practices can be traced.

One of the basic arguments that has been brought out in this study is that cultural interaction between two cultures that are very different can lead to a cultural clash on certain levels of culture. Various scholars have identified different levels of cultural interaction and change. Aylward Shorter has identified four levels, namely, industrial and technical; domestic-technical; value level, and religious level.⁷⁷

Similarly Tate and Mbula have identified four levels, namely, peripheral level, value level, thematic level, and philosophical or core level.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Keesing has identified two levels which he calls zones of group behaviour. The first is rigidity or persistence zone and the other is flexibility or mobility zone.⁷⁹

Shorter, Tate, Mbula, and Keesing agree that social change on the peripheral level is easily accepted while that on the value and thematic levels is rationalized before it is either accepted or rejected. But on the core level change is greatly resisted because it is on this level that the "society teaches [man] about man and man's relationship to the world, to other men, and to facts of ultimate concern."⁸⁰ The core level of culture is the foundation of the

society. It is characterized by rigidity, conservatism, and stability. Behaviour on this level is "sharply crystallized and unquestioned, strictly insisted upon, spelled out in fixed rules and imperative tradition, backed by powerful sanctions, [and] stressed insistently in the training of [individuals in the society]." ⁸¹

Accordingly, the basic claim in this study is, therefore, that the interference with the core level of African cultural systems through forced acculturation has been one of the major causes of 'African Independency'. Second, the degree of forced acculturation has led some of the religious movements in Africa to be religio-political and others to be religio-cultural. For example, the Karing'a movement falls under the religio-political category while the Aladura movement studied by Harold Turner falls under the religio-cultural category. However, whether these movements are religio-cultural or religio-political, ⁸² their basic theme is liberation from racism, colonialism, and Western theological and cultural imperialism.

By using the historical-anthropological approach in this study, the researcher has been able to identify the historical events that led to the rise of the Karing'a movement. Similarly he has been able to identify the cultural and religious

beliefs and practices that were utilized by the Agikuyu in the development of the Karing'a movement. This methodological approach has also been useful in testing the hypotheses for this study. The researcher has found this approach very useful for the study of the basic values of an African people and how these values are defended whenever they are threatened by the forces of change. He would, therefore, recommend this methodological approach to other scholars who are interested in the study of African resistance movements - whether these movements are religious or political in nature. However, the researcher would like to point out that the historical-anthropological nature of this study has made it necessary to identify various groups involved in the Karing'a movement on the basis of culture rather than on the basis of class interest because these groups were culturally and politically motivated.

Definition of Terms

Several terms have been used in this study that need to be defined and clarified. Each term is defined within the context in which it has been used in the study. Therefore, the definitions given below are operational and should not be considered in any way exhaustive.

(a) Karing'a

In the present study the term 'Karing'a' has been used in its 1930's context rather than its traditional meaning. There has been a tendency even today to associate the term 'Karing'a' with its traditional meaning. This tendency has been influenced to a large extent by the origin of this term

Traditionally, the term 'Karing'a' was associated with one of the initiation guilds of the Agikuyu. The other guild was called 'Ukabi'. The 'Karing'a' initiation guild was considered more orthodox than the Ukabi guild. It was even associated with "cultural purity" as the literature quoted above indicates. The differences and the nature of these two guilds have been discussed in Chapter One of this study.

However, during and after the female circumcision controversy in 1929, the term 'Karing'a' lost its cultural orthodoxy and took on a political and religious meaning.

The political meaning of the term 'Karing'a' can be traced back to around 1926 when the first Kikuyu Central Association oath was taken. Githige has observed that "K.C.A. used the name 'Karing'a'

to refer to all those people who had taken the K.C.A. oaths and who knew the secrets of the association."⁸³ Later in 1929, the term was used to refer to all those Agikuyu who opposed the government and the missionaries on the issue of female circumcision and other related political and economic issues. But the term was not used to mean a complete return to Agikuyu traditionalism. The new meaning of the term 'Karing'a' was well expressed by one informant:

Karing'a ni Gikuyu kiria
gikurumirira mitugo ya
Gikuyu iria ya gwitikia
Ngai. Matikwenda kiria
gikumahitithania na Ngai.
Mekwenda o Ngai;
namagacokerio tiri wao
na wiyathi.⁸⁴

(Karing'a are the Agikuyu who follow Agikuyu traditional beliefs in Ngai. They do not want to follow that which might lead them away from their belief in Ngai. They just want Ngai, a return of their land, and freedom).

It is in this context that the term 'Karing'a' has been used in this study.

(b) Tradition

This term has been used in the present study to mean any cultural or religious custom or belief that has been handed down either orally or by

practice from generation to generation. A traditional custom or belief would, therefore, constitute the sayings, teachings, practices, and rituals surrounding that particular custom of belief which have been handed down from generation to generation. Such a custom or belief reflects continuity with the past. When a people holds on to a traditional custom and belief they act and behave as if the past is a reality. They bring into the present the customs and beliefs of their ancestors. Such a people would be considered as practicing traditionalism.

Traditionalism as used in this study, therefore, means adhering to tradition as authority in matters of cultural and religious customs, beliefs, and practices. It is "subordination to the past."⁸⁵ According to Godfrey and Monica Wilson "if there be no subordination to the past, succeeding generations cannot benefit from the activities of those preceding them, [therefore] the cultural heritage is lost."⁸⁶

However, too much traditionalism can lead to resistance to social change. In extreme cases of culture intervention such as the one experienced by the Agikuyu at the advent of European colonization, some people resisted change even on the peripheral and rationalization levels of culture change. They reverted to traditionalism on all the levels of culture change. These were the Watu wa Mungu or

Arathi (the seers) group. This group is considered in the present study to have reverted to conservative traditionalism as opposed to progressive traditionalism.

Progressive traditionalism as used in this study constitutes a combination of the autonomy from the past, that is 'cultural flexibility' and the subordination to the past. As Godfrey and Monica Wilson have pointed out "the combination of [cultural] flexibility with traditionalism is a necessary condition of differentiation in the historical moment."⁸⁷ It is argued in the present study that cultural flexibility occurs mainly on the peripheral and rationalization levels of culture change. But on the core level, flexibility is resisted, and if it occurs, it is highly censored. It is further argued that by utilizing progressive traditionalism the Karing'a movement accepted 'modernity' without alienating the Agikuyu from their basic value system.

Conservative traditionalism as used in this study can be defined as those elements in a culture that resist change on all levels of culture change in the midst of inevitable forces of change. Advocates of conservative traditionalism glorify the past at the risk of destroying that past by the forces of change at work. The glorified past is often seen as a "Golden Past."

(c) Modernity

Modernity is the quality of being modern. It constitutes the new knowledge, customs, beliefs, and practices that a people learn first hand during the process of culture contact. It also includes new technology in the areas of communication, transportation, education, agriculture, architecture, and industry that a people learn and adapt during the acculturation period. Modernity is easily observable in a situation where the traditions and technology of groups in culture contact are "so different that there are no bridges between them, and an individual trying to go over to the new culture has to abandon his own and start learning from the beginning."⁸⁸ However, modernity is highly censored on the core level of culture change but it is easily acceptable on the peripheral and rationalization levels. For example, an individual can easily abandon the use of a digging stick and replace it with either a hoe or a tractor to improve his cultivation methods without being condemned by the members of his group. But he will be condemned, rejected and even harassed if he attempts to alter, change or abandon the basic values held together by the group. This utter condemnation, rejection, and harassment was well demonstrated by the Karing'a group during the height of the female circumcision controversy.

(d) Culture

E.B. Taylor's and Malinowski's definitions of culture have been used in this study. According to Taylor culture "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."⁸⁹ On the other hand Malinowski defines culture as comprising of "artifacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits, and values."⁹⁰ Taylor's definition is descriptive while that of Malinowski is historical. In these two definitions culture, therefore, constitutes two distinct categories, namely, the spiritual and the material. It is argued in this study that both the material and the spiritual culture are interrelated and interdependent. However, the material culture which is most manifested on the peripheral and rationalization levels changes faster than the spiritual culture. The spiritual culture is mainly concentrated on the core level of culture change.

(e) Religion

Religion is "a phenomenon of the realm of values and beliefs. It is the center of the order of symbols, of values, and beliefs, which govern the society."⁹¹ A large component of the spiritual culture

belongs to the realm of religion. In the present study religion and culture are considered one and the same. It is argued that it is difficult to extract religion from culture and vice versa nor can one categorically assert that religion belongs to the core level of culture change. Religious ideas, beliefs, values, and practices permeate all the levels of culture change yet there is a high concentration of 'religious' beliefs, ideas, and values on the core level. It is in the realm of religion that a people assert affirmatively their innate drives for survival, dominance, and territoriality. However, religion is both flexible and traditional. It changes yet it subordinates itself to the past. It is argued in this study that flexibility and traditionalism are fundamental characteristics of the Agikuyu religion and that it is because of these two fundamental characteristics that Agikuyu religion played the role it did in the development of the Karing'a movement.

(f) Culture Change

Culture change is a process in which culture changes materially and spiritually. It begins "with the process of innovation, that is, the formation of a new habit by [an] individual [or individuals] which is subsequently accepted or learned by other members

of his society."⁹² The innovation may be in the form of a new idea, a new art form or a new technology.

Culture change also involves alterations and reformulation of a group's behaviour and life style. The habitual behaviour which was once accepted and rewarded is not rewarded anymore and at times it is discouraged. During the process of culture change old ideas, art forms, and technology are replaced by new ones.

Second, culture change is not an even process. If the process involves two cultures, the effectiveness of culture contact will determine the level of culture change. In a situation where the agents of culture contact are few, culture interaction and change will not be effective to a large segment of the society.

Third, culture change can only occur when the members of a society accept the innovative forces at their disposal. If they resist such forces, culture change will not take place. However, if they accept such forces, they will do so by altering the new innovations to suit their environmental and cultural systems.

In the present study, it is argued that the alteration and reformulation of new innovations occur

differently on the levels of culture change, namely, the peripheral, the rationalization and core levels. On the peripheral level, there is very little alteration and reformulation of new ideas, art forms, and technology. The arrow and the bow can be replaced by the gun without altering the shape and the form of the gun. On the rationalization level, the degree of alteration is higher. For example, the new educational methods and techniques can be altered to suit the people's needs and aspirations. However, on the core level, new innovations are greatly resisted. As a result culture change takes place very slowly on this level.

Agikuyu Democracy

Agikuyu traditional democracy can be defined as a government of the people which was run not by officially elected office bearers as in modern democracy but by two traditionally organized moieties, namely, Maina and Mwangi.⁹³ Each moiety held political leadership for one generation of approximately 25-30 years. Then it handed over the leadership to the other moiety through a secret ceremony called Ituika. However, there existed inter-moiety councils of elders. These councils dealt with matters relating to defence, justice, land, and family disputes.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

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- ⁷² Ibid., p.28 quoting Linton, L. "Nativistic Movements" in American Anthropologist XLV, 1943, p.230.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p.20.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p.20.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., p.245.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p.246.
- ⁷⁷ For a detailed account on these levels see Shorter, Aylward, African Culture and the Christian Church: An Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1973, pp.14-24 and passim.
- ⁷⁸ See Tate, Vincent Francis, "Kangemi: The Impact of Rapid Culture Change on Community and Family: A Study of Change and Stability in a newly developing urban Community," Ph.D. thesis, University of Nairobi, May, 1974, pp.24-31 and passim. See also Mbula, Judith, "The Impact of Christianity on Family Structure and Stability: The Case of the Akamba of Eastern Kenya", Ph.D. thesis, University of Nairobi, 1977, pp. 13-29 and passim.
- ⁷⁹ See Keesing, F.M., Cultural Anthropology: The Science of Custom, New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, N.Y., 1958, pp.389-410 and passim.

- ⁸⁰Shorter, op.cit., p.21.
- ⁸¹Keesing, op.cit., p.410.
- ⁸²The religio-political movements are also cultural in nature but their approach to the solutions of a people's problems is mainly political.
- ⁸³Githige, Muchiri, R., "The Religious Factor in Mau Mau with Particular reference to Mau Mau Oaths", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Nairobi, 1978, p.153.
- ⁸⁴0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, Interviewed 21/1/79, Githunguri, Kiambu.
- ⁸⁵Wilson, Godfrey and Monica, The Analysis of Social Change based on Observations in Central Africa, London, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p.11.
- ⁸⁶Ibid., p.112.
- ⁸⁷Ibid., p.112.
- ⁸⁸Keesing, op.cit., p.391.
- ⁸⁹Schwartz, Barton, M. and Ewald, Robert, H., Culture and Society: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1968, p.41 quoting E.B. Taylor, The Origins of Culture, New York, Harper and Raw, 1958, p.1.
- ⁹⁰Ibid., p.42.
- ⁹¹Wolf, C.P., "The Structure of Societal Revolutions" in Social Change: Explorations, Diagnoses and Conjectures, edited by George Zollschan and Walter Hirsch, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1976, p.85 quoting Edward A Shills' "Center and Periphery" pp.117-30 in The Logic of Personal Knowledge edited by Edward A Shills, Glencoes Illinois, Free Press, 1961.

⁹²Murdock, P. George, "How Culture Changes" in Social Change, edited by John E. Nordskog, New York, McGraw-Hall Book Company, Inc., 1960, p.88.

⁹³For details on these two moieties and the Ituika ceremony see Kenyatta, op.cit., pp.182-193.

CHAPTER ONE

DEMOCRACY IN THE AGIKUYU
TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Since this thesis deals with the Agikuyu people and their cultural and religious response to white rule, it is important to give a brief account of the Agikuyu traditional society before the colonial era. A detailed account of the Agikuyu has been given elsewhere.¹ The point we shall be trying to emphasise in this chapter is the democratic nature of the Agikuyu traditional society. We shall try to show here that democratic justice and social order were paramount in the Agikuyu society and that the strong consciousness for justice and human rights played a big role in the development of the Karing'a movement.

In general, the Agikuyu society was based on two basic systems, namely, the kinship and age grade systems. The kinship system embraced all those individuals who were related by blood. Land was generally owned by those people who were related to each other by blood. The age grade system, encompassed all those people whose bond of unity was the initiation rite.

The kinship system was based on three units.² The first unit was the nuclear family generally known

as Mucii or Nyumba; the second unit was the lineage or mbari; and lastly there was the clan or muhiriga. Within one lineage, there existed several nuclear families who traced their origin from the founder of that lineage. However, as the population of a lineage increased, it divided into several lineages. Each division was headed by its new founder. This division, however, was only limited to the lineages. Clans did not divide.

According to the myth of the origin of the Agikuyu, there were ten clans, namely, Anjiru, Ambui, Angari, Anjiku, Aceera, Ambura or Ethaga, Airimu or Agathigia, Angui or Aithiegeni, Amuyu or Aicakamuyu, and Aithirandu or Angeci.³ Each of these clans traced their origin from the mythological daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the legendary founders of the Agikuyu nation.

Clan identity was very important among the Agikuyu. While lineage identity was somewhat lost when one lineage divided into several lineages, clan identity was not lost by those lineages which migrated to other areas in search of virgin land. The clan identity was also maintained after marriage. Neither the bride nor the bridegroom lost their clan identity after marriage. It should also be noted that all the children belonged to the father's clan. This identity is still maintained today although it is not as strong as it used to be.

Having described the major units of the Agikuyu kinship system, let us look at the relationship between the kinship system and land tenure among the Agikuyu. This is important because the question of land was to play a very big role in the development of the Karing'a movement. Writing in 1938, Jomo Kenyatta observed:

To anyone who wants to understand Gikuyu problems nothing is more important than a correct grasp of the question of land tenure for it secures for them that peaceful tillage of the soil which supplies their material needs and enables them to perform their magic and traditional ceremonies in undisturbed serenity facing Mt. Kenya.⁴ (*italics mine*)

And Bewes, as late as 1953, could still write that

For the Kikuyu his religion, the very basis and origin of his whole being, is closely associated with land. It is the land that gives a stability and balance to this rather emotional tribe.... To ... the Kikuyu his very mainspring is from the land, the rocks, rivers, and trees of his own ancestral holding.⁵ (*italics mine*).

Agikuyu land tenure was, therefore, interrelated with their religion and their kinship system. Its disruption and rejection by the colonialists triggered off militancy among the Agikuyu in the 1920's and throughout the thirties, forties and the fifties.⁶

Since the basic unit of the Agikuyu kinship system was the nuclear family, ideally each family had, therefore, its own land. The owner of the family land was called Mwene Githaka. He obtained the land either through inheritance or buying. If he obtained it through inheritance, he was called Muramati. However, it should be pointed out that the term Muramati, which literally means a guardian, could be applied to anyone who acted as a guardian for a piece of land or even property. If the land was obtained through buying, the buyer was called Muguri. The land whether obtained through inheritance or buying was called Mugunda wa nyumba or family land.

After a period of time, depending on the prosperity of the owner of the land and the population of his family, the homestead land became mbari land or lineage land. The owner became the head of the newly created lineage. As Sorrenson points out, "originally the founder of a mbari acquired what was in many respects an individual title to a Githaka (land); on his death a communal form of title was created ... /and since Kikuyu social structure was very segmented and there was no centralized tribal authority, there could be no tribal ownership of land as such."⁷ The communal title that Sorrenson refers to was not communal in the strict sense of the word. * Mbari was an extended

family consisting of several families. Each family was entitled to a piece of land within the mbari. One mbari could divide into several mbari and each of the new mbari could clear virgin land or purchase it from the neighbours. Where virgin land could not be obtained easily, the landless mbari was obliged to migrate to new unoccupied land. Thus the migration to Southern Kiambu in the 19th century by the Agikuyu can be explained, among other things, as a result of land scarcity due to population pressure within the mbari.⁸

Traditionally, no mbari land could be sold. There existed several land curses. For example no land boundaries made by the father to his sons could be changed by anyone;⁹ a prodigal son could be cursed by his father so that he should not inherit any land; if the family was prosperous, the father left a curse that the family should not move to another place; and no ancestral land could be sold, otherwise the seller could be afflicted by the ancestral curse.¹⁰ These curses made it mandatory for the people to keep and protect their ancestral lands.

In addition to the kinship land tenure, there was what might be described as status tenure. This involved those individuals who were primarily landless and poor. Those who could qualify for status land

tenure, included the immigrants (athami); the servants (ndungata); those born ceremoniously into a lineage; the marriage-in-laws (athoni); the do-nothings (endia ruhiu); and the ahoi. Each category of these individuals was given land according to their status. For instance, a muhoi could obtain land by helping to defend land owned by someone else. However, he was only given cultivation and building rights. He had to vacate the land if the owner did not want him anymore. However, the owner gave him enough time to find another piece of land. If he was a hard working person, he could buy his own land either from his landlord or another landowner.

A servant (ndungata) on the other hand did not own any land. He could stay on the land of his philanthropist (muuma andu) indefinitely as long as he helped on the land. A servant was usually an unmarried man who sought refuge in a philanthropist's homestead. This class of people was not a large one among the Agikuyu. The do-nothings or "play boys" (endia ruhiu) can also be considered to belong to this class since a mwediam ruhiu (it literally means, the one who sells his sword) was given the right to stay on the land belonging to the mbari of his lover. But he was never given any land as such.¹¹

The son-in-law (muthoni) could acquire land through marriage. This happened if he was landless or an immigrant. Immigrants were given cultivation and building rights by another lineage or clan or by their in-laws.

Lastly, muciarwo was given land by the lineage or the clan that adopted him. An elaborate ceremony was performed to adopt him into the new family, lineage or clan.

The acquisition of land through this status tenure system was therefore through "a process which consisted ... partly of alliance and partnership and partly of adoption and absorption, and partly of payment."¹² This process of land acquisition "together with reverence for the ancestors led to mbari tenure of land as opposed to either communal or individual ownership. The communal rights were only limited to salt-licks, rights of way, and the collection of firewood."¹³ And as Kenyatta has observed, "every inch of the Gikuyu territory had its owner with the boundary properly fixed and everyone respecting his neighbours."¹⁴

However, it should be noted that the migration of the Agikuyu to the South in the early part of 1890's led to the creation of a new land tenure which was neither individual nor mbari tenure. The migrants

would buy land from the Athi (the original owners of land in Kiambu), then they would build "large ihingo capable of accommodating hundreds of people, some of whom were warriors under the patronage of the buyer."¹⁵ Ahoi would be used to clear the land. The land would then be divided individually among those who belonged to Kihingo.

One can, therefore, conclude that the Agikuyu land tenure was strictly based on their kinship system except in respect of the newly acquired land in Kiambu District. However, the religious factor related to land applied in both cases. Land remained very sacred to the Agikuyu, and for this reason, they reacted with religious fervour when their land was taken by the colonialists.

Another significant element in the social organization of the Agikuyu society was the age-set system or riika (sing., mariika pl.). The basis of this system was the initiation rite for both boys and girls. This rite was "regarded as the conditio sine qua non of the whole teaching of tribal law, religion, and morality"¹⁶ of Agikuyu society. It was, indeed, "a deciding factor in giving a boy or a girl the status of manhood or womanhood in the Gikuyu community."¹⁷ In other words, through the initiation rite, the "self-hood" and the "self-identity" of the individual were recognized. This recognition was realized through

the age-set system. Thus while the age-set system was the basis of the political system and the social organization of Agikuyu society, it was at the same time a means by which the individual's personality and self-identity could be developed and recognized.

It is difficult to say when the riika system, and, indeed, the initiation rite started among the Agikuyu. Muriuki has argued that this rite seems to have been "well developed by the middle of the 17th century."¹⁸ Whatever might be the history of this rite of passage, it was considered by the Agikuyu to be central to the Agikuyu political system and the social organization. Routledge has observed that:

the festivals and rites associated with both marriage and death hold but a small place in Kikuyu imagination compared to that greatest of all ceremonies whereby the boy becomes a man and the girl a woman.¹⁹

Similarly Macpherson has observed that the membership to a riika "carried with it powerful obligation of brotherhood and sisterhood towards all other members."²⁰ In other words, the initiation rite cut across the family, lineage, and clan boundaries and "united and solidified the whole tribe in all its activities."²¹ Through the initiation rite, the individual gained the opportunity to be introduced to the core values and beliefs of the Agikuyu. Other core values and beliefs

were gradually introduced to the individual as he grew older and became a responsible person in the community. In other words, the Agikuyu initiation rite was used as a prime means of cultural continuity.

Traditionally, there existed two initiation guilds among the Agikuyu, namely, the Karing'a and the Ukabi guilds. Since this thesis deals with the Karing'a movement, it is important at this juncture to discuss the nature of the Agikuyu initiation guilds in an attempt to understand the term "Karing'a" and how this term was later used as a rallying slogan for the development of the Agikuyu cultural nationalism. It should, however, be pointed out that to be initiated in any one of the two guilds did not alter the valuative essence and importance of the Agikuyu initiation rite nor did it involve abandoning any of the values and beliefs associated with the rite as we shall see later. The individuals who were initiated in either one of the guilds participated in all the Agikuyu rites and ceremonies.

The development of the Ukabi and Karing'a initiation guilds can be traced to the Agikuyu-Maasai contact. According to Muriuki, this contact

probably dates back to the first half of the eighteenth century, and the oral traditions of the Kikuyu suggest that there were amicable relations with the Maasai

from, at the latest the beginning of the nineteenth century when they cooperated in driving out the Barabiu.²²

This contact led to cultural borrowing, inter-marriages and Agikuyu-Maasai trade. It also led to the development of the two initiation guilds. Muriuki writes:

those Kikuyu who were of Maasai origin or had lived among the Maasai, ... were grouped with their descendants into an all-embracing section, called Maasai 'guild' for ritual purposes. Their children were initiated following rites similar to the Maasai ones, which were slightly different from those practiced by the Kikuyu 'guild'.²³
(Italics mine).

Similarly those of Maasai guild and their descendants, who adopted Agikuyu traditions and customs were grouped together into the 'Agikuyu Karing'a'.²⁴ One informant declared "Kurua Ugikuyu ni kurua ukaring'a" (to be circumcised according to the rites of the Agikuyu guild is to be circumcised Karing'a).²⁵ Another one remarked "Nii ndaruire Ukabi, Ndiaruire Ugikuyu niguo Ukaring'a" (I was circumcised the Ukabi way and not the Gikuyu way which is Karing'a).²⁶ What is important here is that the term Karing'a was initially associated with the Agikuyu initiation guild as opposed to its association with politics in the 1930's.

It should be pointed out that the two initiation guilds differed slightly in terms of the initiation rite itself. According to Barlow, those initiated in the Ukabi guild danced around the Mutamaiyu tree during the Matuumo ritual, while those in the Karing'a guild danced around the Mugumo tree. The Ukabi initiates stayed in the Irua homestead for four days and on the fifth day went home, while the Karing'a guild initiates stayed for eight days and went home on the ninth day.²⁷ This view has been collaborated by several informants.²⁸ During the Matuumo ritual, the initiates in the Karing'a guild threw stick spears (Ndorothi) on the Mugumo tree while those in the Ukabi guild threw spears on the rubbish-dump (Kiara-ini) or on the Mutamaiyu tree. On the day of circumcision those in the Karing'a guild sat on leaves from the Mugumo tree while the Ukabi initiates sat on cow hides.²⁹

Another major difference between the two guilds was that the boys and girls of the Agikuyu Karing'a had to go through the ritual of second birth (Guciarwo na Mburi) before they were circumcised while the Agikuyu Ukabi children went through the cleansing or purification ritual during Mambura rituals.³⁰ This ritual was performed to remove or prevent the child from being affected by migiwo (pl.) (prohibitions) of his parents or other relatives. After this ritual was performed,

the only mugiro (sing.) that could affect him was one caused by his own bad behaviour.³¹ Gathigira has also pointed out that although both the Agikuyu Ukabi and the Agikuyu Karing'a performed the Kuumithio ritual - the educational ritual after circumcision, the Agikuyu Ukabi ritual was less elaborate.³² Other than these differences, the surgical operation was the same in the two guilds. However, since the Ukabi initiation rite was less elaborate, and, therefore, less expensive it was not unusual for the poorer members of the Agikuyu to prefer it to the Karing'a type. This brings us to another cultural aspect of the term Karing'a.

The division of the Agikuyu society into two guilds shows, among other things, the extent to which Maasai culture affected Agikuyu culture and vice versa. The effect had gone beyond the initiation rite. It had affected birth, marriage, and death rites.³³ In his analysis of sixty eight different thahu (taboo) observed by both the Agikuyu Karing'a and the Agikuyu Ukabi, Hopley found that eleven of them were not observed by the Agikuyu Ukabi.³⁴ This indicates, among other things, that of the two groups, the Agikuyu Karing'a were the more orthodox Agikuyu culturally than the Agikuyu Ukabi.

However, it should be pointed out that the

"orthodoxy" of the Agikuyu Karing'a had started to decline in the early part of this century due to the land alienation. As one informant after another reiterated, the Agikuyu Karing'a traditions involved too many rituals which the Agikuyu of 1920's and 1930's could not afford. For example, the alienation of land rendered too many Agikuyu landless. It became increasingly difficult to raise enough livestock necessary to perform the many rituals required in the Karing'a guild. In addition, the scarcity of certain ritual foods such as Njahi (Bonavist beans), Njugu (*Cajanus cajan*); Mwere (Millet), Ugimbi (Finger millet), Ikwa (Yams), to mention a few - forced many Agikuyu to gradually abandon many rituals in both the Karing'a and Ukabi guilds.³⁵ As we shall see later in this work the term "Karing'a" had already undergone some changes by the time the female circumcision controversy started in the late 1920's. By then, it was becoming less and less associated with the Agikuyu "orthodoxy" and was becoming increasingly associated with politics and those people who were against the abolition of the female circumcision.

It is, therefore, important to note that in spite of the fact that the term "Karing'a" had undergone some changes in the 1920's, the initiation rite

was still a very important rite among the Agikuyu. It was through this rite that the Agikuyu age-set or riika was built. The age-set system provided the basis for the Agikuyu democratic system.

Traditionally the age-set system was divided into two moieties. A moiety is "a social group resulting from the division of society into half."³⁶ A moiety like a modern political party assumes political leadership for a given period of time but its similarity with a political party ends there. Members of a moiety do not organize political rallies, nor do they campaign for offices and members, nor do they move from one moiety to another. One is born into a moiety and remains in that moiety for the rest of one's life.

The two Agikuyu moieties were symbolically known as Maina or Irungu and Mwangi. Each moiety ruled for one generation of approximately thirty years. It handed over leadership to the other moiety in a ceremony called Ituika.³⁷ Membership of a moiety was inherited. The sons were born into the moiety of their grandfather. However, according to Muriuki, "the moieties' names Maina and Mwangi seem to have been only applicable to the living generation: those which had died off were given a definite name, specific to them, and which noted the most outstanding

feature of their period or rule."³⁸

When asked whether Maina and Mwangi were names of real men, the informants were not quite sure. They seemed to think that they were the names of Mariika. It is also interesting to note that the name Maina, for example is found among such communities as the Luhya and the Nandi of Kenya. According to Kenyatta, Mwangi was the first generation that overthrew the despotic and authoritarian leadership of the King of the Agikuyu. The name means "one who captures, conquers, or triumphs."³⁹ The second generation was called Irungu or Maina. Irungu means, "one who straightens or puts things in order."⁴⁰ This generation was responsible for building the traditions of democracy.

After the overthrow of the Agikuyu King, the Ituika ceremony was started. It became a symbol and a constant

reminder that despotic leadership was not allowed among the Agikuyu ... and that only the spirit of independence, love of freedom in thought and action was acceptable to them.... These principles of love of independence and hatred of autocratic rule became ingrained in the minds of the Kikuyu from the time of Ndemi and Mathathi"⁴¹ (that is, from time immemorial).

The Agikuyu democratic form of government was reflected in the social organization of the society. There existed several national and local administrative and judicial councils. On the national level, there existed two councils, namely, Kiama kia Bururi (the National Council) and Njama ya Ita (the Warriors' or the War Council). The National Council consisted of the elders from the ruling moiety who were heads of their respective village councils. This council was the overall administrative and judicial council of the nation. Muthamaki (the appointed leader) of the ruling moiety presided in this council.

The War Council consisted of all the warriors in the nation. It dealt with matters related to defence, peace, law and order in the nation. After the initiation, the young men (aanake) were entitled to membership of this council. However, they were required to pay a fee of ten goats. According to the informants these goats were paid at intervals depending on the availability of the goats.⁴² (See Appendix 1).

At the local administrative level there existed four major councils, namely, Ndundu ya mucii (the Homestead Council); Kiama gia Itura (Village Council); Kiama kia Rugongo (Ridge or Regional Council); and

Kiama kia Ndundu (A Special Committee within the regional council). The elders of the ruling moiety presided in these councils. However, the other elders were allowed to sit in these councils. They could give their views and opinions but they could not give judgement. Before judgement was pronounced they were asked by the elders of the ruling moiety to leave.⁴³

The Homestead Council dealt with all family matters and was presided over by the head of the homestead, the father. The Village Council, on the other hand, was composed of the heads of the family councils. It was headed by the eldest elder in the village. This council dealt with all the village disputes and problems. It was by far "the largest administrative unit under normal circumstances but, in times of crisis ... an ad hoc alliance of several ridges ... [emerged and acted] in concert."⁴⁴ The Regional or Ridge Council consisted of all the elders of a particular ridge. This council was presided over by a special committee, Kiama kia Ndundu. The senior elder who was most advanced in years and who also had the reputation of being the most wise, presided over this council as the chief judge, Muthamaki.

Within the Administrative Councils, there existed what might be described as Executive Councils.

The membership of these councils was based on age, the wisdom of the individual, and the ability of the individual to communicate his wisdom to the people. The members of these councils might be called the "educators" of the nation.⁴⁵ It is within these councils and families that the knowledge, history, myths, legends, beliefs, and traditions of the nation were imparted to the young and the old.

The first of these councils was Kiama gia Kamatimu (the Spear's Council). It was also known as Kiama kia Mburi Imwe (the Council of the First Goat). To belong to this council a man gave one goat, known as mburi ya kiama (the council's goat). This council consisted of recently married men who were still considered warriors and those young elders whose children had not been circumcised. The members of this council were considered too young to judge any cases. They, therefore, sat around and listened to court proceedings as discussed by the senior elders. Their duties consisted of fetching firewood, lighting the fire, and roasting the ceremonial meat. In other words, this was a training age-grade.

The second council was Kiama kia Mataathi or Kiama kia Mburi Igiri (the Council of Two Goats). Membership of this council involved the giving of

two goats and a lamb to the members of the council, hence, the name. The first goat mburi ya mwana was given shortly before the circumcision of a member's first child; the second goat, mburi ya kiama was given in order that the member could be officially accepted as a member of this council; and the lamb, ndurume ya kuinukania was given to the council immediately after his child had been circumcised in order to re-unite the child with the family and to bless the homestead. This council was the highest in the nation. It executed all the legislative and judicial functions of the nation.

The third council was called Kiama kia Maturanguru or Kiama kia Ukuru (the Council of Old Age). This council consisted of the oldest and wisest elders of the land. The members wore brass earrings and carried ceremonial leaves of Maturanguru as a symbol of authority. These elders decided "the dates of circumcision feasts and the holding of Itwika ceremony."⁴⁶ They also officiated at public religious ceremonies at the Mugumo tree (the fig tree) and were the great custodians of the Agikuyu religion and culture.

Besides the three councils discussed above, there was another council of women (Ndundu ya Atumia).

This council dealt with "all matters concerning circumcision of girls, birth, and other religious matters."⁴⁷ It also dealt with social, educational, and judicial matters related to women's rights. According to Karimu and Ndumbiru, this council consisted of Atumia a Kang'ei - those women whose children had not been circumcised; Atumia a Karegeria - those women who had only one of their children circumcised; and Atumia a Nyakinyua - the women who had more than one of their children circumcised. The women contributed food-stuffs - such as millet, sorghum, gruel, arrow-roots, (Ikwa) yams, and castor oil - as part of their membership fee to the council.⁴⁸

In short, this was the nature of the Agikuyu society before the colonial era. It did not take a long time before the colonialists set in motion economic and political machinery to bring about the disorganization of the Agikuyu society. The first step was to appoint chiefs in a society that had no chiefs before. The appointment of chiefs was based on the British preconceived ideas that African traditional societies were governed by chiefs. These chiefs gradually replaced the traditional athamaki. For example, in Southern Kiambu, Waiyaki wa Hinga was replaced by Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu in 1892.

The appointment of chief Gathirimu, a landless and poor man, was seen by the Agikuyu as utter disregard of their democratic system of government. Indeed, they were even more bitter because of the manner in which Waiyaki was overthrown by the colonialists and his subsequent death.

Waiyaki's first encounter with the white man was in 1887 when Count Teleki and his caravan arrived in Southern Kiambu.⁴⁹ Teleki was well received by Waiyaki. In a solemn ceremony, Teleki and the members of his caravan took the oath of blood brotherhood with Waiyaki.⁵⁰ Following Count Teleki's expedition, Captain F.D. Lugard and George Wilson arrived at Dagoretti in October 1890. They established a Fort at Dagoretti after establishing good relations with Waiyaki. Captain Lugard and Waiyaki ceremoniously became blood brothers also.⁵¹

After Lugard left for Uganda, the Fort was left under the management of George Wilson. It became a looting ground for the porters and the caravans which passed through there. They looted food, livestock, and molested women, which led the Agikuyu to besiege the Fort and drive Wilson away.⁵²

In August 1891, a punitive expedition under

Eric Smith and Purkiss arrived at Dagoretti. They destroyed Waiyaki's homestead, camped within it, and set up a Fort which came to be known as Fort Smith.⁵³ This further strained the relationship between the Agikuyu and the Europeans at the Fort. Another punitive expedition led by Purkiss in August, 1892 destroyed 30 villages and crops, as well as taking livestock.⁵⁴

Waiyaki demanded a stop to these punitive expeditions and the looting. He confronted Purkiss in his house during which a fight started. The porters came to rescue their master. Waiyaki was arrested and deported to Kibwezi where he died. Some say he was buried alive and others say he died of sickness.⁵⁵ Whatever caused his death, Waiyaki, "became the first Kikuyu martyr, and this incident is still a turning point in Kikuyu nationalist mythology."⁵⁶ A song was later composed to remember his death:

Waiyaki niakuire
 Nagithikwo Kibwezi
 Naharia athikirwo
 Nihahandirwo irigu
 Iihi, ihi!
 Tiga ndimuiye mugambo
 Gikuyu ndamuhe uhoro.⁵⁷

Waiyaki died
 And was buried at Kibwezi
 And where he was buried
 Was planted a banana tree
 Oh! Oh!
 If I had the voice
 Agikuyu, I would tell you news.

The death of Waiyaki and other punitive actions by the Europeans set in motion the disorganization of Agikuyu democratic system of government. But his death was later to become a historical reminder that their system of government will one day be restored.

The colonialists did not stop at the overthrow of Waiyaki's leadership. Their second move was to replace the warrior group with the Askaris (retainers; constables). These Askaris

were used by chiefs to recruit labour, support the chief's authority, and help with tax gathering. Often they terrorised people and expropriated their property. /They/ used a great deal of physical violence to carry out the wishes of the chiefs, creating ... a reign of terror.⁵⁸

Administratively, the traditional councils (Ciama) were replaced by Local Native Councils in 1925. However, before these councils attained formal recognition by the colonial government,

an 1897 native court ordinance enjoined the government to supervise the judicial activities of tribal authorities, allowing them to employ customary law, subject to the restriction that punishments were not to be inhuman or convictions obtained through witchcraft, torture, or 'barbarious practices'.⁵⁹

In 1925, the Local Native Councils were formally recognized by the government. This recognition made the traditional Ciama less effective.

On the national level, the colonialists replaced the Agikuyu democratic government with the British authoritarian rule. Kenyatta states accusingly, "that Irungu or Maina generation whose turn it was to take over the government from the Mwangi generation [between] 1925-28 ... was denied the birthright of perpetuating the national pride"⁶⁰ by the British government in 1925. He continues to lament how all Ituika songs and dances were considered illegal. The African was reduced to a state of serfdom and, "his spirit of manhood [was] killed and he ... [was] subjected to the most inferior position in human society."⁶¹ Kenyatta concludes that the last Ituika took place between 1890-98. Muriuki collaborates this view. He points out that "Mwangi took over from Maina during Muhingo and before the Kienjeku and the Nuthi ... in Metumi and Gaki respectively This change of power took place between 1890-98."⁶²

Thus by 1925, the Agikuyu political system and its administrative units were virtually replaced by the colonial political structure. This set in

motion a gradual disorganization of the Agikuyu social structure. In addition, during the same period, a substantial amount of their land had already been taken by the colonialists thus dislocating, among other things, the Agikuyu kinship system. However, what is interesting is the fact that up to this time, the Agikuyu reaction to the British rule was that of protest and resistance, more so than that of organizing themselves on the grassroot level. This can be attributed to the fact that the British officials unlike the missionaries were not interested in interfering with the core belief system of the Agikuyu unless it was absolutely necessary.

As we have already pointed out, the initiation rite was the conditio sine qua non for the individual to gain access to the dynamics and significance of the core belief and cultural system of the Agikuyu. The British officials did not interfere with this rite as long as it did not affect the smooth running of the colonial administration and the settlers' labour force. Their interest was to bring about the disorganization of the Agikuyu society, hoping it might die a natural death.

On the other hand, the missionaries were more interested in disintegrating the Agikuyu

religious and belief system, and, if necessary replace it with Christian belief system. They therefore, directly interfered with the Agikuyu initiation rite. We will look briefly at the Agikuyu religious and belief system in the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

¹See the works of Cagnolo, C., The Akikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore; Trans. by V.M. Pick, Nyeri, The Mission Printing School, 1933; Gathigira, S.K., Miikarire ya Agikuyu (The Customs of the Agikuyu), London, The Sheldon Press, 1959 edition; Hobley, C.W., Bantu Beliefs and Magic: With particular Reference to Kikuyu, and Kamba, New York, Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967 edition; Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mt. Kenya, n.d. and My People of Kikuyu and the Life of Chief Wang'ombe, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1966 edition; Middleton, John, The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya, London, International African Institute, 1973; Muriuki, Godfrey, A History of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1974; and Routledge, W., Scoreshy and Katherine, With a Prehistoric People, Akikuyu of British East Africa, London, Frank Cass and Co., 1968 edition.

²For a detailed account of the Agikuyu kinship system see Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp. 3-21.

³Ibid., pp.7-8. See also Gathigira, op.cit., pp. 1-2.

⁴Ibid., p. xxi.

⁵Bewes, T.F.C., Kikuyu Conflict: Mau Mau and the Christian Witness, London, The Highway Press, 1953, p.39.

⁶For a detailed account of the Agikuyu land tenure see Sorrenson, M.P.K., Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp.3-14 and Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.21-51.

⁷Ibid., p.9.

⁸See Muriuki, op.cit., passim.

⁹O.I. Samuel Mathu, Interviewed, 20.10.75,
Ndumberi, Kiambu.

¹⁰See KNA/KBU/7/2, n.d.

¹¹O.I. Mucone wa Kabiru, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge,
op.cit.

¹²Muriuki, op.cit., p.70.

¹³Ibid., p.75. Also see Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit.,
pp. 36-38.

¹⁴Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.26.

¹⁵Muriuki, op.cit., p.78.

¹⁶Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.128.

¹⁷Ibid., p.128.

¹⁸Muriuki, op.cit., p.116.

¹⁹Routledge, op.cit., p.154.

²⁰Macpherson, R., The Presbyterian Church in
Kenya: An Account of the Origins and
Growth of the Presbyterian Church in
East Africa, Nairobi, Presbyterian
Church of East Africa, 1970, p.7.

²¹Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.4.

²²Muriuki, op.cit., pp.86-87. See also Kenyatta,
n.d., op.cit., pp.200-202.

- ²³Ibid., p.98 quoting Hobley, C.W., Bantu Beliefs and Magic, op.cit., Chapter Five; and Beacher, L.J., The Kikuyu, Nairobi, 1944, pp.5-6.
- ²⁴Kabetu, Mathew, N., Kirira Kia Ugikuyu, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1966, edition, p.3.
- ²⁵0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, Interviewed 17/10/74, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ²⁶0.1. Daudi Ndirangu, Interviewed 10/5/74, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
- ²⁷See Barlow Papers, University of Nairobi Library, Africana section, and Hobley, op.cit., pp. 77-87.
- ²⁸0.1. Paul Mathenge, 9/7/76, Thigingi, North Tetu, Nyeri; Karimu wa Kibiru, 20/11/75, Ndenderu, Samuel Mathu, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ²⁹Gathigira, op.cit., pp.45-47.
- ³⁰Ibid., pp.21-25.
- ³¹Ibid., p.22.
- ³²Ibid., p.51.
- ³³See Hobley, op.cit., Chapter Five to Seven for further details on birth, marriage, death, and thahu (taboo) rites.
- ³⁴Ibid., pp.103-107.
- ³⁵0.1. Johanna Kamau, Interviewed 27/5/76, Kabuku, Kiambu; Mucone wa Kibiru, Interviewed 20/11/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu; Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.; Njenga wa Kahira, Interviewed 3/3/77, Karura, Kiambu, to mention a few.

- ³⁶ Schwartz, and Ewald, Culture and Society: an Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, p.500.
- ³⁷ The word Ituika comes from the verb gutuika - (to cut or to end or, to come to an end). Details of Ituika are very hard to get from informants because the ceremony was a very secret one. For a historical treatment of this ceremony, see Muriuki, op.cit., pp.22-23 and Lambert, H.E., Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, pp.40-43.
- ³⁸ Muriuki, op.cit., pp.117-118.
- ³⁹ Kenyatta, 1966 Ed., op.cit., p.10. A detailed account of the legend of the despotic leadership of a legendary King of the Agikuyu, how his government was overthrown, and how democracy was instituted has been given in Kenyatta's Facing Mt. Kenya, op.cit., pp.179-182.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p.10.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p.11 and p.25.
- ⁴² 0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru, Karimu wa Kibiru, and Ndubiru wa Mbetete, interviewed on 20.11.75, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ⁴³ 0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, interviewed on 9.5.79, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ⁴⁴ Muriuki, op.cit., p.36.
- ⁴⁵ Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.93-124. Kenyatta has discussed at length the role of these councils in the educational system of the Agikuyu.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p.105.

- ⁴⁷Ibid., p.108.
- ⁴⁸0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit., and Ndubiru wa Mbetete. op.cit.. Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ⁴⁹For a detailed account of Teleki's experiences in Gikuyu country, see Count Teleki and the Discovery of Lakes Rudolf and Stefania, Richard, C.G. (Ed.), London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1960, pp.11-26.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., pp.20-21.
- ⁵¹Kabutu, Kihara, Mbaara ya Wiyathi wa Kenya, Kuuma 1890-1963, (The Struggle for Independence in Kenya from 1890-1963), Nairobi, Pan-African Press Ltd., 1963, pp.7-8. See also Macpherson, op.cit., p.16.
- ⁵²Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya, p.13.
- ⁵³Macpherson, op.cit., p.17.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., p.17. See also Kabutu, op.cit., p.8.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., p.11.
- ⁵⁶Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.14.
- ⁵⁷0.1. Leah Wanjiku, Interviewed 20/7/78, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
- ⁵⁸Tignor, Robert, L., The Colonial Transformation of Kenya, New Jersey, U.S.A., Princeton University Press, 1976, p.48.
- ⁵⁹Ibid., p.44 quoting Ghai and McAuslan, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya, p.131.
- ⁶⁰Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.189.
- ⁶¹Ibid., p.190.
- ⁶²Muriuki, op.cit., p.22.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO AGIKUYU RELIGION

Having discussed Agikuyu democratic system, we should likewise discuss the Agikuyu traditional religion in an attempt to discover some of the religious elements that the Agikuyu utilized in the development of the Karing'a movement. Agikuyu traditional religion had two major components of beliefs, namely, the belief in Ngai-(God) and the belief in Ngoma (the ancestral spirits).¹ These two beliefs were complementary. However, the attitudes towards these two beliefs were different. Kenyatta has observed that "the Agikuyu ... attitude towards [the ancestral spirits was] not at all to be compared with their attitudes to the deity who [was] truly worshipped."² He goes on to say that the terms used during ceremonies to express the two beliefs were different. The term "Guthaithaya Ngai" used to mean to "worship or beseech Ngai" while the terms "Guitangira ngoma njohi or, Guthinjira ngoma" were used to mean to "pour libation or to sacrifice to the spirits."³ In other words, the Agikuyu never worshipped the ancestral spirits, rather they communed with them.

It is also important to note that the Agikuyu do not seem to have had any beliefs in "natural

spirits." Kenyatta does not mention them neither does Routledge, nor, Gathigira. However, Hobley and Leakey mention them. Hobley has observed that:

when clearing a forest to make a cultivated field, the Kikuyu people generally leave a large and conspicuous tree in the clearing. Such a tree ... is believed to collect the spirits from all other trees which have been cut down in the vicinity. [This is] an interesting example of animism, the spirits so collected being most emphatically declared to be tree, and not human spirits.⁴

Similarly, Leakey has stated that:

whenever the Kikuyu cleared forest land for cultivation they always left standing a number of big trees at intervals. Such a tree was called Murema-kiriti (one which resists the cutting of the forest); and according to the Kikuyu these trees, "Nyua ciiruru cia miti iria ingi miune, igaciungania" (Drink the shadows, or spirits, of all the trees felled and gather them together) These trees ... became the dwelling places of the former trees in the neighbourhood.⁵

Hobley's and Leakey's observations have been refuted by several informants. They have argued that the Agikuyu religion was not animistic; that the big trees, thick bushes, hills, big rivers and rocks were abodes of the human spirits; and that such objects were not spirits themselves.⁶ One of the

informants, Ibrahim Njoroge said emphatically that "gutiri muti wari ngoma" (no tree was considered to be a spirit) and that whenever the Agikuyu cleared the forest, they cut all the trees except the Mugumo tree (fig tree) which was metaphorically known as Murema Kiriti.⁷ Njoroge's views were supported by Karimu and Njenga wa Kahira.⁸ What is also interesting is that Leakey has translated the word ciiruru to mean "spirits" in the above quotation. But the word ciiruru means "shadows" and not spirits. "Ngoma" means "spirits". In his quotation the word "ngoma" does not appear.

According to Kenyatta, there were three categories of the spirits in the Agikuyu religion: Ngoma cia Aciari, (the family or parents spirits); Ngoma cia Muhiriga, (the clan spirits); and Ngoma cia riika, (the age-set spirits).⁹ These groups of "spirits" composed of young and old men and children in their respective age-groups."¹⁰ All the spirits were approachable by man whenever the need arose. However, Macpherson argues that clan spirits "do not seem to have been approachable by clan representatives of the earthly community, but they themselves might initiate action in the earthly sphere in matters affecting the clan welfare."¹¹ This argument has been disapproved by several informants. The informants argue that these spirits were approachable

by the oldest elders of the clan in time of clan trouble and crisis. Libation was poured on their behalf and foodstuffs given to them.¹²

The strong belief in spirits among the Agikuyu might suggest, at first, that the Agikuyu worshipped these spirits. This was the conclusion that some missionaries had when they encountered the Agikuyu. Rev. Barlow, for example, concluded that "Ngoma monopolizes attention of Agikuyu than of God. Such worship of Ngoma is unnecessary, wrong, and insulting to God."¹³ However, when this question is posed to the informants, they react angrily by saying:

Agikuyu matiahoyaga ngoma
Agikuyu mahoyaga Ngai.¹⁴

(Agikuyu never worshipped
ngoma. They worshipped
Ngai).

In addition, the spirits were never used as intermediaries. The Agikuyu approached Ngai directly.

As already pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, the belief in Ngai was the major aspect of the Agikuyu religion. The Agikuyu believed that Ngai is the creator of man and all there is on earth. He is the giver of land, food, shelter, and all that man requires for his sustenance.

All the informants interviewed have categorically emphasised that there is only One Ngai. Some have even reacted angrily when the questions on the belief and existence of Ngai are posed to them.¹⁵ One of them was so infuriated that he threatened to terminate the interview if the researcher insisted on asking such questions.¹⁶ It appears, therefore, that the existence of Ngai was never questioned nor was it a topic of philosophical discourse among the Agikuyu. Accordingly, atheists could hardly exist in such a society.

Although informants do not entertain the questions on the belief and existence of Ngai, they do, however, entertain questions on the attributes and activities of Ngai. They are willing, for example, to discuss the various names of Ngai. This suggests, among other things, that Ngai was not an abstract concept for the Agikuyu. Idowu writing on the names of the African deity has observed that "the names by which the deity is called in Africa are descriptive of his character and emphatic of the fact that he is a reality and that he is not an abstract concept."¹⁷ This applies equally to the Agikuyu names for Ngai.

The most descriptive names of God among the Agikuyu are: Ngai, Murungu, Mwene Nyaga, Baba, and

ithuri. Ngai is the most common name. It comes from the verb Kugaya - to divide or to distribute. The one who divides is called Mugai. That which divides is called Ngai: Ngai is, therefore, the Great Divider of everything there is.

Murungu is another Gikuyu name for God.

Whether the Agikuyu borrowed this term from another community particularly the Akamba and the Meru or, whether it is an indigenous name is not quite clear. Edwin Smith argues that it is a corruption of Phoenician word "moloch".¹⁸ Hopley on the other hand argues that "Murungu is an impersonal deity who is vaguely supposed to live in the sky."¹⁹ However, the informants argue that Murungu is a Gikuyu word from Ndemi na Mathathi, that is, from the time immemorial.²⁰ It means that which is hornless, and therefore, merciful. As one informant put it:

Ngai ndari hia ciakunuha
na guthecana ta ngoma.
Ngai e Murungu.²¹

Ngai does not have horns to
destroy or to pierce a person
like the spirits.
Ngai has mercy. He does
not destroy.

Another informant has observed that the term Murungu was used to evoke Ngai's mercy especially during a crisis:

"Ngai witu Murungu tuhe mbura"²²

Ngai, the merciful One, give us
rain.

It appears from the above that the term Murungu is a symbolic word for Ngai's mercifulness and peacefulness, and that it was used as a noun.

Mwene-Nyaga is another common name of Agikuyu deity. Mwene means the owner; Nyaga means brightness. This implies that the Agikuyu conceived Ngai as the owner of brightness. But the informants argue that Mwene-Nyaga simply means the owner of that majestic mountain they called Kiri-Nyaga.²³ This implies that Mwene-Nyaga is a symbolic term for the majesty of Ngai, and secondly, his brightness and purity.

The last two names of Ngai are Githuri and Baba. Githuri was not commonly used. Githuri is derived from the verb guthura, to select, Muthuri is the one who selects wisely. It is a term used for a married man. To be a Muthuri means to be a wise selector of words, ideas, opinions, behaviour, and friends. Githuri on the other hand means the "Great Elder". Ngai is, therefore, a "Great Elder." From this description, one can argue that the term Githuri is descriptive of Ngai's moral attributes and wisdom. Lastly, the term Baba (father) is a

fairly common name for Ngai. Whenever it is used it symbolises, among other things, the father image of Ngai. It is mostly used together with the term Ngai, thus, Ngai-Baba (God-Father).

Although the belief in Ngai was unquestionably accepted by the Agikuyu, His nature was a mystery to them. According to Gathigira, Agikuyu conceived Ngai as neither a man nor an animal:

Ndahaana mundu kuna
na ndahaana nyamu
kuna ... ni mutukanio
wa mundu mugendi wa
nyamu.²⁴

(He is not fully a man
nor is He fully an animal
.... He is a mixture of
the two).

Routledge writes of an informant who, when asked the nature of Ngai replied:

He has no father, nor mother,
nor wife nor children: he is
all alone He has no
messengers ...; he does all
his own work.... God does not
eat. He is neither a child
nor an old man; he is the
same today as he was yesterday.²⁵

Since Ngai is a mysterious being, the Agikuyu had no carved images of Him. As Gathigira has observed:

Ngai ... /ndangithondekeka?
We niwe wakumbire andu,

Andu matingihota gukumba
 Ngai.²⁶

Ngai cannot be carved into
 images. He created man,
 man cannot, therefore, create
Ngai.

This mysteriousness of Ngai accounts for the great reverence accorded to Ngai by the Agikuyu during worship and other ceremonial activities.

As to the dwelling place of Ngai, the Agikuyu believed he lives in the sky (iguru). However, when the informants are asked to be more specific on what the term iguru means, they simply say that he lives beyond the clouds. When asked whether iguru is a localized place like 'heaven', they simply say:

Ngai aikaraga kuu
 iguru matu-ini.²⁷

(Ngai lives in
 the clouds).

The discussion ends there. One is left with a feeling that iguru is another symbolic term expressing the mysteries of Ngai.

However, Gathigira on the other hand argues that Ngai dwells in the sky because when the thunder struck, Agikuyu used to say that there was a disagreement between the good Ngai and the bad Ngai. The good Ngai wanted it to rain and the bad Ngai

did not want it to rain. Gathigira goes on to observe that:

Agikuyu meciragia ati Ngai
ni igiri, mwega na muuru.
Ngai ucio mwega niwe wa
Agikuyu na niwe wikaga
maundu mega, na uciu muuru
niwe wa ukabi nake niwe
uthinagia andu.²⁸

(Agikuyu thought there were two Ngai, the good and the bad one. The good Ngai was for the Agikuyu and the bad one for the Maasai. The good Ngai did good things and the bad one troubled people).

While agreeing with Gathigira, the informants still insist that there is only one Ngai. The difference lies on the different rituals people perform for their Ngai. As one informant put it:

Ngai niumwe no magongona maria
o andu marutaga matihanaine.²⁹

(Ngai is one. The difference is only the rituals and sacrifices that each people perform for Him).

When the informants are asked whether they see any paradox between their claim that there is only One Ngai and that there is a good Ngai and a bad Ngai, they simply say that they do not find any paradox at all.³⁰ They insist that every group of people perform their sacrifices to please their Ngai. However, although sacrifices differ, there

is only one Ngai. This argument was to play a big role in the development of the Karing'a movement in the 1930's and the 1940's.

While the Agikuyu believed that Ngai lives in the sky, they also believed he has his dwelling places on earth. They believed that his earthly dwelling places are on the four big mountains surrounding Gikuyuland, namely, Kirinyaga or the mountain of brightness in the north; Kianjahi, the mountain of long rains in the east; Kia-Mbiruiru, the mountain of clear sky in the south; and Kia-Nyandarua, the mountain of sleeping place or hides in the West. On these four mountains Ngai dwells and manifests his greatness. And from these mountains, Ngai surveys the activities of man and his entire creation. In other words, Ngai cares for his people and his creation.

Although the Agikuyu did not have any special days to worship Ngai they nevertheless offered sacrifices to Him whenever necessary. Gathigira, for example, mentions five national sacrifices that were performed by the ruling moiety. These were; prayers for the rain; prayers before planting; prayers after planting to make the crops yield more food; prayers to cure an epidemic

disease; and prayers to prevent an epidemic disease from striking the nation.³¹ He also mentions the prayers for the homestead that were performed by the head of the homestead to ask Ngai to bless the members of his homestead and the livestock.³² Likewise Kenyatta mentions five such prayers,³³ but Kibicho mentions twelve of them: ① the prayers at public assemblies such as administrative and judicial councils; ② the prayers and rituals connected with the handing over of the government by the ruling moiety; ③ the sacrifice and prayers of entry into different age-grade councils of warriors and elders which managed the political, ethical-religious, military, and judicial matters of the nation; ④ the prayers connected with the ordination of a diviner; worship connected with the ordination or dedication of an elder to allow him to officiate at sacrificial rites at the sacred trees; ⑤ prayers at the beginning of a judicial case; ceremonies related to the initiation rites; ⑥ sacrifice for rain; ⑦ prayers before planting; ⑧ prayers of thanksgiving for harvest; ⑨ prayers and sacrifice of supplication for God's blessing and purification of the new crops just before anyone began eating any of it; and the seasonal sacrifice and prayers for God's protection of the entire nation against disease.³⁴

It is very interesting to note that of the twelve national prayers and sacrifices, seven of them

were related to maintaining of the social structure of the Agikuyu society. They were, therefore, performed in order to preserve law and order in the country. Through these sacrifices, the Agikuyu maintained and preserved their cultural and religious traditions and practices. They also preserved their democratic system of government.

From what has been said so far, it is abundantly clear that the Agikuyu concept of Ngai was unquestionably monotheistic. Cagnolo has pointed out, for example, that Christianity "found a suitable soil for its growth" in the Agikuyu monotheism.³⁵ This conception did not change even after the coming of Christianity. The Agikuyu converts to Christianity continued to believe that the Ngai they worshipped in Christianity was the same Ngai "who was known and worshipped by their pre-christian forefathers in the traditional Kikuyu religion."³⁶

Furthermore, Agikuyu monotheism was not exclusive and particularistic, rather it was "inclusive in its conception of God as the God of all men and tolerant of other peoples' patterns of worship despite their differences."³⁷ Therefore, the Agikuyu saw Christianity as another religion in which they could continue to worship Ngai

"and to remain in communion with monotheistic believers like themselves from other ethnic or national groups."³⁸ After all they had been, for many years, in communion with their monotheistic neighbours, the Maasai and the Akamba. They saw no contradictions in establishing a similar relationship with Christianity. Moreover, they found their monotheistic nature of Ngai was collaborated by the biblical monotheism.

However, although the Agikuyu saw no contradictions in embracing Christianity, the missionaries and the colonialists were apprehensive in accepting Agikuyu monotheism and the whole range of Agikuyu beliefs and practices. Writing in 1922, Hopley observed:

The religious beliefs of the tribes of Kikuyu and Ukamba generally consists of a rudimentary conception of a high god, corresponding more or less to the old Hebrew concept of ~~Jehova~~ ^{Jehovah}. To the bulk of the peasantry this idea is naturally very vague and practically subconscious The belief in ancestral spirits . . . is the predominating spiritual factor in the minds of the great majority of the people.³⁹

In her article "A Harvest Thanksgiving" Mrs. E. Scott observed in 1910:

The whole countryside, it seemed, came to offer thanks. Except for a very small minority, the whole of these are frankly heathen, yet openly acknowledging an unseen power. They respond to join in the Thanksgiving, because they think the missionaries seem to know more about this unseen power than they do, and that probably this God whom the white people worship is one and the same as their nebulous being called "Ngai" He is a being who needs to be propitiated by sacrifice, and his place is a bad place where it is cold and uncomfortable.⁴⁰

Similarly, A. Ruffell Barlow observed apprehensively in his article "A Sacrifice for Rain" that:

The Kikuyu have quite a wonderful system of sacrifices, perhaps almost unique among the tribes of East Africa. Other Bantu tribes have their sacrifices to the departed spirits, and to God for rain and other necessities, and in times of great calamity; but I hardly think that many other tribes exist into the daily life whose people the sacrificial system enters to so great an extent as it does in the case of the Kikuyu people.

There is a distinct difference between the sacrifices to God and those to the spirits showing that the Kikuyus' idea of the Deity is not so vague and so confused with that of the spirits of the departed as it has been supposed to be the case of many other tribes.⁴¹

Although some missionaries accepted the fact

that the Agikuyu believed in a monotheistic Deity, they were apprehensive in accepting the fact that the Agikuyu Ngai was the same as Christian God. As far as they were concerned the Agikuyu Ngai, religion, and culture were paganistic, underdeveloped, and needed to be replaced by Christian God, religion, and culture. There is enough evidence to argue that the missionaries believed that the Agikuyu, and, indeed, the Africans were generally groping in the dark waiting for the full revelation in Jesus Christ. To them African traditional religious beliefs and practices were "a preparation for the gospel."⁴² This view is still held today and has influenced some African Christians. As Professor Mbiti has put it: "Christianity should be presented as the fulfillment of that after which, in all its richness, African religiosity has groped."⁴³

Thus the positive evaluation of the Agikuyu religion was used to win the Agikuyu to Christianity. But, such an evaluation can only be seen on the negative background in which the missionaries viewed the Agikuyu religion. As Kibicho has objectively observed:

All positive evaluations (of Agikuyu religion) were seen in the sense of mere potentiality, and the European saw himself as the agent sent by God to interpret this potentiality for the African and to assist and guide it to what he (the European) understood to be its divinely appointed end, both cultural-religiously and politically.⁴⁴

The negative evaluation of the Agikuyu religion was in many cases exaggerated in order to justify the urgency to convert the Agikuyu to Christianity. By so doing, this would accelerate the Agikuyu realization that after all they were "groping" in the dark and their beliefs could be easily replaced after the good news had been preached to them. One such negative evaluation was expressed by Marion Scott Stevenson of the Church of Scotland Mission. Shortly after her arrival in 1907, she observed that when the message of Christ came to the Agikuyu

It came with force to the receptive youth of a people steeped in animistic beliefs, where fear was the foundation of their religion. The ramifications of their tribal thahu (taboo) had been taught to them during the rites; also some glimmering of their unseen world, peopled with ancestral spirits and a vague [concept of] God,

all of whom had to be propitiated by sacrifices lest evil befall the village or the individual or his belongings.⁴⁵ (*italics mine*)

As recently as 1953, Bewes described the Agikuyu religion as animistic and went on to argue that:

The Agikuyu idea of God is a curious mixture of the personal and impersonal. He is Ngai-baba - (father, God), and yet they use a neuter form, Ngai ni nene (the God, is great); Ngai ni nguru (the God, it is powerful); and will normally use the personal prefix "Mu" only if they have come under Christian influence.⁴⁶

Barlow has expressed a similar view:

While all other Christian attributes of God are found in Agikuyu Ngai, there is lack of revelation. There is no clear and definite revelation embodied in Kikuyu tradition and the communications claimed to be received from Ngai by Kikuyu prophets or mediums are of doubtful authenticity and lacking in religious purpose.⁴⁷

It is quite clear that the missionaries were convinced that the Agikuyu hardly knew who they worshipped, and if they knew, it was only a yearning, a feeling that there was a supernatural power whom they vaguely called Ngai. Although

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the missionaries used the term Ngai in the Bible translation, they only adopted the term but "the content had to be different."⁴⁸ The content had to be sought in the Bible. The Agikuyu had to be summoned to come to Ngai. Songs were composed to specifically call the Agikuyu to Ngai:

1. Andu a Gikuyu, ukai kuri Ngai
Andu a Gikuyu, mutiuke kuri Ngai
Andu a Gikuyu, ukai kuri Ngai
Muone Mwathani witu

Mutiuke kumuhoya x 3
Nowe Mwathani witu⁴⁹

(Agikuyu people come to Ngai
Agikuyu people, please, come
to Ngai
Come to see our Lord.

Please, come to pray him x 3
He is the only our Lord)

2. Itikia Ngai uhunjirie andu aria
angi
Othe matoi maigue mugambo
Umamenyithie ugoro wa Mwathani
Moime nduma-ini mathii utheriini

Itikia Ngai x 3
Na umwihoke we⁵⁰

(Believe in Ngai in order you
may preach to others
All those who do not know
(Him) to hear (His) voice
Let them know the good news
of the Lord
In order they may get out of
the darkness and come to the
light.

Believe in Ngai x 3
And trust in Him only).

These hymns imply among other things that the Agikuyu had no God before Christianity and that any Mugikuyu who heeded the Christian call had to make a total break from the Agikuyu religion and culture. It became a heresy to practice the traditional beliefs and rites. Such practices came to be known as things of the devil (maundu ma ngoma) as opposed to things of God (maundu ma Ngai). This meant that things of the devil included anything associated with the Agikuyu religion and culture while things of God included anything Western. The missionaries demanded from their converts to make a total break from their religion and culture. The break was so complete that any backsliding was referred to as going back to "things of the Agikuyu (gucokerera maundu ma Ugikuyu)."⁵¹

The demand to abandon Agikuyu religion and culture can be seen from the view held by the missionaries that the Agikuyu possessed no moral conscience. "How could morals be found among these people who in their age long abandonment have become so corrupt as to raise practices openly immoral to be a social institution?"⁵² asked Rt. Rev. Perlo, the initiator and the organizer of the Consolata Fathers among the Agikuyu. And

Barlow observed:

Agikuyu have no obligation to love and help all men as taught by Christ. They are self-seeking and self-loving. No self-denial and self-sacrifice is found among them. They have no compassion over the blind and the dumb and crippled. They fear death making them to throw the dead in the bush. They are slaves to superstitious fear or death, thahu (taboo), urogi (witchcraft), evil eye, etc....

They have no philosophy of life yet formulated. They are ignorant of purpose of life, no explanation of birth, life, toil, disease, sorrow, death, etc. So their view of life is limited to earthly existence... (and) ... have no thought of future reward and punishment and the resurrection.⁵³

Since the Agikuyu did not possess a moral conscience, so argued the missionaries, they were an immoral and promiscuous people. This could be observed in their dances and their whole way of life. The following quotation from Margaret Hooper's article reflects this biased view. Describing the nature of an Agikuyu girl in relationship to the dances, Hooper wrote that the primary aim of these dances was

to cultivate a body capable of rousing and holding a man's passions. The dances nearly all tend educationally to this; the lives of those around her

proclaim this . . . , the body has been trained to use what we should term suggestive actions, and the mind has been dulled and clodded with evil thought. Evil knowledge is everywhere. . . . The dances end in immoralities... their whole posturing and rythmic movement tend in that direction. All the forces of sexual passion have been let loose in the young girl, and quite uncontrolled and fearfully to the difficult life of the adolescent.⁵⁴

For Mrs. Hooper, and other missionaries like her, the Agikuyu dances and songs were a source of sexual promiscuity and had to be prohibited in schools and Churches.

The religious interpretation of the Agikuyu cultural traditions and practices clearly indicate a subconscious effort by the missionaries to equate Christianity with Western culture. This was well expressed clearly in the Semi-Jubilee book of the Church of Scotland:

The words of the songs accompanying some of the dances are offensive to the Europeans sense of decency and morals, and such dances act as an incentive to immorality, judged by civilized standards.⁵⁵

In a way the missionaries do not seem to have had

any conflict in equating Christianity with Western culture. In fact, it appears from the above quotations that everything Western was Godly while everything Gikuyu was paganistic. This meant that the missionaries could justify the declaration of a total war against "paganism" - a war that continues even today. With this view in mind, they could justly interpret any protest movement among the Agikuyu as a struggle between the forces of paganism or darkness and the forces of the light. Karing'a movement was seen in this light, as were other protest movements including the Mau Mau revolution. Thus, Blakeslee observed this struggle during the Mau Mau revolution:

Kikuyuland, as has every heathen domain, has been dominated by the prince of darkness for past ages. The flooding of the district with the light of the Gospel has revealed the hidden things of darkness, the character and source of every evil tribal customs. The powers of darkness have retaliated in proportion to the penetration of the Gospel light.⁵⁶

This dualistic interpretation of the Agikuyu view of reality led to a radical replacement of the Agikuyu Ngai, religion, and culture.⁵⁷ It meant those who accepted Christianity had to be radically

and ruthlessly uprooted from the Agikuyu world - the world of darkness - and had to unquestionably accept a New World - the World of Light. In order to do this, the missionaries introduced a concept of 'heaven' that can be described as un-biblical. As Rowley and Grant have argued,

the Biblical descriptions of heaven are symbolic. /Heaven/ was undoubtedly conceived of eschatologically by the NT /New Testament/ writers, but they maintained a great reserve in all their descriptions of the life of the redeemed While they conceived of the heavenly condition as involving social relations, they did not regard it as one in which the physical organism survived.⁵⁸

Although it can be argued that the missionaries would have thought that the concept of 'heaven' they introduced was very biblical, the songs that were composed to glorify heaven indicate otherwise. Most of these songs gave the picture of heaven as a permanent place where "the physical organism survived." Some songs were composed to glorify heaven as a beautiful and holy place:

Kuri mucii mutheru
Matu-ini Iguru
Niguo mucii wa Jesu
Muhonokia witu.

Nakuo kwi na gikeno
 Na wega na wendo
 Gutiri undu muuru
 Kana kieha kuo.⁵⁹

(There is a clean
 (holy) home
 Up in Heaven
 It is the home of Jesus
 Our Saviour.
 It is a home full of
 happiness.
 Peace and love
 There is no evil there
 or sadness).

Other songs were composed to specifically describe
 heaven (iguru) as God's country or God's permanent
 territory:

Ngai ni wa kugocwo!
 Niatwendaga ma
 Niaarutire muriu atuhonokie
 Jesu niaatuikire igongona
 Nigetha tutonye bururi wa
Ngai (*italics mine*)⁶⁰

(To God be the glory for
 He loves us
 He gave His Son to save us
 Jesus became the sacrifice
 In order we could enter
God's country).

Others promised free things in heaven:

Matonyo meru tukaheo
 Tuhu, tuhu, tuhu
 Akorwo tukwenda Jesu.

Nitukaheo indo iguru
 Tuhu, tuhu, tuhu
 Akorwo tukwenda Jesu.⁶¹

(We shall get new clothes
 Free, free, free
 If we love Jesus

We shall get property
Free, free, free
If we love Jesus).

Since people were going to get free things in heaven, they were discouraged to own property on earth:

Ndikwenda utonga kana
uhlu wa thi
Ningwenda kuheo indo
cia matu-ini
Ningenaga ndaigua ati
riitwa riakwa
Niriandike wega marua-ini
maria.62

(I do not want richness or
earthly property
I want to get property
from heaven
I feel happy when I hear
that my name
Is written on the Holy
Book).

Songs were also composed to distinguish those who were destined to heaven (Iguru Matu-ini) and those destined to the earthly state - the state of evil and the devil:

Shaitani na andu ake nio
thu ciitu
Mekwenda tutahwo tutwarwo
gwake
Minyamaro na thina niatuheete
Na niekwenda gutuma tutigane
na Ngai.63

(The Devil and his people are
our enemies
They want us to be taken by
force to his place

He has inflicted trouble
and suffering on us
And he wants us to leave
God).

Children and youth were encouraged to love God's
country and to look forward to going there. They
sang:

Kwi Mucii Muthaka muno,
Iguru Matu-ini
Na nikuo twana twake
tugatwaro niwe
Ni mucii wa gikeno, ni
undu ni wa Ngai
Na kindu kimwe kiuru
gitigatonya kuo.⁶⁴

(There is a beautiful
Home in Heaven
And all His children
shall go there
It is a home of happiness
because it belongs to God
And no evil shall be there).

The above hymns indicate among other things
that 'heaven' is a real place, a territory, a
permanent dwelling place for God and his people,
and a place where people own property and are
forever happy. One can, however, try to rationalize
that the context of these hymns is symbolic but
some of the informants interviewed accept categori-
cally that Heaven is a real place and they look
forward to going there.⁶⁵ This is a fair indication
that the effect of radical replacement of the Agikuyu

cosmology with a heavenly cosmology is still with us today. Indeed, the missionary commitment to the radical discontinuity of the Agikuyu cosmology led either consciously or sub-consciously to the composition of a large number of hymns with a heavenly theme as the two tables in the fourth appendix show. The first table lists hymns with the theme of heaven as a permanent place composed before 1956. The second table lists hymns and choruses with a heavenly theme added in 1956.⁶ As the writers and revisers of these hymns indicate some of the hymns were composed locally and others were not.⁶⁷

If we look at the Table one in the appendix, we will see that the number of hymns with every stanza referring to heaven as a distinct place are 38 out of 217 hymns and choruses, while those with one or more stanzas are 85. Thus the total number of hymns referring to heaven as a distinct territory are 123 which is about 57% of all the hymns. It is also interesting to note that some of the most common and popular hymns during the colonial period were those with the theme of heaven as the researcher can vividly recall.

If we turn to Table Two a similar pattern emerges. Out of 62 hymns seven of them have every stanza referring to heaven while twenty six of them have one or more stanzas referring to heaven. Thus 53% of all the hymns refer to heaven as a distinct place.

If we now combine the total number of hymns in Tables One and Two the total figure will come to 281. Out of this figure 156 hymns refer to heaven in one form or another. This means approximately 52% of all the hymns composed and sung during the colonial period referred to heaven as a "real" and permanent territory. Considering the psychological impact songs have on the minds of any social group, one can argue that the concerted effort by the missionaries to radically replace the Agikuyu religion and culture with Christianity was apparently quite effective. This fact is also supported by the data from the field as already pointed out above.

One would have expected that the negative reaction against the missions in the 1930's was doctrinal in nature; that, indeed, the Agikuyu were reacting to such doctrines as the resurrection, virgin birth, the ten commandments, the Godhead of

Jesus Christ, the concept of God, and supposedly the 'revolutionary' message of the Gospel. Apparently this is not so.

When the informants are asked about these doctrines, they simply argue that they had no problem with them. For example, they associated the ten commandments with Migiro (prohibitions).⁶⁸ The doctrine of the 'holy' conception is rationalized by referring to the mysteriousness of the birth and the life of Chege alias Mugo wa Kibiru, a prominent seer in Agikuyuland in the late 19th century. According to Petro Kagure, Chege was found under a Mubiru tree by a man called Karanja from Mang'u in Kiambu District. Nobody knows who bore him, who conceived him, and how he had come under that Mubiru tree. Likewise, he died mysteriously. According to the same informant, the day before he departed from the people, he slaughtered a goat and put some of the meat and fat in a gourd (gitete). He was then accompanied by some elders for a journey. They came to a big tree. He decided to lie down under the tree for a rest. He asked the elders to

go on. However, the elders persuaded him to continue the journey but he refused. The following day people came to look for him. They could not find him. He had disappeared mysteriously. They could not even trace his paraphernalia.⁶⁹

Kagure's story on the birth and the life of Chege wa Kibiru differs from that of Charles Mucuha. But his story on the mysterious disappearance of Chege agrees with Mucuha.⁷⁰

According to the information gathered by Mucuha, Chege was the son of Kibiru. He was born at Kigemo, Murang'a. Mucuha gives Kihumbuini, Murang'a as another place of his birth. Chege is supposed to have moved to Kimandi some six miles from Chomo, Murang'a where he lived and died. Some of the Mucuha's informants say he was of Agaciku clan and others say he was of Mucera clan.⁷¹

According to Mucuha, Chege wa Kibiru "never argued or bargained with God except for muttering in agreement such words as yes, oh, yes, what should I do."⁷² He travelled widely. He once visited Waiyaki wa Hinga and prophesied that he would be arrested and killed by the white man.⁷³ He used to prophecy between 1.00 a.m. in the morning and 1.00 p.m. in the afternoon. "Sometimes at a beer

party he would be mysteriously taken up by Ngai into the roofs of huts used as stores, for a short time where he would draw the attention of all around, then he would be brought back to earth."⁷⁴

Chege prophesied of the coming of the white man, the railway line from Mombasa to Kisumu, the train, Christianity, wearing of European clothes, selling of the milk in market places,⁷⁵ the coming together of the Agikuyu at Githunguri kia Wairera and of the struggle for freedom in this country.⁷⁶

He said of the coming of Christianity that

those very people /referring to white men/ will bring with them new knowledge about Mwene Nyaga The new comers will beat whoever will not listen and obey this new teaching of Mwene Nyaga. Those who will listen and obey will be taught fully and properly to become teachers of this new knowledge about Mwene Nyaga ... to their own people.⁷⁷

Additionally, the death of Chege wa Kibiru is surrounded with mysteries. According to Mucuha, he died mysteriously in 1908 after Ngai had revealed to him about his death. He is supposed to have

asked his sons to light a fire for him in a bush behind his hut at a place called Kamai. He instructed his sons to watch and tend him until the day they would

come and find his head covered under his mantle. They should then leave him alone and not talk to him. A few days /later/ . . . they found him /gone/ and none of his possessions /could be found/.⁷⁸

The point that is being emphasized here is that the "mysteries" surrounding the life and death of Jesus Christ was not a problem to the Agikuyu. The memories of the "mysterious" life and death of Chege wa Kiburu were still vivid in their minds when the missionaries came. They already believed that Chege was a prophet from Ngai "who never died but was taken to heaven by God."⁷⁹ It should also be emphasized that the prophecies of Chege wa Kiburu helped the Agikuyu to respond to change positively as we shall see later in this study.

The power associated with the cross of Jesus Christ was not a "mystery" to the Agikuyu either. They associated it with the mysterious power that used to cure somebody suffering from measles (githuku) after the patient's hair had been shaven in a form of the cross. Whatever the cross did was not explained by the informants but they said the patient would get cured. The informants did not know either how and when the symbol of the

cross became a significant symbol among the Agikuyu. What the Agikuyu knew is that it had the power to cure just like that of Jesus Christ.⁸⁰

Similarly the doctrine of the resurrection was not received by the Agikuyu with awe and surprise.⁸¹ According to Karimu wa Kibiru, the Agikuyu knew that people could die and rise from the dead. After a person had been seriously sick, he was abandoned in the bush. A fire was lit beside him and some people would watch over him. After he had been pronounced dead, he was left to the hyenas and other scavengers. It just so happened that once in a while a person may recover from his sickness two or three days after he had been pronounced dead. He would "rise from the death" and walk home.

Karimu narrated a very interesting story of one of her step mothers. In answering the questions on how people used to rise from the dead, she said:

Nikwariukagwo ona mundu
 ararite ona akabutha
 mwena mugima akometio
 Mutumia wa baba ...
 uria wakinyirite maitu
 niabuthite mwena mugima
 akiriuka. (Ariuka)
 niekiriirwo muthaiga ni
 ago ... ugitaitikirio

gukiuma. Nii nindonire
na maitho.⁸²

(People used to rise from the dead even after a person had rotted one side of the body. My step mother had been pronounced dead and had rotted one side of her body. She rose from the dead. After she rose, the medicine man applied medicine on her body and she became well. I saw this with my own eyes).

Asked how long the woman was dead, Karimu said, she had been dead for two days.⁸³ She was asked further whether the Christian story of resurrection bothered the Agikuyu, she replied:

Ithui nitwaiguire uguo,
twaigua-ri tukiuga
ona Agikuyu nimariukaga
ona mundu ararite ta ...
(mithenya) itatu.⁸⁴

(We heard about the Christian story of resurrection. When we heard about it, we said that the Agikuyu used to rise from the dead even after three days).

The point that is being stressed here is that the Christian doctrines were not the major cause of the protest movement against the missions in the 1930's. In fact they do not seem to have

played any major role at all. The evidence at hand points to the fact that the major cause was a systematic attempt by the missionaries to radically replace the Agikuyu religion and culture, with a Christian - cum- Western religion and culture.

However, it should be pointed out that the attitudes of the missionaries towards African culture in general can be understood by tracing the religious background of the 18th century England. Eighteenth century England saw the rise and the development of the evangelical movement. One of the leading figures in this movement was John Wesley.⁸⁵ The evangelicals believed in individual conversion; preaching the word of God to a sinful world; the trust in the Holy Spirit; and priesthood of all believers.⁸⁶ The missionaries who came to work among the Agikuyu in the early part of this century were largely evangelicals. According to Murray these missionaries "would have been regarded (and would have regarded themselves) as conservative evangelicals [and as] fundamentalists in the American sense. For all of them a personal 'conversion experience' and not merely a period of formal Christian teaching followed by baptism was necessary for Church membership."⁸⁷ They were also puritan Victorians - drinking, dancing, smoking,

premarital sex, polygamy, divorce, and other worldly amusements were considered evil.⁸⁸ Although the Church Mission Society (CMS) was not as strict as the other missions, it nevertheless encouraged teaching against these customs. The Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), for example, had by 1915 a body of church laws "containing regulations on catechumens, . . . baptism, Christian marriage, polygamy, drunkenness, sexual offences, circumcision, confession of offences and the restoration of disciplined persons to fellowship."⁸⁹

The puritanical and theological orientation of the missionaries led them to emphasize on eschatological evangelism. Many of them envisioned the return of Christ to be near. Therefore, any work be it educational, social or political which seemed to retard the achievement of this objective was not very much encouraged. They did not consider, for example, any form of education that went beyond reading of the Bible to be necessary for their converts.⁹⁰ This was especially the case with the African Inland Mission.

Not only were the missionaries puritanical and conservative but they were also paternalistic. Some like Archdeacon W.E. Owen felt that the

missionaries should control the development of African political movements. For example, after Harry Thuku incident in 1922, Owen discussed with the Senior Commissioner in Kisumu ways and means of controlling the Young Kavirondo Association. He later decided, together with other government officials, to disband the Young Kavirondo Association and replace it with Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KTWA). Owen became the president of KTWA in order he could make politics 'safe' in Nyanza.⁹¹ According to Nancy Murray the missionaries in general "projected an ideology in which imperialists appeared to be united in the common task of working for African welfare. To this end they took it upon themselves to spread an idealized British ruling class version of what colonial domination was all about, disguising bourgeois economic interests as matters of principle."⁹²

The paternalistic attitude and the conservative theological background of the missionaries led them to disapprove the Agikuyu religion and culture, and indeed, of the African heritage in general. They did this by either enforcing church laws which were alien to the Agikuyu or by subtly teaching against the traditional beliefs and practices of the Agikuyu.⁹³

The rise and development of the Karing'a movement can, therefore, be understood by looking, among other things, at the religious and paternalistic background of the missionaries. It is out of this background that the missionaries carried out a systematic campaign against the Agikuyu religious and cultural beliefs and practices. The campaign ultimately led to the female circumcision controversy in 1929 and the subsequent rise of the Karing'a movement. However, prior to the rise of Karing'a movement, there are at least three major factors that contributed to the development of that movement, namely, land alienation, forced labour, and taxation. These factors will be dealt with in the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹For a detailed account of the Agikuyu Religion see Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya, n.d., pp. 222-258; Gathigira, Miikarire ya Agikuyu, pp. 29-40; Hobley, Bantu Beliefs and Magic, 1967 (imp), pp.19-206; and Routledge, With A Prehistoric People 1968 edition, pp.225-282ff.

²Kenyatta, op.cit., p.255.

³Ibid., p.223.

⁴Hobley, op.cit., pp.31-32.

⁵Leakey, L.S.B., The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903, Vol.III, London, Academic Press Inc. Ltd., 1977, p.1117.

⁶0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru; Karimu wa Kibiru, and Ndubiru wa Mbete, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge, Interviewed, 24/10/74, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

⁷0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, Interviewed 9/5/79, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

⁸0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru and Njenga wa Kahira, Interviewed 3/5/79, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

⁹Kenyatta, op.cit., p.256. See also Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, p.89.

¹⁰Ibid., p.257.

¹¹Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, p.9.

¹²0.1. Samuel Mathu, op.cit., Ibrahim Njoroge, Interviewed 25/10/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu, 22

and Nyamu Kamau, Interviewed 14/2/74,
Ndenderu, Kiambu.

¹³See Barlow Papers

¹⁴0.1. Johanah Kamau, Interviewed 3/2/77,
Rironi, Kiambu, Ibrahim Njoroge
op.cit., and Petro Kagure wa Kariuki,
Interviewed 3/2/77, Rironi Kiambu.

¹⁵0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., Petro
Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit., Kuria wa
Runo, Interviewed 3/2/77, Rironi,
Kiambu, and Joshua Mucheru, Interviewed
24/12/74, Kabuku, Kiambu just to
mention a few.

¹⁶0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.

¹⁷Idowu, Bolaji, E., African Traditional
Religion: A Definition, London,
SCM Press, 1973, p.150.

¹⁸Smith, Edwin W. (Ed.), African Ideas of God:
A Symposium, London, Edinburg House,
1950, p.4.

¹⁹Hobley, C.W. Ethnology of the Akamba and Other
East African Tribes, London, Cambridge
University Press, 1910, p.85.

²⁰0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru, Mucone wa Kibiru, and
Munyui wa Gichura, Interviewed 23/9/78,
Ndenderu, Kiambu.

²¹0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.

²²0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru, op.cit.

²³0.1. Ibid., Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.,
Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and Joshua
Muceru op.cit.

²⁴Gathigira, op.cit., p.29.

- ²⁵Routledge, op.cit., pp.225-226.
- ²⁶Gathigira, op.cit., p.30.
- ²⁷This information has been given by almost all the informants interviewed by the researcher.
- ²⁸Gathigira, op.cit., p.29.
- ²⁹0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ³⁰0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., Petro Kagure, op.cit., and Mucone wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ³¹Gathigira, op.cit., p.33-39.
- ³²Ibid., pp.39-40.
- ³³Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.234-253.
- ³⁴For a detailed account of these prayers see Kibicho, Samuel G., "The Kikuyu conception of God, Its Continuity into the Christian Era, and the question it Raises for the Christian Idea of Revelation", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A., December, 1972, pp.48-50.
- ³⁵Cagnolo, op.cit., p.28.
- ³⁶Kibicho, op.cit., p.1.
- ³⁷Ibid., p.11.
- ³⁸Ibid., pp.1-2.
- ³⁹Hobley, 1967 (imp), op.cit., p.22.
- ⁴⁰Kibicho, op.cit., p.83 quoting Kikuyu News No.24, December, 1910, pp.3-5.

⁴¹Ibid., p.83 quoting from Kikuyu News, No.3, May, 1908, pp.1-2.

⁴²Dain, Ronald and Diepen, van Jac, Luke's Gospel for Africa To-day! A School Certificate Course Based on the East African Syllabus for Christian Religious Education, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1972, p.6.

⁴³Ibid., p.6 quoting Professor John S. Mbiti in a lecture presented to the Christian Church's Educational Association of Kenya, September 19, 1969. Professor Mbiti has advanced this theme in his book African Religions and Philosophy, op.cit., passim.

⁴⁴Kibicho, op.cit., pp.93-94.

⁴⁵Scott, Henry, E. (Mrs.), A Saint in Kenya: A Life of Marion Scott Stevenson, London, Hodda and Stoughton, 1932, pp.68-69.

⁴⁶Bewes, T.F.C., The Work of the Christian Church among the Kikuyu, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953, p.317.

⁴⁷Barlow Papers, op.cit.

⁴⁸Bewes, op.cit., p.317.

⁴⁹Nyimbo cia Kuinira Ngai (A Book of Hymns in the Kikuyu Language and Supplement), London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1956 edition, Hymn No.60.

⁵⁰Ibid., Hymn, No.50.

⁵¹Kibicho, Samuel, G., "The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and

through Christianity: with the Kikuyu conception of 'Ngai' as a case - study", a paper delivered at a Research Seminar on 'Christianity in Independent Africa', University of Nairobi, January 14th, 1975, p.9.

⁵² Cagnolo, op.cit., p.257.

⁵³ Barlow Papers, op.cit..

⁵⁴ Kibicho, "The Kikuyu conception of God, Its continuity into the Christian Era, and the Question it Raises for the Christian Idea of Revelation", p.74 quoting Church Missionary Review, LXXIV (1923) in an article "Beauty for Ashes" by Margaret C. Hooper,, pp.149-150.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.73 quoting Semi-Jubilee Book of the Church of Scotland, p.18.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.106 quoting Blakeslee, Beyond the Kikuyu Curtain, p.7.

⁵⁷ For a detailed account of what Dr. Kibicho calls the radical replacement and discontinuity of the Agikuyu Ngai, religion, and culture see his thesis, op.cit., passim.

⁵⁸ Grant, F.C. and Rowley, H.H., Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, Revised edition, 1963, p.370.

⁵⁹ Nyimbo Cia Kuinira Ngai, op.cit., Hymn No.37.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Hymn No.79.

⁶¹ Ibid., Hymn No.105.

⁶² Ibid., Hymn No.126.

- 63 Ibid., Hymn No. 113
- 64 Ibid., Hymn, No.170
- 65 0.1 Andrew Ngoiya, Interviewed 29/8/77, Ndumberi; Stephen Kinuthia, Interviewed 25/9/77; and Rachel Nyamwathi, Interviewed 5/9/77, Dagoretti, Nairobi.
- 66 Nyimbo cia Kuinira Ngai, op.cit, passim
- 67 Ibid., P.iv
- 68 0.1 Daudi Ndirangu, Interviewed 10/5/74, Ndumberi, Kiambu, Samuel Mathu, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- 69 0.1 Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit. Kagure who is now over 100 years old told the researcher that he personally knew Chege was Kibiru. He told the researcher that Chege was a heavy set man of medium height and that he never married.
- 70 For a detailed account on the life and death of Chege wa Kibiru see Charles Mucuha, Chege wa Kibiru, UCN/HD - RPA/B/2/2, n.d. According to Mucuha, Chege was married to two wives. One of his sons Kibunja lives in Nyahururu as a squatter.
- 71 Ibid., pp. 1-4.
- 72 Ibid., p. 1
- 73 Ibid., pp. 1-5.
- 74 Ibid., p.4.
- 75 Ibid., passim.

- ⁷⁶0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit.; Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.; Joshua Muceru, Interviewed 2/1/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu; Stephano Wacira, op.cit.; and Kuria wa Runo, Interviewed 3/2/77, Rironi, Kiambu.
- ⁷⁷Mucuha, op.cit., p.21.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., p.6.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., p.23.
- ⁸⁰0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru, Interviewed 29/11/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu, Karimu wa Kibiru, Interviewed 23/9/78, Ndenderu, Kiambu; Ndubiru wa Mbete, Interviewed 20/11/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu, and Nyawira wa Mucone, Interviewed 20/11/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ⁸¹For a detailed account on the Agikuyu concept of death and the resurrection see Njoki wa Kamau, "Attitudes Towards Death and Coming Back to Life Among the Agikuyu and their attitudes towards death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ", February, 1980; and Wangechi Waititu, "The Agikuyu Concept of Death and Resurrection and their attitudes towards Christian's doctrine of Resurrection", February, 1980. These research papers can be obtained from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi, Kenya.
- ⁸²0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ⁸³Ibid.
- ⁸⁴Ibid.
- ⁸⁵Pike, G. Holden, John Wesley, The Man and His Mission, London, The Religious Tract

Society, n.d. See also Warren, A.C.M., What is an Evangelical, London, 1944; Hellenwerger, Walter, J., The Pentecostals, London, SCM Press Ltd., 1972; and Bartner, Robert, W. and Chiles, Robert, E., A Compend of Wesley's Theology, New York, Abington Press, n.d.

- ⁸⁶Atieno-Odhiambo, E.S., "A Portrait of the Missionaries in Kenya Before 1939" in Kenya Historical Review: The Journal of the Historical Association of Kenya, No.1, Vol.1, 1973, Nairobi, p.2 quoting Warren, What is an Evangelical, p.16.
- ⁸⁷Murray, Jocelyn, M., "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy, with special reference to the Church Missionary Society", p.45.
- ⁸⁸Ibid., p.48.
- ⁸⁹Ibid., p.48 quoting Macpherson, op.cit., p.67.
- ⁹⁰Ibid., p.52. See also Capon, M.G., Toward Unity in Kenya, Nairobi, Christian Council of Kenya, 1962.
- ⁹¹Murray, Nancy, U., "Archdeacon W.E. Owen: Missionary as Propagandist". A paper presented at a seminar in the History Department, Kenyatta University College, January, 1980, p.13 quoting Owen Papers Acc. 83/0313, November 23, 1922 and April 25, 1927. See also Zwanerberg, Roger Van M., "The Missionary Conscience and Colonial Injustices: The Life and Times of W.E. Owen of Nyanza" in Politics and Leadership in Africa, Ojuka, Aloo and Ochieng, William, (eds.) Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1975, pp.63-84.

⁹² Ibid., p.19.

⁹³ Murray, Jocelyn, op.cit., p.50. See also Atieno-Odhiambo, op.cit., p.11.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREATION OF THE COLONIAL SOCIETY
AND THE RISE OF THE AGIKUYU
POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

We have seen in the last two chapters how the colonialists and the missionaries radically set out to introduce a new religious and social structure in the Agikuyu society. This was effected through what has been described as "the radical replacement and discontinuity of the Agikuyu traditional society." It marked what might be regarded as the "First Phase" of sowing the seeds for the development of the Karing'a Movement. What is being discussed in this chapter as the "Second Phase" involved the shaking of the social foundations of the Agikuyu society through land alienation, forced labour, and taxation. This phase created favourable "centres" for the rapid development of the Karing'a movement, namely, the European settled areas, reserves and the urban centres. It was during this phase that the "colonial society" was created, a society in which the Africans were subjected to political, social and economic oppression. The colonialists became the "Masters" and the Africans became the "Servants".

It was also during this phase that Agikuyu political associations were first formed.

We shall look at the creation of the colonial society first. There are at least three factors that led to the creation of the colonial society, namely, land alienation, forced labour, and taxation.

Land alienation took at least four forms. As already noted in the first chapter, Agikuyu land tenure could absorb the landless /ahoi (pl.); muhoi (sing.)⁷ by giving them building and cultivation rights. This traditional practice misled some Agikuyu when the colonialists came. They mistook the colonialists to be ahoi. Consequently they gave some of them land to build and cultivate on hoping they would soon go away. However, they found out rather too late that the colonialists were here to stay and could not be considered as ahoi.

Below is a letter of one Gacui Gitemburi who became a victim of exploitation of the Agikuyu Ahoi system.¹ The letter is one of many letters that were sent by the Agikuyu to air their grievances to the Land Commission of 1934. It was addressed to the Hon. the Senior Commissioner, Nyeri through District Commissioner, Kiambu. The letter is dated 13th October, 1931, Dagoretti, Kikuyu:

Dear Sir,

I beg most humbly and respectfully to lay the following points before your honour and sincerely trust that it will meet with kind consideration.

My purpose in writing to you is this. In 1903, Mr. MacClellan arrived at Dagoretti as a pioneer, and he had no place to pitch his tents, so he asked me of my shamba to build an office and other houses for staying.

I agreed with him to take a sufficient piece for building the whole camp. Then in 1912 another part of my land was taken by force ... and that place which was taken without my consent is about three quarter of former one.

He did not pay a single cent to me or to my relation for the first piece neither for second one. They destroyed many crops and I did not get any compensation for my labour.

.... In 1930 when Mr. Rlyland was making a new road through the native reserve he destroyed many crops too. After destruction he promised that he will pay to me 60/= for my compensation but he left Kiambu District before paying anything.

.... I did good deeds to the pioneer (*italics mine*), ... and now I have to weep for it. ...

It is about 28 years since he built this Boma on my Shamba. I ask to be given back all my Shamba which at present no one ever uses it but it is said that it is part of government but it is not a township; it is a trading centre.... All my relations are scattered all over the country because they have nowhere to live....

Many thanks for receiving this matter which I expect you will be waiting to find as much information as you will be able.

Thanking you in anticipation, Sir.

Your most obedient servant,

(thumbstamped)

Gacui Gitemburi

Gacui was one of the many Agikuyu who lost his land through the exploitation of ahoi system by the white man. Others lost their land through the Agikuyu barter system. Traditionally, a man could buy land by exchanging goats, sheep, and cows with the landowner. The colonialists seized this opportunity by bartering their goods such as blankets, bracelets, necklaces, beads, sugar, and other foreign items for the land.²

The colonialists also used the Agikuyu taboo of the use of rubbish-heap (thumu wa kiara) to obtain land. Traditionally, it was a taboo to use manure from rubbish-heap. The pit in which this manure was deposited was a dumping ground for every form of dirt and filth from the homestead including stillborn babies. The Agikuyu believed that this manure was ceremoniously unclean and could be contagious.³ On the other hand, it was a symbol of wealth. The wealthier a person was, the higher the rubbish-heap was.⁴

When the colonialists learned about this taboo, they started urging and even forcing the Agikuyu to use the pit manure. The Agikuyu refused to use the manure, and instead preferred to leave their homesteads. The colonialists would then take the homestead and the surrounding land. When the Agikuyu became aware of this trick, they broke the taboo and started using the manure.⁵

The above method of exploitation of the Ahoi system was short-lived. First, the Agikuyu learned fast that their traditional practices were being used against them. Second, that the colonialists needed more land. They had to turn to some other methods such as force and false arguments to justify their land alienation policy.

In 1894, Francis Hall and Major Smith carried

a punitive expedition in Kiambu and Murang'a. They massacred several Agikuyu, burned their villages, and "brought in 1,100 goats and loads of grains ... but we didn't manage to do much execution as the brutes (*italics mine*) wouldn't stand."⁶ In 1904, Col. R. Meinertzhagen led another punitive expedition which left 796 Kikuyu dead, and captured 782 cattle and 2,150 sheep and goats.⁷ These punitive expeditions which spread throughout Central Province, virtually overcame the Agikuyu resistance ridge by ridge. However, as Rosberg and Nottingham have observed, "there was no symbolic moment of surrender to the new authority, while acquiescing to British rule ... the resilient Kikuyu seldom behaved with timidity, apathy, or obsequiousness that might have been displayed by a more decisively conquered people."⁸

According to one informant, some Agikuyu fled from their land after these expeditions partly because of the fear of the "strangers" and partly because of the prophecy of Chege wa Kibiru.⁹

Chege had prophesied that the "strangers" would kill with deadly weapons which produced fires and that the people should not fight back with bows and arrows for they would be annihilated.¹⁰

Following Chege's prophecy, some Agikuyu left

their land and retreated into the forests, coffee plantations, mission stations, and into any other place they could find refuge. The "centres" for the Karing'a movement were slowly and painfully emerging.

The punitive expeditions were followed by two land theories. The first of these theories was the Athi theory, which alleged that the land owned by the Agikuyu in Murang'a and Nyeri was originally owned by the Athi people. The Agikuyu could not therefore claim the rightful ownership of land in those two districts. They were as much newcomers as the colonialists.¹¹ However, according to the Agikuyu tradition on this question, "Athi were Kikuyu pioneers who hunted for their livelihood."¹²

The Ndorobo¹³ theory, on the other hand, stressed the fact that the Agikuyu in Kiambu District were as late comers as the colonialists. However, the Agikuyu insisted that though they were new comers, they had bought the land from the Ndorobo and the purchases were irredeemable. The colonialists on the other hand, argued that "in the Ndorobo view, the sales were never completed because the Kikuyu had not kept up their payments of goats."¹⁴ In general, these two theories

were not different. Both were used to accomplish one objective, that is, to alienate land from the Agikuyu in Nyeri, Murang'a and Kiambu Districts.

It is a fact that although the Agikuyu had bought land from the Ndorobo, they had not fully bought all the land in Kiambu, hence, they were very sensitive talking about the history of their migration in Kiambu.¹⁵ However, it is also a fact that by 1900 most of the land that appeared unoccupied in Kiambu was the result of several epidemics that had hit the Agikuyu prior to the coming of the colonialists. Swarms of locusts had devastated the land between 1894-1899. This was followed by "severe drought in 1897-98, a cattle plague in 1898, a serious famine in 1898/99 and an outbreak of smallpox simultaneously."¹⁶ It is estimated that the mortality rate ranged between 50 to 95 per cent of the Agikuyu population. The effects of these disasters account, therefore, for most of the land that apparently appeared unoccupied when the colonialists arrived. Most of this land was taken by the colonialists between 1902-1903.¹⁷

The claim by the colonialists that they found unoccupied land in Kiambu cannot, therefore, be dismissed as false but it must be seen in the

light of the epidemics that had hit Kiambu as mentioned above. Likewise, their claim that some of the land bought from the Ndorobo was not fully paid for cannot be dismissed as absolutely false. Of course, there is enough evidence that some Agikuyu had fully bought the land from the Ndorobo.¹⁸ But there is also evidence that some of the land was not fully bought, for example, Mbari ya Muhoro (Muhoro's lineage) of Ndenderu, Kiambu District confiscated some land from a Ndorobo after they had bought it very cheaply.¹⁹ Other incidents of taking land by force from the Ndorobo occurred when the land was bought by one or two rich families. The families could ask a Ndorobo to sell the rest of his land to them. If he refused, they forced him to vacate the land. This practice was not very common because people were frightened of being bewitched by the Ndorobo.²⁰

It should be pointed out that the colonialists used these land theories to justify their claims that the Agikuyu in Kiambu were just as new comers as themselves. However, they do not seem to have taken these theories too seriously because they could take the land through the legislative power, and thereby ignore the theories.

Before 1900 land alienation to the colonialists

was through direct negotiation with the Agikuyu as we have mentioned above. However, this method was soon abolished "because the local officials feared that the Kikuyu would become the victims of unscrupulous settlers, Asian and European."²¹ The government thereafter assumed the control of the alienation of land. In 1901, the East Africa (Lands) Order in council was passed. This Order defined the Crown land as "all 'public' land subject to the control of His Majesty."²² In 1902, the Crown Lands Ordinance was passed. This Ordinance stated that "in all dealings with Crown land regard shall be had for the rights and requirements of natives, and in particular the Commissioner shall not sell or lease any land in the actual occupation of natives."²³ These two pieces of legislation assumed inter alia that any waste or unoccupied land was not owned by the Africans, therefore, such lands could be alienated to immigrants.

However, there is enough evidence to show that African rights provided in the 1902 Ordinance were ignored. In Kiambu - Limuru area, for example, more than 60,000 acres of land were taken from the Agikuyu between 1903-1905. According to the Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 1934, more than 11,000 Agikuyu families were the rightful owners of this

land.²⁴ The white settlers were required to pay the owners of this land two rupees per acre for the land that was cultivated and two rupees per house. This money was hardly paid.²⁵ The families that were evicted were given forest land in Lari-Kiriita area but some of them refused to go there and so their houses were set on fire.²⁶

The violations of the 1902 Ordinance led to the creation of 'reserves' for the Africans in order (among other things) that more land could be alienated to the European. In 1906, "the boundaries of two Kikuyu 'reserves', one covering the Nyeri and Fort Hall (now Murang'a) portions of the Kikuyu country, the other covering Kiambu were published in the Official Gazette."²⁷ Nevertheless, this did not stop the government from alienating some of the land in the 'reserves'.²⁸

In 1915, however, a policy on African 'reserves' was introduced and passed in the Legislative Council²⁹ under the Crown Land Ordinance. According to this Ordinance, any land occupied by the Africans in the 'reserves' could not be sold or leased by the colonial government. But if the government saw that such land was no longer required for the use by the Africans, it could be taken with the consent of

the Secretary of State for the Colonies. However, for reasons only known to the colonial government, this Ordinance was not officially implemented until 1926.³⁰ In 1921, the Chief Justice declared in a case of one Kiai that "the only owner of land reserved for the use of tribes was the Crown ... (and that) all native rights in such reserved land ... thereof [were to become] tenants at will of the Crown."³¹ The decree strengthened the 1915 Ordinance and left the Africans at the mercy of the British Crown.

Although the 1915 Ordinance had become law in 1926, it was shortlived. In 1928, another bill was introduced in the Legislative Council "providing for a Trust Land Board with European settler but not African representation and with power to grant land in the reserves to non-Africans on short term leases."³² The bill went through in 1930 and was passed as the Native Lands Trust Ordinance. This meant therefore the 1926 Ordinance was nullified. The New Trust Board could alienate land reserved for the Africans if the Local Native Council agreed but if the latter objected the matter was to be referred to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.³³

The 1930 Ordinance might have benefited

the Asians who, since 1908, could not own land in the 'white' highlands. But it was a big blow to the Africans who now had to share the small "reserved land" with the Asians. In a move to prevent the Asians and the Africans from owning the land in the 'white' highlands, Lord Elgin, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, had declared in 1908 that "as a matter of administrative convenience grants of rural land in the highlands should not be made available to Asians or other non-Europeans."³⁴ This policy which came to be known as "Elgin Pledges" became law and thereby brought into being the famous "White Highlands". It appears, therefore, the 1930 Ordinance compensated the Asians for what they had lost in 1908.

It is quite clear from what has been said so far that by 1930, the government had virtually assumed complete control of the land and the Africans had become "tenants" on their own soil. According to Welbourn "by 1926, nine thousand square miles (of land) were in the hands of about two thousand Europeans some of them absentee landlords as against the forty seven thousand square miles tentatively (italics mine) described as Native Reserves for an African population of about two and a half million."³⁵ And Kenyatta has

observed that "by 1933 there were about 110,000 Gikuyu [living] as squatters on farms on European land in various districts of Kenya."³⁶

While it appears as if only the colonial government was involved in alienating land for European settlement, this is not really so. The missionaries had their role to play as well. They alienated land for the "settlement of the Gospel" in the 'hearts' of the Agikuyu, hence, their aim for the alienation of land was just as disturbing as that of the Colonial Government.

In 1898, for example, the East African Scottish Industrial Mission was set up at Thogoto near Dagoretti. The mission led by Rev. Thomas Watson alienated 3,000 acres of land at Thogoto. After a long battle some of this land was returned later.³⁷

The idea to establish a Scottish Mission at Thogoto was at first conceived by Sir William Mackinnon, the Chairman of the Imperial British East Africa Company in 1889 and Alexander Bruce, the director of the company. They wanted to set up "a private Christian mission in the heart of the territory their company was administering on behalf of the British government."³⁸ The mission was going to be dedicated to religious education, general

education, medical and industrial education. It was going to be patterned on similar missions at Lovedale, South Africa, and Blantyre, Malawi.

Rev. Dr. Clement Scott from Blantyre Mission was appointed to head the mission. His ambition was to make the mission at Thogoto to be

the main bastion of a chain of mission stations of the Blantyre type, stretching northwards to the Abyssian border and beyond, each ultimately to be self supporting where possible by agricultural or industrial work. 39

To achieve this goal, he needed a lot of land.

Consequently he applied for three thousand acres of land from the Protectorate Government. The government granted him one thousand acres of land on a ninety-nine-year-lease. In granting this land, the government never consulted Mbari ya Hinga (Hinga's lineage) who were the rightful owners of the land. This did not help in establishing better relations between the Agikuyu at Thogoto and the missionaries - a relationship which was already strained following Waiyaki's death.

As we shall see later in the next chapter, the mission at Thogoto became the main centre for the campaign against the Agikuyu beliefs and

traditional practices particularly the female circumcision. It was also at Thogoto that the famous Thogoto Declaration was signed, thereby inaugurating the split in the Church between the Abolitionists (Kirore) and the Karing'a. It was also near Thogoto that the first Agikuyu nationalist song, Muthirigu, was first sung in defence of the Agikuyu cultural traditions.

After alienating three thousand acres at Thogoto, the Church of Scotland Mission set up another mission at Tumutumu in 1907 where more land was alienated. Drs. Arthur and Scott who set up the new mission tried at first to persuade one Chief Rukanga and his mbari to give or sell land to them. The chief refused. Another shrewd missionary by the name of Barlow threatened to use force if the chief and his mbari did not comply. Barlow is reported to have said in Gikuyu "Ndoka kurehe urugari na heho" (I have come to bring warmth and coldness). Finally, Barlow succeeded in using presents and persuasive language to get Chief Rukanga to accept his demands.⁴⁰

Where the missionaries did not acquire land through persuasive means, they were given land by the Colonial government - the land which in most cases was in the 'reserves' since most of

the missions were in the 'reserves'. According to a government circular dated 1st September, 1925, it was stipulated that a mission board could be allocated a plot not exceeding five acres but could be given up to forty acres if the board proposed to build a hospital and an agricultural school. The plot would be leased for ninety years. The mission could pay a nominal fee of five shillings per acre annually payable to the Native Trust Fund or Local Native Fund. There must be one European in residence. Failure to carry out this condition for one year could lead to the termination of the lease. Lastly, no mission could be granted such land unless it was ten miles from another mission station.⁴¹

We can summarize this section on the alienation of land by noting several points. First, the Agikuyu became tenants (Ahoi) on their own soil, and thereby their land tenure system was abolished. This was contrary to their belief that Ngai had given each people their own territory. Second, land alienation created 'reserves' and the European 'settled areas'. These were later going to develop into the "centres" of discontent and the breeding grounds of Karing'a movement. Third, a new social structure emerged

which created a situation whereby Africans literally became slaves in their own land. This new social structure affected the Agikuyu greatly since most of their land had been alienated to the colonialists. Subsequently, their traditional social structure was equally affected. This new social structure was later challenged by the Karing'a movement.

What might be considered as "domestic slavery" was introduced to the Agikuyu, and indeed, to all Africans in the form of forced labour and taxation. At first, it took the form of the exodus of the Agikuyu from the 'reserves' to become 'squatters'. This exodus was partly because of the scarcity of land in the reserves and partly because of the introduction of taxation. However, the question of population increase cannot be overruled as another contributing factor.⁴² The other cause for the exodus was through force. As we will see later, Chiefs were used by the Europeans to forcefully recruit labour for them.

As Sorrenson has pointed out initially "there was little control over the labour force on European farms. The usual arrangement was for a European settler to encourage Kikuyu labourers to reside on the farm as squatters, allowing them to cultivate land and to graze stock."⁴³ This

method of recruiting labour was primarily due to the fact that large tracts of land that had been alienated were not being utilized. For example, the Native Labour Commission of 1912 found out that the majority of the Europeans did not utilize the land which they owned. The following is a list of some of the Europeans who were interviewed by the Commission and were found to have large tracts of land which was not used:

Lord Delamere owned 150,000 acres and only 3,000 acres were under cultivation; F.O.B. Wilson of Machakos owned 6,600 acres and only 80 acres were utilized; A.L. Block of Kiambu had 1,850 acres of which about 200 acres were under cultivation; R. Hankcock of Kiambu owned 2,000 acres and only 150 acres were under cultivation, and V.M. Nawland had 250 acres and only 70 acres were utilized.⁴⁴

These figures show among other things that the European settlers could easily get cheap labour since they had ample land to give to the squatters. According to the Commission's report, the wages on most of the European farms averaged between two shillings and seven shillings a month without food or house. The working hours averaged between ten to twelve hours a day.⁴⁵ The fact that the settlers could give land to squatters led to what might be termed as "voluntary exodus"

to the European farms. The scarcity of land in the 'reserves' forced many Africans to voluntarily migrate to European farms. However, this 'voluntary exodus' did not last long.

In Kiambu District, for example, when the coffee crops started to mature in 1910, "there was a persistent demand from the European settlers to get rid of, or at least to reduce the number of Kikuyu squatters."⁴⁶ There was also the issue of squatters taking up more and more land as their families and stock increased. In order to deal with this problem, the government passed a Masters and Servant Ordinance in 1906. Under this Ordinance, the settlers and the government departments could employ Africans on a three year contract. The settlers were permitted to set aside a certain area of land for squatters to cultivate and keep stock. But "by 1928 it was estimated that almost twenty per cent of the European farm area in the highlands was occupied by resident labourers and their stock."⁴⁷ This was an alarming portion of settlers' land, and, moreover, it was creating a class of landed Africans on the farms. The government reacted by reducing the contracts to one year and monthly contracts were allowed.⁴⁸ Many squatters

were evicted from their 'land' and sent home. This created "some dissension among Kikuyu labourers in the Rift Valley. For example, in 1929, some of them refused to re-engage on new contracts. The ring-leaders were sent back to the reserve (where trouble was already brewing)."49

It should be pointed out, however, that 'voluntary exodus' to the settlers' farms should not be exaggerated. Many people preferred to stay at home unless it was absolutely necessary to go to the European farms. They were aware of the poor working conditions on the farms; the salaries were not encouraging; and the family life was drastically affected on the farms because usually the husbands left their families in the reserves. Many people refused to go to work on the European farms. The government reacted by using force.

In 1919 a decree was issued in which all the government officials were instructed to "exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied male natives to go into the labour field. Where farms are situated in the

neighbourhood of a native area, women, and children should be encouraged to go out for such labour as they can perform."⁵⁰ The chiefs were used to forcefully recruit labour in the reserves. Giving evidence to the Native Labour Commission (1912-1913); Chief Kutu of Embu and Ndia Districts stated that whenever recruiters came for labour, he used to send his headmen to get labour. If any man refused to work, he used to go with his askaris and take the man's goats and sent them to Embu.⁵¹ Njiri wa Karanja, a headman, used to catch by force those men who refused to go to work. He would also get their goats and kill them.⁵² Headmen Wokabi wa Kirunguru and Ngotho wa Munyuru both under Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, stated how they and Kinyanjui procured labour for Europeans by force without which their efforts were liable to prove a failure.⁵³ They denied having received any bribes for this job.

Individuals gave evidence on how they were used by the Chiefs. Mbatia wa Gicheru who had been adopted by Chief Kinyanjui had this to say:

When Kinyanjui gave an order for, say, 200 men to be brought in to work, he, with seven other retainers like himself and two Council Elders

would go out together to collect /men/ and bring them to Kinyanjui. They went from house to house and called them out but did not interfere with men already working for wages. If a man refused to come, Kinyanjui would be told and the man's goats taken away until he complied in which case they would be returned to him. The men were collected from different parts on different occasions. One man would always be left in a village. ... Men often ran away or hid themselves; in which case they would be followed and caught.⁵⁴

And other witnesses told of how they were mistreated by Europeans. Kamau W. Muchiri of Dagoretti told of how his employer

had made him and some others to pull a plough with a rope and had beaten them when they rested for a little while. After one and a half month's work, he asked for his wages and was ... struck on the head with a stone and had reported the fact at the government office. All of them were constantly in trouble with this settler and were in the habit of going to Dagoretti to complain; at another time a man who had been severely hurt by him went home and was replaced by his father in case he should be accused of desertion.⁵⁵

The Commission did not report what action had been taken against this employer.

The Government was just as unfair and brutal as the settlers. Kamau wa Kabiana told of how

he had been taken by force to Chief Kinyanjui at whose village there was a European who wanted men. At that time 400 men were sent to work. They had been taken to the Government Office, Nairobi. They were to work during a period of three months but had not attached thumb marks to a form of contract. /After three months/ he had been paid one rupee and been compelled to take two rupees from the sale of his produce to (pay) the tax. 56

There were cases where recruiters were paid so much money for procuring labour for the settlers,⁵⁷ and cases where men were forcefully recruited and later abandoned by their employers in places far away from home after they had finished their jobs.⁵⁸

The forced labour was not only required on the settlers farms but it was also required in the 'reserves'. In 1910, the Native Reserves Ordinance was passed. This Ordinance demanded free labour from all able-bodied males for the construction and maintenance of boundary beacons, or mounds, roads, and bridges. In 1912, the Native Authority Ordinance was passed. The Ordinance demanded free labour for the construction and maintenance of any water course or other

work for the benefit of the community.⁵⁹ The Chiefs, Headmen, and the Askaris were used to get this labour.

The forced labour was one of the evils that greatly shook the social foundations of the Agikuyu society. The families, lineages, and clans were separated. This made the Agikuyu kinship system unworkable. The role of the man as the head of the homestead was imperilled, for in most cases, he worked in towns and on the plantations while his family was in the reserve. The traditional councils of elders were no longer workable since some of the elders had either moved to the plantations while even in the "reserves" the authority of the elders was undermined by the imposition of the newly created colonial leadership of chiefs, headmen, askaris, and the Local Native Councils.

However, it must be emphatically pointed out that the Agikuyu chiefs and their henchmen played just as strong a role as the colonialists in implementing forced labour. As the above cases show, the chiefs were just as ruthless as the Europeans. They were to play an even bigger role in the taxation programme which was introduced "with the avowed purpose of securing revenue - /for

the government]; but had the effect of compelling Africans to seek employment from Europeans."⁶⁰

In order to justify the introduction of the Hut and Poll tax, Lord Delamere, one of the leading settlers declared in 1913:

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native It is on this that the supply of labour and the price of labour depend. To raise the rate of wages would not increase but diminish the supply of labour. A rise in the rate of wages would enable the hut and poll tax of a family, sub-tribe or tribe to be earned by fewer external workers.⁶¹

Another settler, Richard Bauer argued in an article in the East African Standard of October 2, 1924, that as far as the Agikuyu were concerned, they were "naturally idle, [and, therefore]; they can be assisted to improve their conditions only by having the result of study and systematized labour brought directly before them."⁶² The most effective weapon to do this was through taxation.

In order to facilitate the collection of taxes, the Kipande was introduced in 1919. Kipande was a metal container in which the registration

papers of an individual were carried.⁶³ All males over sixteen years of age were required to get the Kipande - failure to get it resulted in a fine of £300/=; with or without a month's imprisonment ... By 28th February, 1922 the total number of offenders ... was 8,377 (involving tens of thousands detentions and interrogations).⁶⁴

Every holder of the Kipande was required to pay poll tax plus tax for each dependent living in a separate "hut". If he did not pay "hut" tax, his "hut" was sometimes burned to the ground regardless of what would happen to the family. On top of these taxes, every man was required to pay taxes for his extra wives but not for the first one. Extra wives were taxed because the colonialists argued that a man with extra wives was rich, and, therefore, he should pay more taxes. This meant that a polygamist had to force his wives to live in very congested conditions to avoid building more "huts".

In addition to Hut and Poll taxes, Africans were required to pay cess tax and participate in the unpaid forced labour. The cess tax was paid by the Africans living in the "reserve". The cess was supposedly used for development of African education, construction of roads, bridges, and hospitals in the "reserves". As would be

expected, in order to avoid the cess tax a lot of African males drifted into towns and the European farms in search of employment.

The unpaid forced labour was required from all adult males. They were required "to do six days unpaid work every three months. The penalty for refusal was formerly a fine of up to $\underline{140/-}$."⁶⁵ In 1928, Sir Edward Grigg, the then Governor of Kenya, imposed two months "rigorous imprisonment" or "communal labour" for Africans. This work consisted of making and repairing roads, building bridges and government buildings. But even as far back as 1915, women and young girls were forced to work on European farms with no pay. However, according to Thuku, this forced labour was stopped by the colonial office in 1921.⁶⁶ It might have been stopped officially but it continued all the same, for in 1929, the "penalty for refusing to do the ... communal labour on roads and Government buildings was increased from a fine equivalent to a labourer's gross income for a year to three months' imprisonment in addition."⁶⁷

It was literally impossible to pay these taxes given the fact that the per capital income for the Africans was very low. By 1931, the

average annual income for an African was $\underline{\text{K}100/\text{=}}$ out of which he was expected to pay $\underline{\text{K}28/\text{=}}$ of Hut and Poll taxes while the income for Europeans was $\underline{\text{K}1,200/\text{=}}$.⁶⁸ Europeans and Asians did not pay any taxes other than a poll tax of $\underline{\text{K}30/\text{=}}$ on males over 18 years old. But the bankrupt and disabled Europeans were exempted.⁶⁹ It is, therefore, quite clear that the primary goal of heavy and unjust taxation on Africans was not only to provide the much needed labour force but to run the colonial administration. The figures speak for themselves. In 1931 alone, African taxation brought in $\underline{\text{K}12,140,000.00}$ compared to $\underline{\text{K}250,000.00}$ from the Europeans.⁷⁰

What has emerged so far in this analysis is the fact that the Colonial Government was not only interested in radically changing African social structures and in this particular case, the Agikuyu, but it was determined to see to it that the Africans themselves bore the biggest share of colonial development. They provided more funds in the form of taxes than Europeans and most of the labour required to run the colonial government and settler farms. Among the Agikuyu, for example, the chiefs and their henchmen helped a great deal in the development

of "Colonial Society". As Mathu has pointed out, "under the protection of the Union Jack, individuals like Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, Kioi wa Nagi, and Karanja wa Marite, to mention a few, were made to be the key drivers of the new 'imperial' vehicles merely as chiefs".⁷¹ Informants also agree that the new generation of the Agikuyu leaders which the colonialists created is as much to blame for the disorganization of the Agikuyu society as the colonialists.⁷²

It is equally important to observe that the reaction against land alienation, forced labour, and taxation came mainly from the groups that helped in one form or another to radically replace the Agikuyu social structure with the colonial structure. These groups included liberal Europeans, the missionaries, and the chiefs and their henchmen. There was another group which consisted of young moderately educated men who lived mainly in towns. This group together with the disgruntled masses in the "reserves" and the "squatters" was later to spearhead the Karing'a movement. We shall discuss these groups briefly.

Probably one of the most outstanding European critics of the colonial policies on

land alienation, forced labour, and taxation in the 1920's and 1930's was Dr. Norman Leys, a medical doctor, and an author. His two books, Kenya (1924) and A Last Chance in Kenya (1931) give detailed accounts of the horrifying conditions of Africans as a result of the colonial rule. However, besides these two books are a series of letters between him, the missionaries and the colonial government.⁷³ These letters reflect the feelings and emotions of the man and his attitude towards the colonizers. They also discredit the argument that missionaries were sympathetic to the African cause and proved that indeed they were the colonialists bedfellows.

In a letter addressed to a certain Borden Turner dated 3rd May, 1921, Leys described forced Labour "as a byproduct of a system founded on prostitution of political power to serve the profit of aliens." In the same letter he refuted the claim that forced labour was not compulsory and said that such a claim was the "most dangerous falsehood." He went on to demand that Africans must be given their land back in order that they can use it and be free to refuse to be harlots for the profit of the conquerors.⁷⁴

This letter was replied to by Archdeacon

Owen on 6th June, 1921. Owen, a very prominent missionary of the C.M.S. refuted Leys' claims by quoting a letter from Canon Leakey which he apparently supported. The letter read in part:

In the tribe /referring to the Agikuyu/ there is a large number of young bloods who correspond to the wasters at home /England/ They live on the fat of the land by making their mothers and sisters and wives work if they have any work for them.... My own experience is that it is desirable even from the mission point of view (italics mine) that those men should come out to work for Europeans, so as to see something of civilization (italics mine) instead of living buried in the Reserves and thinking of nothing but dances, immorality and drinking bouts.⁷⁵

In the same letter Archdeacon Owen denied Leys' allegation that a large group of women were forced to work.

In a series of letters written to Dr. Oldham, the Secretary of International Missionary Council, Leys had pleaded with him to intervene because the situation was getting out of hand. At one time he had suggested to Oldham, the missionaries, and the government officials to set up a royal commission to investigate the problem of forced labour. In 1924, a Commission on East African

Affairs was set up under the chairmanship of Ormsby-Gore. The Commission does not seem to have concerned itself with problems of forced labour, taxation and land alienation as Leys might have liked. But it focussed its attention on the federation of the three East African territories.⁷⁶ In fact the Commission was set up "as a result of a motion by Sir Seydney Henn in the House of Commons in April 1924.... Henn asked for a commission to examine the practical issue of co-ordinating policy and services in East Africa and to advise a future economic development."⁷⁷

In a reply to one of Leys' letters, Oldham justified his inability to act by saying that:

I have no doubt cowardice, dislike of unpopularity, the desire to be thought sane and respectable, are real temptations to which we too often succumb.... So long as I am Secretary of the International Missionary Council I cannot entirely separate myself from my office and act as a freelance This is not meant to be an excuse for doing little or nothing So long as I retain [this job] there are limitations in regard to the kind of things I can usefully do.⁷⁸

This cowardly letter lacks the sensitivity and the so-called Christian commitment that the missionaries were so good at preaching to the Agikuyu.

Leys replied to Oldham's letter by admitting angrily that according to Jesus' definition, "I am not a Christian."⁷⁹ In another letter to Oldham, he accused the Archbishop of Canterbury for not being forceful enough in presenting the case against the forced labour in the House of Lords in regard to the construction of the railway line to Nyeri which the Africans had been forced to construct. Leys went on to accuse the clergy for sitting on the fence. "They [Clergy] cannot come off and join ... heartily in any battle over a living issue." He went on to suggest that Oldham should write to Archdeacon Owen in Nairobi to suggest

that Kenya missionaries should unanimously issue a statement sending copies to the Government in Nairobi, to Downing Street, to Nairobi Press, to the Times, and to the Manchester Guardian to the ... effect that there is no applicable number of unemployed in the reserves; that already there are too few left in the reserves for the work of food growing, house building ... and that this levy [referring to cess] is injuring the work

of the Church. If missionaries did issue such a statement they would make forced labour impossible in future.⁸⁰

No such a statement seems to have been issued by the missionaries. The only letter referring to this matter was written by Archdeacon Owen on May 23, 1929. This letter appeared in the Manchester Guardian but its content had very little to do with what Leys had in mind. It is also highly improbable whether Owen was replying to Leys. In this letter, Owen gave a case of a European officer who ordered a baraza (meeting) on a Sunday morning. The meeting was called to discuss labour. The European officer (Owen does not give his name) ordered the Chiefs to go and gather people. The Chiefs "made an especial point of conveying the order to some of the leaders of Christian congregations who were conducting the worship of the increasing number of those who are emerging from paganism to Christianity. With a penalty hanging over their heads of two months imprisonment and a fine of [Shs.150.00] for disobeying the order, those summoned obeyed."⁸¹ This indicates quite clearly that Owen was more concerned about the Church than with the forced labour.

Norman Leys never got far with his letters

and petitions to the missionaries. What seems to have happened was that a rift developed between him and them. In one of the letters, Oldham accused Leys for his inclination to mistrust "his" friends. He continued, "you have at different times regarded MaGregor Ross, Curtis Tom Jones and myself as unfaithful to the cause and have little use for the Archbishop and the missionaries."⁸²

It appears from these letters that Norman Leys had a lot of trust in the missionaries at first but they let him down miserably. The only action they took was to issue a joint memorandum through the conference of Missionary Societies. This memorandum gave consent to compulsory labour on the "traditional unpaid labour by 'natives' in a Reserve for the benefit of the Reserve." The memorandum discouraged forced labour for private employers and even the government "unless this [was] absolutely necessary". It was further suggested that the government officials "should take no part in recruiting labour for private employers."⁸³

It is abundantly clear that the missionaries were not sympathetic to the African plight. In fact it appears that they were in full support of the replacement of the Agikuyu social structure

with a colonial social structure through land alienation, forced labour, and taxation.

The other group that protested against the colonial policy on land, labour, and taxation consisted of chiefs, headmen, Christians, elders of the tribunal courts, and a growing group of tax collectors. Their approach to the Agikuyu problems was not very different from that of the missionaries in that they catered for their own interests and not necessarily for the restoration of the Agikuyu land and culture.

There are reasons why this group was not culturally orientated towards solving the Agikuyu problem. First, they were mostly the puppets of the colonial government. The second, more important reason is that the majority of this group had very little traditional background. The epidemics and famine that had hit Gikuyuland in the 1890's together with the alienation of land that followed left many orphans and ahoi (the landless) in the whole of Gikuyuland particularly in Kiambu. These orphans, ahoi, and other destitutes, found their way to the mission stations. Apparently some of them had little or no background in their traditional

culture and religion. They became the first Christian converts who were later to become chiefs, headmen, clerks, and askaris. However, one wonders whether it is justifiable to say that these orphans and destitutes were in fact converted to Christianity. As Mathu has observed:

The claim ... that these boys were converted into Christianity is all false. The falsehood lies in the fact one cannot convert a non-convertible commodity or person. The so-called converts of the time, were known to have had less experiences with the indigenous religion. ... This was the essence behind Christian conversion which captured a lot of adherents so suddenly like a bushfire in Gikuyuland.⁸⁴

Mathu might have exaggerated the lack of the traditional background of these orphans. But there is some truth in what he says. These orphans were destitutes who were more concerned with shelter, security, and food than their traditional beliefs and practices. It is not, therefore, surprising that when they became the puppets of the colonial government they tended to cater more to their interests than the interests of the Agikuyu in general.

Similarly the chiefs that were hand-picked by the colonialists were not of traditionally

high standing in their communities. Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, for example, has been described as "a man of no traditional standing, a hunter without property."⁸⁵ Others were porters, ahoi, and Askaris.⁸⁶

This group of chiefs, headmen, clerks, and tribunal elders emerged as the landed class among the Agikuyu in the 1920's. As the colonial government alienated more land from the reserves under the pretext that "Ngai had handed Githaka (land) over to the government and, therefore, no man had a right to remove another from any part of Githaka or accuse him in court because he has made his home there,"⁸⁷ this group became alarmed and decided to form a political association, the Kikuyu Association.

According to Macpherson, Kikuyu Association was founded in 1920 by "leading Christians, government headmen, and tribal elders drawn principally from South and Central Kiambu."⁸⁸ Among the founders of this Association were Chief Koinange Mbiyu, Philp Karanja, Matayo Njoroge, Waweru Mahui, Solomon Ng'ethe, and Wanyoike Kamawe.⁸⁹ Reporting on this Association a few years later the District Commissioner, Kiambu stated that it was "composed mainly of enlightened and

reasonable Kikuyu with official headman, Koinange as President."⁹⁰ It was, therefore, considered by the colonial government "to be more representative of the African particularly Kikuyu opinion than Thuku's East African Association."⁹¹

Before discussing Thuku's East African Association it is important to note that Kikuyu Association was probably the first moderate political association to be formed by the Agikuyu. The fact that a pro-government group decided to form a political association, as moderate as the association was, is important in shedding some light on the oppressive forces that were at work in the Agikuyu society and that these forces were affecting all the Agikuyu including the pro-government Agikuyu. Second, the formation of this association indicates, among other things, that even the pro-government Agikuyu were becoming increasingly aware that unless they organized themselves politically, the colonial government was not going to heed their grievances. Third, it also means that one cannot over exaggerate the role of the Karing'a militant group as the sole champion of the Agikuyu grievances and of the rise of the Agikuyu nationalism. Indeed, one has to look at the rise and the development of

the Karing'a movement as a combination of factors - including the moderate voices of the chiefs and headmen - that led to the sharpening of the contradictions between the Agikuyu on the one hand and the colonialists and the missionaries on the other.

In spite of its moderate approach to the Agikuyu political and socio-economic grievances, the Kikuyu Association carried on its work of gradual reform throughout the 1920's. It prepared and issued petitions and memoranda. One of the lengthiest and best articulated of the memoranda was issued in 1924 to the East African Land Commission.

In its opening remarks, the Association expressed its loyalty to the King, the Governor, and the entire colonial administration. The memorandum then outlined the whole history of land tenure. It requested the government to give title deeds to the Agikuyu; that reserved land be clearly demarcated; that it be illegal for any Mugikuyu holding land in the reserve to sell or dispose of any portion of his land to anyone else other than another Mugikuyu; that the grazing area, salt licks, et cetera, be restored to the Agikuyu;

and that there should be no more alienation of land without the consent of the Agikuyu. The memorandum ended on a submissive note:

Our wish is not to claim the return of the land now in the possession of Europeans; we realise that they must now remain in occupation. We accept the present division of the land between us and them but we earnestly beg that our anxiety as to the future may be finally removed and such legal security given us that we need not fear the possibility of any further encroachment.⁹²

This memorandum which apparently never addressed itself to the social problem of the Agikuyu other than land was rejected. The colonial government was not prepared to issue title deeds because as Acting Chief Native Commissioner had once said, "issuing of title deeds was inapplicable to the Kikuyu system of land tenure."⁹³ Moreover, some of the most influential settlers like Lord Delamere held the view that "the question of obtaining satisfactory labour supply would never be settled if individual title deeds were given."⁹⁴

The Kikuyu Association never succeeded in its approach of using the colonial machinery as a means to achieve any kind of land or social

reform. In fact, what is interesting is the fact that the colonial government realized it could do away with the Association by establishing Local Native Councils in 1925. The government argued that there was no need for an organization like the Kikuyu Association after the local councils had been established. Thus by 1928, the Association was on the decline and even the government questioned whether it represented the Agikuyu rights at all. Rosberg and Nottingham have pointed out that "about 1932, the Association changed its name to the Kikuyu Loyal Patriots to avoid confusion with the Kikuyu Central Association and to indicate its loyalty to the Government."⁹⁵

The decline of the Kikuyu Association with its Nyeri counterpart, the Progressive Kikuyu Party which had been organized in 1928, meant, among other things that the Kikuyu Central Association remained the only vocal political association among the Agikuyu. This marked a new era in the development of the militant Agikuyu nationalism.

Before discussing the Kikuyu Central Association, it is important to point out that one can argue with fairness that by the middle of 1920's, the colonial government had succeeded in establishing a colonial society. It was only a matter of time before the traditional societies

could be radically replaced by the colonial society. As we have already observed in this chapter, the creation of a colonial society in Gikuyuland involved a considerable amount of violence which ranged from military force to physical assaults, land alienation, forced labour, taxation, cultural deprivation such as separating families, stopping the performance of such ceremonies as Ituika, imposing hand picked leaders on the people, and having utter contempt for and assaults on the Agikuyu traditions. These and more shook the foundations of the Agikuyu society to such an extent that by 1930, a new generation of the Agikuyu was rising which had very little knowledge of their traditions, and if they did, they had no respect for them.

In the midst of this 'cultural erosion' or 'cultural replacement', there emerged a new class of the Agikuyu. This class could be considered the second generation of Athomi (the readers or the Christians). Unlike the first generation of Athomi which consisted of boys who had either left home voluntarily to join the missions because of the material gains that their fellow orphans had gained or who might have been lured to the missions by the missionaries and the chiefs, these boys had been exposed to colonial exploitation such as land alienation, forced labour, taxation, and cultural deprivation.

Included in this group were young men who had been in the First World War and had received no rewards or compensation for their war efforts. There was also the group of the landless and the disgruntled masses in European farms and the reserves. Out of these groups emerged a group of radical Agikuyu that was not comfortable with the radical replacement of their culture and the alienation of their land. It is this group that formed the Kikuyu Central Association in 1924.

Prior to the formation of the Kikuyu Central Association there existed another Association: the East African Association. There are conflicting views as to when this association was formed. Kabutu argues that it was formed by Jesse Kariuki in 1919.⁹⁶ According to Thuku, the formation of this Association was prompted by a meeting called by the District Commissioner in Dagoretti in 1921 to discuss Agikuyu grievances. The meeting was to be attended by the chiefs, missionaries, colonial administrators, and the public. Apparently, Harry Thuku heard about this meeting. On June 7, 1921, he called a meeting in Pangani to form the Young Kikuyu Association. Presumably, Thuku thought it would be politically expedient

to form a Kikuyu association to deal with the Agikuyu grievances. Three weeks later, in July, 1921, the Young Kikuyu Association was renamed the East African Association to appeal to various non-Agikuyu African communities in Nairobi and elsewhere.⁹⁷ Rosberg and Nottingham accept Kabutu's view but add that some of the founders of the Association included Harry Thuku, Jesse Kariuki, James Njoroge, and Job Muchuchu.⁹⁸ Whoever might have been the founder of the East African Association, the fact is, it was the first militant African political organization, and out of it emerged the Kikuyu Central Association.

The formation of the Kikuyu Central Association was by accident rather than by design. After Harry Thuku was detained in 1922, the East African Association was banned.⁹⁹ However, when some of the members of this Association heard that the Ormsby-Gore Commission had been set up to investigate the land problem in Kenya, they approached the government to lift the ban so that they could present African grievances to the Commission. The government refused arguing that they could not represent all the Africans in Kenya and that since the Agikuyu had more grievances particularly about land, they should

form an all Agikuyu association. Jesse Kariuki rejected this suggestion but later he and others - including Joseph Kang'ethe, Hezekiah Mundia, and Johanna Kunyiha, to mention just a few - decided to form the Kikuyu Central Association in 1924.¹⁰⁰ The headquarters for this association were in Murang'a.¹⁰¹

The K.C.A. leadership was more militant than that of the East African Association. They saw the Agikuyu problems in a wider perspective than their predecessors. For them, the Agikuyu problems were more than political and economic. They were cultural as well. They were more aware of the role of culture in developing a movement that would appeal to a larger segment of the Agikuyu society. They therefore, appealed to those elements of the Agikuyu that "psychologically did not fully accept European dominance."¹⁰² For example, they started administering an oath.

Oath taking has always been a traditional practice among the Agikuyu. K.C.A. used this traditional practice among other things to religiously and culturally establish a sacred bond between the Agikuyu and their land. In 1926, such an oath was administered to the members of the K.C.A. The oath involved swearing with the Bible held in the left hand

and a handful of earth in the right hand. A member swore he would be faithful to his people and the country. The use of the Bible indicates, among other things, that the K.C.A. was at first an organization for Athomi and that the oath was syncretic in nature.¹⁰³

The second step to strengthen their resistance against the invasion of their culture and territory was through the use of a monthly journal, Muiguithania (the Reconciler). Its first editor was Jomo Kenyatta. The content of the journal was full of cultural and political advice, proverbs, and long accounts of the K.C.A. meetings. The journal which according to Rosberg and Nottingham was probably the first newspaper produced by Kenya Africans continued to be printed intermittently until K.C.A. was banned in 1940. The paper helped to "unite the attitude of progressive elements in the tribe while at the same time its riddles, proverbs, and stories encouraged its readers to think of themselves ... as Kikuyu ... (and) to restore pride in being a Kikuyu and an African."¹⁰⁴

The fact that the K.C.A. saw the need to publish a journal whose objective, among other things, was to promote and restore pride and integrity among the Agikuyu is indicative of

the fact that the people had already started experiencing the "pains of cultural erosion." The 'replacement' of their culture with a 'colonial culture' was being felt; and the forces of land alienation, forced labour, and taxation were working. Their culture and past were slowly being eroded. In an article written by one Gideon Kagika in September, 1928, the word "Karing'a" was used for the first time. The article read in part:

As from now I request you not to say that you do not belong to that Association (referring to K.C.A.). You are members of the Association since you are all Kikuyu Karing'a (real Kikuyu).¹⁰⁵

It

It is very important to note that the use of the term 'Karing'a' in this article is different from its original meaning. As already pointed out in Chapter One of this work, originally the term Karing'a was associated with the 'orthodox' initiation guild of the Agikuyu as opposed to the more 'liberal' initiation guild of Ukabi. The new usage of the term 'Karing'a' encompassed the entire Agikuyu culture, religion, and the social structure. It has also an implied reference to the "orthodox" Agikuyu vis-a-vis the Agikuyu readers - the Athomi. However, it has

also another implied meaning of those Athomi who were willing to revive and preserve their cultural heritage.

The new usage of the term 'Karing'a' marked a new era in the development of the Agikuyu nationalism, and, indeed of Kenya nationalism. We begin to see the development of a radical awareness of "cultural erosion" and a determination to stop this "erosion". This awareness began to spread among the masses of the Agikuyu in the form of what might be called "land tales".

The "land tales" were used to warn the Agikuyu of the impending disaster to their race and subsequent total domination by the colonialists. It is difficult to substantiate the authenticity of these tales just as it is equally difficult to say whether these tales were created by the members of the K.C.A. However, the fact that many informants talk about them in relation to the Karing'a movement is important in understanding the psychological propaganda that ultimately led to the massive support of the Karing'a cultural nationalism.

There were at least two important and popular tales that were widely spread among the Agikuyu. The first one dealt with the strategy behind land alienation, forced labour, and taxation.

The second one dealt with the strategy behind the replacement of the Agikuyu social structure and the subsequent effort to abolish female circumcision.

There are two versions of the first tale. According to the first version, Lord Delamere wanted the Agikuyu to be offered jobs and pieces of land on the European farms so that they could vacate their land in the "reserves". By so doing, the African land would be left vacant and Europeans could occupy it peacefully. According to Delamere's plan, all Agikuyu land would be occupied by the Europeans by 1942. Europeans would confiscate all the property owned by the Agikuyu on the European farms. They would then force the Agikuyu to come back to the "reserves" only to find that all their land had been occupied by the Europeans. They would have no choice other than to be the slaves of the white man.¹⁰⁶

The second version of this tale is slightly different to the first one. The tale goes that in the early 1920's, Delamere wrote an article in the East African Standard stating allegorically that all monkeys should be made to climb on treetops and the people should occupy the land so that by the time the trees would be felled, forcing the monkeys to come down from the treetops, they

would find that the people had occupied the land. This allegory whether it was stated by Delamere or not was interpreted by the Agikuyu territorially. To them, the monkeys were the Agikuyu; climbing on treetops meant forced migration to the Rift Valley and European farms; monkeys coming down from treetops meant the Agikuyu being repatriated from the Rift Valley only to find their land gone; and the people meant the white men.¹⁰⁷

The second land-cum-cultural tale was related to the Agikuyu traditional culture as it would be affected by the abolition of the female circumcision. According to this tale, the white man's goal in stopping the female circumcision was to create a new race of the Agikuyu who would never circumcise their women or wear traditional dresses or believe in the Agikuyu religious and cultural practices. This new race would eventually stop circumcising their male children. The influence and power of the white man would increase the population of the 'New Agikuyu' over that of the indigenous or Agikuyu Karing'a. As the population of the 'New Agikuyu' increased, the population of the Agikuyu Karing'a would decrease. Eventually, the Agikuyu Karing'a

would be extinct.

According to the informants the extinction of the Agikuyu Karing'a would pave the way for the total take over of the Agikuyu land by the white man. The white man would then tell the 'New Agikuyu' that they are not the rightful owners of the Agikuyu land; that the owners used to circumcise their children; that they used to wear traditional dresses; that they wore bangles on their feet and earrings on their ears; that their earlobes were perforated; and that their traditional customs and beliefs used to be different from those of the 'New Agikuyu'. Europeans would then take over the land and turn the 'New Agikuyu' into slaves.¹⁰⁸

When one of the informants was asked how this tale started, he referred the researcher to the Delamere's article on the monkeys and the people.¹⁰⁹ Another one said he grew up knowing these tales.¹¹⁰

How and when these land and cultural tales started and whoever started them is very hard to tell. The important thing here is that they reflect a very strong cultural and historical consciousness of the Agikuyu. The Agikuyu had come to realise and even accept that their culture and history were being radically eradicated and

with it their land would be taken away. They were determined to control their past, culture, land, and destiny for "who controls the past controls the future [and] who controls the present controls the past."¹¹¹ These words spoken by Winston Smith, the main character in the novel, 1984 were in reply to a question put to him by O'Brien, his interrogator as to what the Party slogan was. O'Brien went on to ask him:

Does the past exist concretely, in space? Is there somewhere or other a place, a world of solid objects, where the past is still happening?

"No"

"Then where does the past exist, if at all?"

"In records. It is written down."

"In records. And - ?"

"In the mind. In human memories."

"In memory. Very well, then. We, the party, control all records, and we control all memories. (*italics mine*) Then we control the past."¹¹²

After a long and agonizing torture, O'Brien told Winston:

We [the Party] shall turn you into gas and pour you into the stratosphere. Nothing will remain of you: not a name in a register, not a memory in a living brain. You will be annihilated in the past as well as in the future. You will

never have existed (*italics*
mine).¹¹³

In a way the dialogue between O'Brien and Winston Smith shows a very good parallel between the Agikuyu land cultural tales on the one hand and the fate that was awaiting Winston on the other. The Agikuyu Karing'a had sensed this, hence the tales and the oathing. It had started first with the radical replacement of their culture and religion by the colonial culture and religion. This had been followed by developing such mechanisms as forced labour, taxation, land alienation, and a new generation of the Agikuyu that was becoming gradually indifferent to the Agikuyu traditional culture and beliefs. These mechanisms would eventually 'erode' the Agikuyu traditions. The white man would then enslave them. The Agikuyu Karing'a through K.C.A. had to stop this process from taking place. In order to achieve this objective, K.C.A. started recruiting members not only in Kiambu, Nyeri and Murang'a Districts but also in Meru and Embu Districts.¹¹⁴

Thus, the rise and the development of the Karing'a Movement can only be viewed from this background. The Agikuyu were reacting to two forces that were at work, namely, the force of

radical replacement of their democratic society, and the force of rapid cultural erosion.

In summary, from what has been discussed in this chapter, we can make several observations. First, the period 1900-1930 can be considered as a period in which the colonialists managed to consolidate their autocratic authority over the Agikuyu. It was during this period that massive Agikuyu land was alienated; forced labour and taxation systems were legalized; and the Agikuyu democratic leadership was replaced by authoritarian leadership through the Local Native Councils, the colonial administrators and the colonial chiefs. Second, the undemocratic nature of the colonial rule led to the formation of the Agikuyu political associations. Notable of these associations were the Kikuyu Association with its Nyeri counterpart the Progressive Kikuyu Party, and the Kikuyu Central Association. The formation of these associations reflects the Agikuyu traditional democratic belief that problems can be solved through negotiation, persuasion, and through the use of reason. Third, the Agikuyu response to social change during this period was remarkably positive. They had shown very little resistance to the white man's education and religion. Their response to

European technology was also positive. The only major incident of resistance was in 1922 when all the Africans in Nairobi demanded the release of their leader Harry Thuku, a stop to forced labour, heavy taxation and further alienation of land.¹¹⁵ In other words, up to this time change on the peripheral and rationalization levels of culture change was not resisted. The change on these two levels continued with little resistance even after 1930. Fourth, up to this time, there is no evidence to show the Agikuyu attempt to organize themselves on a massive scale to resist social change. It was after 1930 that this need arose. The need was sparked off by the missionaries' campaign against the female circumcision rite - a rite in which the individual was introduced to the Agikuyu core beliefs and values. We will turn to this campaign in our next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- ¹See KNA/KBU/4/4/13/10/1931.
- ²O.I. Daudi Ndirangu, op.cit.; and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ³O.I. Stephano Wacira, Interviewed 17/7/76, Mahiga, Othaya Division, Nyeri.
- ⁴O.I. Rev. Paul Kahuhu Gachomba, Interviewed 18/2/77, Tumutumu, Nyeri.
- ⁵O.I. Stephano Wacira, op.cit.
- ⁶Rosberg, and Nottingham, op.cit., p.15 quoting letters of Francis George Hall. II, pp.162-64.
- ⁷Ibid., p.15.
- ⁸Ibid., p.16.
- ⁹O.I. Karimu wa Kibiru, Interviewed 23/9/78, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ¹⁰Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya n.d., pp.41-47.
- ¹¹Sorrenson, op.cit., p.7. See also Lambert, H.E., The Systems of Land Tenure in the Kikuyu Land Unit, Capetown, South Africa, 1950, passim.
- ¹²Ibid., p.7.
- ¹³According to the oral information given by Karimu wa Kibiru, Mucone wa Kibiru; and Munyui wa Gichura, op.cit., Ndorobo and Athi were the same people only that they were generally called Ndorobo in Kiambu and Athi in Nyeri and Murang'a. However, the term Athi was also common in Kiambu. The Agikuyu called the Ndorobo Athi because they

were good at hunting. The word Athi comes from wathi which means to be accurate at shooting an animal with an arrow and bow.

¹⁴ Sorrenson, op.cit., p.7.

¹⁵ 0.1. Ibraham Njoroge, op.cit., Joshua Muceru, op.cit., See also Muriuki, op.cit., p.38.

¹⁶ Muriuki, op.cit., p.155.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.155ff.

¹⁸ See for example a memorandum written to the 1934 Land Commission by Mbari ya Mutuanene. This memorandum which can be found in the Kenya National Archives/DC/KBU/4/4/, n.d., documents the property paid to purchase the land from one Legechwe, a Ndorobo. The writers, Kibui and Rububu go into details to indicate the ceremonial marks that bordered the land before they bought it.

¹⁹ 0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru, Interviewed 23/9/78, Ndenderu, Kiambu. Mucone is the grandson of Muhoro.

²⁰ Ibid., and Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.

²¹ Sorrenson, op.cit., p.17.

²² Ibid., p.17.

²³ Ibid., p.18.

²⁴ Ibid., p.18 quoting Report of the Kenya Land Commission, cmd.4556, (1934), pp.70-71.

²⁵ Ibid., p.18 quoting Kenya Land Commission, p.101.

²⁶ 0.1. Kuria wa Runo, op.cit.

- ²⁷ Sorrenson, op.cit., p.19 quoting The Official Gazette of the East Africa and Uganda Protectorates, 1 May, 1 July, 1906.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p.19.
- ²⁹ The Legislative Council of Kenya first met in 1907.
- ³⁰ Sorrenson, op.cit., p.19. See also Kabutu, op.cit., p.21.
- ³¹ Murray-Brown, Jeremy, Kenyatta, London, George Allen and Uncoin Ltd., 1973, p.81.
- ³² Sorrenson, op.cit., p.26.
- ³³ Ibid., p.27.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p.16.
- ³⁵ Welbourn, East African Rebels: A Study of some Independent Churches, p.116.
- ³⁶ Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.xv
- ³⁷ See Muriuki, op.cit., p.178ff.
- ³⁸ Macpherson, op.cit., p.21.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p.34.
- ⁴⁰ Waruiru, Christopher, "Female Initiation Controversy at CSM Tumutumu, 1912-1937," B.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1971, pp.59. This information was collaborated by Paul K. Gachomba, 18/2/77, Tumutumu, Nyeri.
- ⁴¹ See KNA/PC/CP9/1/1.
- ⁴² Sorrenson, op.cit., pp.34-35.

- ⁴³ Ibid., p.35.
- ⁴⁴ Joint Missionary Archives, Box No.3/112; University of Nairobi, Africana section, Nairobi, Kenya. For a detailed account of this Commission, see J.M. Archives, Box No. 3-5.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Sorrenson, op.cit., p.35.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.35-36 quoting Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1928, p.101.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p.36.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p.36 quoting Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1929, p.7.
- ⁵⁰ Welbourn, op.cit., p.117.
- ⁵¹ Joint Missionary Archives, op.cit., Box 5, No.110, p.215.
- ⁵² Ibid., p.216.
- ⁵³ Ibid., Box 5, No.111, p.231.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., Box 5, No.111, p.235.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., pp.235-236.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p.234.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., p.230.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p.233.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., Box 3, Microfish, No.113.
- ⁶⁰ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.21.

- ⁶¹Kibicho, "The Kikuyu Conception of God, Its continuity into the Christian Era, and the Question it raises for the Christian Idea of Revelation," p.123.
- ⁶²This article can be found in Barlow's Papers, op.cit.
- ⁶³For a detailed description of Kipande see Harry Thuku, an Autobiography, edited by Kenneth King, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1970, p.19.
- ⁶⁴Welbourn, op.cit., p.22.
- ⁶⁵Leys, Norman, A Last Chance in Kenya, London, Leonard and Virginia Woolf Press, 1931, p.35.
- ⁶⁶Thuku, op.cit., p.16ff.
- ⁶⁷Leys, op.cit., p.88.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p.15ff.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., passim.
- ⁷⁰Ibid., passim.
- ⁷¹Mathu, W. George, "Impact of Christianity on Kikuyu District: An analysis of Its Cultural Processes on the Church Missionary Society", Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, Paper No.106, 8th November, 1968, n.p., p.4.
- ⁷²0.1. Samuel Mathu, op.cit.; Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.; and Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.
- ⁷³These letters can be found in the Joint Missionary Archives, op.cit.
- ⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶See Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.88-93; and Kabutu, op.cit., p.27.

⁷⁷Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.88-89.

⁷⁸Joint Missionary Archives, op.cit., See letter dated 9th March, 1925.

⁷⁹Ibid. See letter dated 3rd March, 1925.

⁸⁰Ibid. See letter dated 30th May, 1925.

⁸¹This letter was reprinted in the East African Standard, July 6, 1929, MacMillan Library Archives, Nairobi, Kenya.

⁸²Joint Missionary Archives, op.cit. See letter dated 24th June, 1925.

⁸³Ibid. See also Welbourn, op.cit., p.124. Welbourn discusses a similar memorandum issued in 1919 "in favour of legalized compulsion for labour on government projects instead of the veiled compulsion for all purposes." This memorandum does not differ very much from 1921 memorandum. The memorandum was dated 21st August, 1921.

⁸⁴Mathu, op.cit., p.14.

⁸⁵Rignor, op.cit., p.45

⁸⁶Ibid., pp.45-59.

⁸⁷Wanyoike, E.N. An African Pastor, Nairobi, E.A. Literature Bureau, 1974, p.95.

⁸⁸Macpherson, op.cit., p.73.

⁸⁹Wanyoike, op.cit., p.96ff.

- ⁹⁰ KNA/DC/KBU/1/19/1926, p.2.
- ⁹¹ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.42.
- ⁹² KNA/DC/KBU/4/3/n.d.
- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Joint Missionary Archives, op.cit., Box 3, Microfish 108, p.109.
- ⁹⁵ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.85.
- ⁹⁶ Kabutu, op.cit., p.23.
- ⁹⁷ Thuku, op.cit., pp.20-24 and 78-79.
- ⁹⁸ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.26.
- ⁹⁹ For reasons leading to Thuku's arrest and detention - see Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.49: Thuku, op.cit., pp.23-27: and Kabutu, op.cit., p.25.
- ¹⁰⁰ Kabutu, op.cit., pp.28-29. For more details on K.C.A. see Spencer, John, "The Kikuyu Central Association and the Genesis of Kenya African Union", in Kenya Historical Review Vol.2, No.1, 1974, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1974, pp.67-79.
- ¹⁰¹ KNA/DC/KBU/1/193/1926/p.2.
- ¹⁰² Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.86.
- ¹⁰³ O.1. Harrison Munyua, Interviewed 7/6/77. Kiriita, Limuru.
- ¹⁰⁴ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.101-102.

- 105 Ibid., p.100.
- 106 0.1. Ephantus Nguya, Interviewed 25/8/76, Cinga, Othaya Division, Nyeri.
- 107 0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit., and Kuria wa Runo, op.cit.
- 108 0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.: Samuel Mathu, op.cit.; Joshua Muceru, op.cit.; Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit.; Njenga Kahira, Interviewed 3/3/77, Karura, Kiambu; Kuria wa Runo, op.cit., and Johanna Kamau, Interviewed 10/1/77, Kabuku, Kiambu.
- 109 0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit.
- 110 0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- 111 Orwell, George, 1984. The New American Library, New York, 1961 Ed. p.204.
- 112 Ibid., p.205.
- 113 Ibid., p.210.
- 114 For details on K.C.A. activities in Meru and Embu Districts and the Church's reaction to such activities see Murray, "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy," pp.218-250.
- 115 Ross, MacGregor W., Kenya From Within: A Short Political History, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968, pp.224-233.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FINAL BLOW: THE CAMPAIGN
AGAINST FEMALE CIRCUMCISION
AND MAMBURA RITUALS

In the last chapter we discussed what might be regarded as the "second phase", that led to the rise of the Karing'a movement. We have observed that it was during this phase that the term Karing'a was first used with a broader cultural meaning. In this chapter, we shall discuss what might be described as the "third and final phase": the campaign against female circumcision and Mambura rituals.¹ This phase is very important in this study because it was during this phase that the term 'Karing'a' formally lost its narrow cultural meaning and became associated with a movement that aimed at educating the Agikuyu about their culture, religion, political rights, and about their enemies - the colonialists and the missionaries. In other words, it was during and after this phase that the Agikuyu Karing'a started a movement whose aims and objectives were to prevent the forces of culture and social change from penetrating into the core level of the Agikuyu culture.

As we shall see later, the Agikuyu reacted to the campaign against female circumcision with suspicion

and horror. In fact, the campaign confirmed one of their fears that the missionaries and the colonialists were determined to exterminate the Agikuyu Karing'a and replace them with the New Agikuyu generally known as Athomi. It should be noted that unlike land alienation that led to the formation of "protest" political groups such as Young Kikuyu Association, Kikuyu Association and the Kikuyu Central Association, the campaign against female circumcision led to a mass movement that actively involved men, women, and the youth. The earlier protest groups involved Chiefs, men educated in the mission schools and traditional elders. This difference can be explained among other things by trying to understand the significance of the initiation rite among the Agikuyu.

The Agikuyu initiation rite was what Kenyatta has described as the conditio sine qua non of the whole teaching of the Agikuyu way of life, their history, folklore, religion, morality, social structure and the individual's role in that structure. In his defence for the rite, Kenyatta writes:

the real argument lies
not in the defence of
the surgical operation
or its details but
in the tribal psychology
of the Gikuyu, namely,
that this operation is
still regarded as the

very essence of an institution which has enormous educational, social, moral, and religious implications, quite apart from the operation itself.²

Cagnolo has similarly observed in a somewhat different manner that

According to their [Gikuyu] mentality it [circumcision] is a civil and religious rite; it is at circumcision that the adolescent [was] admitted into the public life of the tribe, and it [was] also the occasion for a routine of ceremonies through which, it [was] considered the shames of barrenness may be avoided and good relations established with the world of spirits.³

This religious and socio-physiological nature of the rite of initiation formed the roots of the Agikuyu society. This rite guaranteed the maintenance and the survival of the educational, religious, and social institutions of the Agikuyu society. It was through this rite that the individual was introduced to the core beliefs and values of the Agikuyu.

As already pointed out in Chapter One, Agikuyu society was hierarchical in nature. In order for the

individual to be part of this hierarchy, he had to go through the rite of initiation. Although the children were part of this hierarchy, they could not play any dominant role in the society before they were initiated. After the initiation, they qualified to participate in the hierarchical structure of the Agikuyu society. Their participation depended, of course, on the behaviour and the ambition of the individual. For example, after the initiation, the young man was allowed to be a member of the warrior council; he could get married and head his own family; he could participate in the Councils of Elders after paying the required fees; he could be a member of the ruling generation and thus participate in the socio-economic and political affairs of the nation; and finally he could be a member of Kiama kia Maturanguru or Kiama kia Ukuru (the Council of Old Age). The members of this council had the privilege of officiating in public religious ceremonies.

Similarly, after the girl was initiated she could qualify to be married and have her own plot of land to cultivate; she qualified to be a member of the Council of Women after paying the necessary fees, and she could participate in

public religious ceremonies after she had reached the appropriate age.

If, therefore, the campaign against the female circumcision succeeded, so argued the Agikuyu Karing'a, the womenfolk would be deprived of their active role in the society and would remain on the lowest level - the level of children. They also feared that if the number of uncircumcised girls increased, their sons would not get women to marry. They also suspected that soon the missionaries would start a campaign against male circumcision. This would eventually exterminate the Agikuyu Karing'a.⁴

The Agikuyu rite of initiation was also associated with procreation. It was a deciding factor for marriage and procreation.⁵ As Lambert has observed:

Initiation was more important than marriage. It conferred the right not only to marry but to procreate. Uninitiated girl could not procreate - only a Muiritu (a circumcised girl) could, whether she was married or not. The uninitiated mother is an abomination: the initiated but unmarried mother is just a naughty girl.⁶

Since the Agikuyu believed that uncircumcised

girl could not give birth, they feared that "if the female initiation rite was abolished, the uncircumcised women would not be able to give birth. Consequently, the Agikuyu would be exterminated."⁷

Traditionally, if an uncircumcised girl gave birth, the child was killed. This was done as a deterrent measure to prevent uncircumcised girls from having sex.⁸ However, it appears that such an occurrence was very rare indeed. One informant expressed shock and disbelief when she was asked whether an uncircumcised girl could give birth:

Hi! Tutiri twaigua uguo
(Oh! We have never heard
of such a case).⁹

The Agikuyu also believed that if an uncircumcised girl got married, her first two children would die or the father might die. The informant gave an example of an uncircumcised girl in Ndenderu Village who lost two children in this way.¹⁰ They further believed that an uncircumcised girl was a child; a child cannot take care of another child.¹¹

In addition to these beliefs, the Agikuyu seemed to associate menstruation with the ability to give birth. They generally held that something was done during circumcision that was related to menstruation and conception. What this "something"

was, the informants could not elaborate.¹² If a girl menstruated before she was initiated, her parents were fined nine goats or she could be taken secretly to the Maasailand at night and be given to the Maasai.¹³ However, if the mother sensed that the daughter was about to menstruate before the initiation ceremony, she could seek help from the medicine woman who would ceremoniously tie her clitoris until the ceremony takes place. The clitoris was ceremoniously tied with the roots from Mahinga shrub (*Sida cunigolia*). Five Mahinga shrubs were uprooted and their roots were ceremoniously tied. They were then buried under a Mukurwe tree (*Albizia coriaria*). After this ceremony the girl could not menstruate until she was circumcised.¹⁴

On the day to untie her, the five Mahinga roots were dug from the Mukurwe tree. The tree was uprooted. Ceremonial beer was poured where the tree was uprooted. Then the Mahinga roots were taken home where they were ceremoniously untied. The ceremony involved putting the roots in the centre of a basket (Gitaruru). Then some creeping shrubs called Marerema (*Basella alba*) were put around the basket. The roots were then ceremoniously untied by the medicine woman. After

untying, everything was thrown at the rubbish-heap (Kiara). Then ceremonial beer was drunk to congratulate both the parents and the girl.¹⁵

In addition to these beliefs and taboos concerning menstruation, the Agikuyu believed that the initiation rite for girls helped to end the fear of childbirth.¹⁶ Wanyoike supports this view. He states that "circumcision was not only an introduction to adulthood and womanhood but it was an introduction to the pain of childbirth. For girls' endurance during circumcision indicated an ability to bear babies safely."¹⁷

On the day of circumcision, the girl was expected to be brave and calm. She was "not supposed to show any fear or make any audible sign of emotion or even to blink. To do so would be considered cowardice and would make her the butt of ridicule among her companions."¹⁸

The abolition of the female circumcision as the Agikuyu saw it meant the girls would be very fearful in giving birth and many would die during childbirth.¹⁹ This was part of the Agikuyu psychology and no amount of preaching against it could change their mind. Any change of mind had to be gradual and not as drastic as the missionaries

thought.

Another important aspect of the Agikuyu initiation rite was its religious and cultural significance. The religious and cultural significance of this rite is well summarised by Nyamiti. He argues that the initiation rite brings an ontological change in the candidates from childhood to adulthood; from profane world to a sacred world. Hence, initiation rites are performed "in the form of a secret mystery or revelation In order to enable the candidates to perceive this rapture from the profane world in the most efficient manner, the separation (of the candidates from the community) is often presented in the form of ritual death and regeneration or resurrection."²⁰ Kenyatta calls these rituals Mambura or the divine services.²¹

According to Muceru, the divine services were preceded by the unruly behaviour of Ihii (the uncircumcised boys).²² Gathigira agrees with Muceru. He goes on to state that this unruly behaviour was a pre-initiation ritual called Kuhira or Gutathaiya. This ritual was performed six to eight months before the actual initiation rite took place.²³ The would-be initiates were

called Ihii and the dance they performed was called Mumburo.²⁴ Gathigira says that the would-be initiates were called Nguru and that the dance they performed was called Irugu.²⁵ However, the information gathered in the field indicates that Nguru was a dance for the circumcised and uncircumcised boys. During the dance, the young men would feast in meat, soup, and irio (Agikuyu traditional dish).²⁶ This feast was like the one held by older men called Kirugu.²⁷

During the Kuhira ritual, Ihii would dance and ask for free food from the community. If the food was not given, they would literally take it by force and even use abusive language. After this ritual was over, Ihii prepared themselves for the actual initiation rite. No more abusive language was allowed and no taking away food by force was acceptable.²⁸ After the Kuhira ritual was over, preparations for the divine services started.²⁹

The following information on Mambura rituals was gathered by the researcher in the field. The researcher's findings were collaborated by the data collected by four students at the Kenyatta University College on Mambura rituals.³⁰ The students gathered information from four different areas: Gerald G.

Nguru from Kirinyaga District;³¹ Kairu John Mburu from Ndeiya, Kiambu District,³² Ngotho Isaac Kamau from Kitale in Trans-Nzoia District,³³ and A.P. Gichuki from Magutu, Nyeri District.³⁴ The students interviewed more than twenty informants. The information they gathered was strikingly similar to the one gathered by this researcher.

What follows is not a detailed description of Mambura rituals; rather it is a brief summary of what these rituals were.³⁵ The aim here is to show their deep cultural and religious significance among the Agikuyu and to demonstrate that the surgical part of the circumcision ritual was just a small aspect of the Agikuyu initiation rite.

There were at least ten rituals of Mambura. However, there were four pre-Mambura rituals. We have already discussed the first one, Kuhira ritual. The other three rituals were organized and performed by the parents of the neophyte. The first ritual involved slaughtering a goat traditionally known as mburi ya mwana (the child's goat) and brewing traditional beer known as njohi ya uuki (honey beer). The parents invited relatives to consult them as to whether there was some taboo in the

family that might prevent the child from being initiated. If there was a taboo, the parents were requested to postpone the initiation ceremony until the family was cleansed. A similar ritual was performed to inform the father's age groups that he was about to initiate his son or daughter. The third ritual was performed to inform the members of the father's lineage (mbari) of the forthcoming initiation ceremony. After these ceremonies had been performed, the parents slaughtered a sacrificial goat, mburi ya hako (the goat for appeasement) to appease the ancestors and Ngai. With this sacrificial goat, they presented their child to the ancestors and Ngai for blessings and good keeping. After this ceremony, the neophyte was now ready for the Mambura rituals.

Mambura rituals started three to four days prior to the operation day. However, fourteen days before the initiation day, the neophytes were fed with a special diet of njahi na njugu (bonavist beans and cajanus cajan) and a special porridge made of ugimbi na mwere (finger millet and bulrush millet). This diet was used to "prevent the loss of blood at the time of initiation ... and also to ensure immediate healing of the wound, as well as a

precaution against blood poisoning."³⁶ It was administered by Mutiri (Sponsor). Every neophyte had a Mutiri who took care of him and taught him all that was necessary before and after the initiation. Mutiri was like a God-father. He was chosen by the neophyte. A boy chose a man while a girl chose a woman. Mutiri was symbolically the second father or the second mother to the neophyte. According to Gathigira, the neophyte had more respect for his/her Mutiri than he/she had for his/her blood parents.³⁷

The first Mambura ritual was called Kuraria Murungu (to keep Ngai awake at night). This ritual involved singing and dancing all night by the neophytes. While they danced, they crushed sugarcanes in mortars to juice for preparing beer for this ceremony. The ceremony was considered "an act of communion with (Ngai), Murungu whose protection [was] invoked to guide and protect the initiates through the Irua (initiation) ceremony and at the same time to give them the wisdom of their forefathers."³⁸ The neophytes stayed awake all the night. No one was allowed to sleep because to do so would mean he would miss "the opportunity of direct contact with Murungu, which

would result in misfortune at the time of the irua."³⁹
 The songs and dances that were performed during the night were usually composed of words of praise or abuse directed to any member of the clan and particularly to the parents whose children were to be initiated. The songs were mainly obscene songs associated with sex. The reason for singing such songs was to free the neophytes from any embarrassment or shame regarding sex and to psychologically give them the strength and courage to face circumcision with pride and courage.

The following day the beer that had been prepared overnight was partaken of and the second ritual of Kurathima Ciana (to bless the children) started. This ritual was performed at the homestead where all the neophytes were gathered and where they stayed until they were fully initiated. The parents of the respective neophytes came to the homestead to witness their children being blessed. The blessing was done by an elder and an old woman who held senior offices in the Ceremonial Council generally known as Kiama Kia Matunguru or Kiama Gia Kiriira. The elder marked the neophyte's cheeks, the nose, the throat, the nails and around the eyes with ira

(white diatomaceous earth). This ira was obtained from Mt. Kirinyaga (now Mt. Kenya), the mountain of Ngai. The elder placed ira on the palm of his left hand and dipping his right thumb in it, he marked the neophytes one by one before him. As each neophyte passed, the elders would chant "Ciana irogea thaai, thathaiya : Ngai thaa-ai-ciana irogea thaai, thaaithai-thai-thaaaaai (peace be with the children. Beseech Ngai ... peace - peace, peace. Let peace be with the children - peace.")⁴⁰

After the elder had blessed the neophytes, an elderly woman blessed them by anointing them with castor oil (maguta ma mbariki) which she carried in a small bottle-like gourd called Kinandu. She anointed each neophyte on the head, around the neck and on the feet. As each neophyte was anointed the elders would chant as before "Ciana irogea, thaai, thathayai Ngai"

After this ritual of blessing, the neophytes went back to their respective homes accompanied by their parents, relatives, and friends. Upon reaching home, the third ritual was performed. This ritual, known as Kunyua Kinagi, was performed by both married and unmarried women. Kinagi was a

gourd containing special gruel or milk. The neophyte sipped some of it from each gourd presented to him by the women from the village. After this ritual the neophyte was allowed to rest until the following day.⁴¹ The significance of this ritual is not clear. None of the informants interviewed gave any reason for it. Kenyatta does not explain its significance either.⁴² Neither Gathigira nor Kabetu mentions this ritual.⁴³

The fourth ritual known as Matuumo consisted of several ceremonies. First, the neophyte was prepared for the purification ritual. His/her⁴⁴ hair was shaved; his body was decorated with beautiful beads and he was given a rattling bell, kigamba. He was then escorted to the Irua homestead, where Matuumo rituals were to be performed.

After the neophytes had gathered at the Irua homestead, Mundu Mugo wa Mambura (a special medicineman for Mambura rituals) assisted by the elders blessed the ground on which Matuumo songs and dances were to take place. The medicineman went around sprinkling a brownish powder (ruthuku) on the ground to wipe off any evil which may be directed against the neophytes. Then the elders sprinkled honey beer on the ground to appease the ancestors and ask for

their blessings. When the blessing was over, the neophytes could now use the ground for dancing and singing. From time to time, a ceremonial horn rubbed with Itwanda medicine was blown. The medicine was believed to have the power to chase the evil spirits away.

The second ritual of the Matuumo involved going through the arch. The arch was made of banana stems and sugar canes. According to Kenyatta, the arch was "considered as a medium through which the ancestral spirits [could] be harmonised with the Irua and appeased, so as not to bring any misfortune on the ceremony in which the ceremonial council offers sacrifices to ... Ngai"⁴⁵

^s The last ritual of the Matuumo was called Kuna Mugumo. The girl neophytes marched to the Mugumo tree (fig tree) - the sacred tree of the Agikuyu, accompanied by the warriors. Upon reaching there, a ritual horn was blown to give warning to the boys to run to the Mugumo tree. A big crowd gathered at the Mugumō tree to see who would reach the tree first. The race covered at least two miles. The significance of this race was to determine who was going to be the leader of their "riika." (age-group). The one who arrived first was supposed

to throw his ndorothi (a spear made of stick) across the fig tree. If the boy failed to throw ndorothi over the tree, his parents suffered a lot of shame and were fined a goat. It was, therefore, very important for the boy to throw ndorothi as accurately as possible. While the boys threw ndorothi over the tree, the girls threw wooden whoops between the branches and the main stem of the Mugumo tree. These wooden whoops were called mihaci.

After the Mugumo ceremony was over, the branches, twigs, and leaves from the tree were tied into bunches, and taken to the Irua homestead where they kept the sacred fire burning and others were used to make beds for the neophytes. The crowd left the Mugumo tree singing ritual songs.⁴⁶

The fifth ritual of the Mambura was gutiihira ciana (the spraying ritual). During this ritual, the neophytes were spat with honey beer from the mouth of the head of the ceremonial council. An elderly woman performed the same duty with a mouth-full of a kind of liquid called githambio. This medicine was to protect the neophytes from evil, temptations, fear, and evil spirits. When this ritual was in progress, the neophytes went through the arch chanting:

Tugutihirwo riria ria
njuki tweriragiria
Tukurumirira ugi wa njuki.

(We have been sprayed with the stings of the bees which we have been longing for. We shall follow the wisdom and the energy of the bees).⁴⁷

The sixth ritual was what might be called the ritual of giving up childhood behaviour of gute maundu ma wana. Kenyatta describes this ritual as a form of oath.⁴⁸ However, informants argue that such an oath never existed for the neophytes.⁴⁹ During this ritual the neophytes swore that they had given up childhood; that they would never let the secrets of adults be known to children; that they would be responsible; and that they would always observe all the customs and traditions of the Agikuyu. They also gave away all the garments that they used to wear before the initiation.⁵⁰

After this ritual, the neophytes went back to their respective homes where they were heavily guarded by the warriors to protect them from evil and from being injured. It was thahu (taboo) for a neophyte to shed blood before the initiation. The following morning all the neophytes went to the river to bathe in cold water in preparation for the ritual of operation known as ndemengo (to be cut).

This ritual was performed at a special ground designated for this purpose. It was performed by a uruithia (the circumciser). A man circumcised the boys and a woman circumcised the girls. The public witnessed the whole operation for the boys but no men were allowed to witness the operation for the girls.

After the ndemengo ritual the neophytes went back to the Irua homestead accompanied by their sponsors (atiiri). The public followed behind singing and dancing about the brave ones. The neophytes stayed in the Irua homestead for four days if they belonged to the Ukabi-Gikuyu guild or for eight days if they belonged to the Agikuyu-Karing'a guild. During this time, their wounds were well nursed and taken care of. It was also a period of feasting and resting after the long Mambura rituals. On the eighth day the eighth Mambura ritual known as ithemba was performed. This was like a homecoming ritual.

After the neophyte (Kiumiri (sing.): Ciumiri (pl.)) got his presents, there was a lot of merry making. Parents whose Kiumiri was first born child were given brass earrings as a sign of promotion to the Council of two Goats (Kiama kia Mburi igiri or Kiama kia Mataathi).

After these rituals were over, the neophytes were intensively instructed by their sponsors about their new roles as the new adults in the community. The final ritual and instructions that were undertaken while the neophytes were still together in their adoptive home were called kuumithia - which literally means to be brought out of childhood into adulthood. According to Gathigira any neophyte who never went through this ritual was not considered a full Mugikuyu and was not allowed to participate or lead in any of the Agikuyu sacrifices and ceremonies. Such a person was called githairu.⁵¹ This ritual was therefore compulsory for all the neophytes.

The last ritual was called menjo or guthiga. It was the ritual for purification and cleansing. By this time the neophytes will have healed and returned to their homes. According to Kenyatta, this ceremony consisted of

shaving the heads (kwenja) of the boys and girls. The clothes and ornaments worn during the transitional period /were/ discarded, their bodies /were/ painted with red ochre mixed with oil, after which they /were/ dressed in new clothes.... Then they /were/ introduced ... as full fledged members of the community.⁵²

The above information indicates, among other things, that the Mambura rituals or the divine services were more complex and involved than what

the missionaries had thought. The missionaries capitalized on only two of the ten rituals of Mambura, namely, the operational ritual and Matuumo rituals. They argued that the operational ritual was medically harmful to the girls while the Matuumo rituals reflected the sexual perversion and immorality of the Agikuyu people. But as we have seen above, these two rituals were minor compared with the other divine rituals. The whole initiation rite was meaningless without the other eight divine rituals for, it was these rituals that gave the neophyte the religious and psychological strength to pass through the threshold of childhood to adulthood or from profane world to a sacred world.

In the profane world the uninitiated, was contemptuously differentiated sexually, for example, an uninitiated boy was contemptuously called a Kihii (sing.) (Ihii) (pl.) while the uninitiated girl was called a Kirigu (sing.), (Irigu) (pl.). The behaviour of Kihii and a Kirigu was considered uncouth, rude, and childish. Both had no discipline whatsoever especially the Ihii. As one informant put it "gutiri kihii na kirigu ki mutugo" (Kihii and Kirigu do not know the traditions and customs of the people). He went on to talk contemptuously of Kihii and Kirigu;

"ungigia ndundu na kihii kana kirigu ugakenagiakua" (if you tell a secret to a Kihii or Kirigu you will be happy only when he/she dies).⁵³ In other words, no Kihii or Kirigu can be trusted. Another informant said that if a Kihii was killed, the fine was only thirty goats just like the fine for killing a woman.⁵⁴ And if a Kihii died nobody mourned him.⁵⁵

On the other hand, in the sacred world, the neophyte was proudly differentiated sexually. An initiated boy was proudly called Mwanake and an initiated girl was called Muiritu. These two terms were used to specifically assert the maleness of Mwanake and the femaleness of Muiritu. Both the young man and woman were at liberty to receive instructions regarding their respective roles in the society. They were expected to uphold the customs and traditions of the Agikuyu for as one informant put it "Kurua ni kurumia mitugo" (to be initiated means to uphold the customs and the traditions).⁵⁶

From the information gathered from the informants, it appears that the initiation rite was a turning point for every neophyte not only sexually but also culturally and religiously. To abolish this rite could lead to disastrous results in the Agikuyu society. As one informant put it: "Kunina

irua ni kunina mitugo na kunina mitugo ni kunina ruriri" (to abolish the initiation rite is to abolish the customs and traditions and to abolish customs and traditions is to exterminate the nation).⁵⁷ This fear of extermination led to the development of the "land and cultural tales" that we have already discussed in Chapter Three. It would appear from these tales that the fear of extermination was not so much physical as it was cultural and religious. The Agikuyu sensed the threat of this cultural and religious extermination as the missionaries intensified their campaign to abolish the female initiation rite.

There are several reasons that prompted the missionaries to start a campaign to abolish female circumcision. The most important ones were moral and medical reasons. However, one would not be stretching his imagination too far in suggesting two other underlying reasons, namely, male chauvinism and paternalism of the missionaries. These two underlying factors contributed to the missionaries' zeal to campaign against female circumcision.

There was, indeed, an attempt by the missionaries to act as defenders of the Agikuyu female rights. This male chauvinism directed to the Agikuyu females is, for example, reflected in a letter written by Rev. Barlow to Tate in July 1921 concerning the status of

the Agikuyu women. The letter describes, among other things, the status of the Agikuyu women as that of a superior chattel from birth to old age; and that Agikuyu men are like dictators; that they literally own their wives; that their wives have no rights; that a man can kill his wife and nothing can be done to him; that he can cut her ears or nose and nothing would be done to him as long as he has "bought" her; and that men "sell" their daughters. Barlow goes on to say that Agikuyu women had begun to revolt against the dictatorial nature of their men. He concludes his letter by stating that "in view of these considerations, I am strongly inclined to agree with Senior Commissioner, Nakuru, and to regard the payment of the marriage price as a pure purchase and the woman concerned as being treated as a mere chattel."⁵⁸

In another attempt to defend the rights of the Agikuyu women, the church court of the Church of Scotland Mission generally known as Kirk Session passed a resolution in December, 1920, "against what was regarded as an abuse of gutugwo, whereby Christian brides were refusing to enter their husbands villages until they had received gifts from every member of the husband's family."⁵⁹ The missionaries had even gone further to suggest that

since the Agikuyu men were too greedy in "selling" their daughters, an agreed amount should be paid to the father once and for all before the wedding. Dr. Leakey criticised the missionaries for having suggested so. He wrote:

One of the very big factors underlying the so-called excessive price at which girls are sold as wives to mission boys ... has been brought into being by the missionaries themselves. They insist that the father or guardian of a bride shall be present at or before the wedding, and shall sign a document stating 'full payment' for his daughter and that he will not at a later date demand more. The old men, knowing this will be required of them, and that they cannot demand any further presents from the son-in-law once the marriage has been solemnized, demand exorbitant numbers of sheep and goats for daughters who are to be married to Christians.⁶⁰
(italics mine)

The point that is being made here is that the view that the moral and medical factors led to the campaign against female circumcision is not satisfactory. The missionaries' paternalistic attitude and their ignorance of the Agikuyu culture and beliefs were

some of the major contributing factors that led to the campaign itself. It appears that the missionaries appealed to the moral conscience of the few Agikuyu they had converted into Christianity to accept that female circumcision and the Mambura rituals were evil. They nevertheless, did this under the veil of paternalism and ignorance.

Before discussing the nature of the campaign against female circumcision it would be worth while to mention in passing the various groups that were involved in this campaign and the attitude that each group had. There were at least four groups involved in this campaign. The first was the Roman Catholic group. The Catholics were not directly involved in this campaign. As far as they were concerned, female circumcision and other related rituals were social customs which gave a young Kikuyu "a standing in the tribe ... and it [female circumcision] in no way necessarily causes a soul's damnation."⁶¹ The Catholics seemed more concerned with the method of carrying it out and not so much with its moral and religious aspects.

The second group was the colonial government. The official government attitude towards female circumcision was that the custom "was of a very

ancient origin and would disappear only as a result of a gradual process of education."⁶² This official attitude was to lead later to a head-on collision with some of the conservative churches. The other group was the Anglican Church headed by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.).⁶³ This group took the government's stand although its mission at Kabete tended to be greatly influenced by the conservative churches notably the Church of Scotland Mission at Thogoto. It is interesting to note that the Anglicans never had an official policy until in October 1931 when the Bishop of Mombasa wrote to all Anglican clergy and the members of the Pastorate Committees.

In the letter, the Bishop called upon all the clergy and the pastorate members to condemn female circumcision. He went on to say that all heathen practices connected with the custom must be entirely abandoned by Christians; that any operation causing physical injury to the individual must be condemned; that where a pastorate decides to condemn the custom of female circumcision entirely, no church member who has not abandoned female circumcision should be eligible to be a member of a pastorate committee; and that if a clergyman decides to refuse to baptize the infant children of parents who practice

the custom the bishop would support him.⁶⁴ This official policy of the Anglican came rather late after the female circumcision issue had already led to the development of the Karing'a movement.

The last and the most militant group consisted of the conservative churches, namely, the Church of Scotland Mission, the African Inland Mission, and the Gospel Missionary Society. This group played a bigger role in the campaign against female circumcision than the other groups. However, although the other three groups believed in a policy of gradualism, they nevertheless gave the conservatives the moral support as we will see later in this work.

According to Welbourn, Macpherson, and Waruiru, the campaign against female circumcision started in 1906.⁶⁵ The campaign was started by Dr. Arthur, Mrs. Watson, and Marion Stevenson - all of the Church of Scotland Mission at Kikuyu. At first, the campaign took the form of Christian Moral Education. According to one informant, the campaign was carried out both in the Church and in the schools. The missionaries would teach against the female circumcision and Mambura rituals during church services; they would discourage and forbid church members from

practising it; they would discipline members who allowed their girls to be circumcised by excommunicating them temporarily from the churches; and in schools, they would expel girls who were circumcised.⁶⁶ Another informant gave a demonstration of how Miss Stevenson used to come to Tumutumu with a piece of rubber. She would demonstrate that the female sex organ was as elastic as rubber and would lose its elasticity after the circumcision. This made childbirth difficult.⁶⁷ This researcher recalls that as recently as 1950, boys and girls were expelled from schools if they participated in Mambura rituals even though they were not getting circumcised. It would, therefore, appear that the campaign against female circumcision was double-edged. First, it was aimed at total abolition of female circumcision; and second, the abolition of Mambura rituals. The abolition of these rituals would lead to the destruction of the Agikuyu cultural and religious traditions.

In carrying out this campaign, the missionaries had become convinced that in order to destroy the culture and religion of the Agikuyu, it was necessary to discourage their followers from participating in the Mambura rituals. As far as the missionaries

were concerned, these rituals prevented the Agikuyu from becoming "good" Christians. Roland Oliver has observed that by 1910 the missionaries "had become convinced that an African who had passed the age of puberty and who was left in his accustomed environment could never become more than a nominal Christian."⁶⁸ Similarly, Routledge has observed that:

It is a well known fact that the native races show in childhood intelligence and adaptability which may be said to equal that of their white compeers, but that with earliest manhood and womanhood development seems to cease or even retrogression to set in. The function of initiation has in some quarters been held responsible for this change It is certain that from the white man's point of view, young Kikuyu servants who have been entirely satisfactory till the time that they ask for temporary leave to go through these ceremonies, return, if they return at all, entirely altered for the worse, and are frequently unable again to settle down to the routine of a European establishment. (*italics mine*)⁶⁹

Routledge's use of the phrase "European establishment" would, of course, include the Church, the School, the

factory, administrative offices, coffee and tea plantations, and any other institution established by Europeans during the colonial era. It would, therefore, appear, from the point of view of Routledge and Oliver, that the abolition of initiation rite would make the Agikuyu adapt easily to European and Christian way of life. This adaptability would in the end destroy their culture and religion. Being aware of this the missionaries intensified their campaign against circumcision.

As the campaign gained momentaum, the missionaries tried not to use force at first. They used the power of persuasion. They managed to persuade some mission boys and girls not to participate in the initiation rite. Informants say that the missionaries quoted Paul's letters to the Romans and the Galatians⁷⁰ which taught that the circumcision of the heart is more important than that of the body and that in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail.⁷¹ These teachings plus, of course, the paternalism of the missionaries, persuaded some of the new converts to reject the initiation rite. For example, in 1914, two mission girls at Kikuyu refused to be circumcised but the missionaries persuaded them to do so because they, the missionaries, thought the time had not yet come

for such a public rejection. Moreover, the missionaries feared that this might affect their work. The girls were circumcised at the Kikuyu hospital by a traditional circumciser.⁷²

In 1915, a similar experiment was made at Tumutumu in the presence of Dr. Philp and Marion Stevenson. According to Waruiru, a traditional circumciser was asked to circumcise three mission girls: Lizzie Mwarania, Ruth Wangui, and Julia Maikani.⁷³ Dr. Philp found "the operation so brutal that he refused to sanction it being repeated, and thereafter, opposed the custom by every means in his power."⁷⁴

The fight against female circumcision went hand in hand with the fight against the Mambura rituals. In 1909, the Church of Scotland Mission at Kikuyu moved that the boys could be circumcised traditionally without going through Mambura rituals. A similar attempt was made at C.S.M. Tumutumu in 1912. According to Kahuhu, Barlow and Dr. Philp tried to persuade the mission boys at Tumutumu to be circumcised in the hospital. Many of the boys refused and went back to their homes to be circumcised traditionally. However, about six boys including Kahuhu himself agreed to be circumcised

in Mambere⁷⁵ (the mission station) but they refused to be circumcised in the hospital. They agreed not to go through the Mambura rituals because they had been taught that such rituals were evil. However, they requested to be circumcised by traditional circumciser. Rev. Barlow accepted their request. He accompanied them to be circumcised but warned them that if anyone of them showed any fear he would beat them. Kahuho claimed that after they were circumcised, the people did not accept them as fully circumcised because they had not gone through the Mambura rituals.⁷⁶

Kahuho went on to report that after Barlow had lived with the Agikuyu for sometimes, he had come to realize how the uncircumcised (kihii) was hated and had decided to be circumcised himself. When he went to England later in 1912, he got circumcised in the hospital. He told his followers about it when he came back.⁷⁷ Whether Barlow's "hospital circumcision" had other ulterior motives other than the fact that he was supposedly looked at with contempt by the Agikuyu because he was a kihii, is very hard to tell. But what is interesting is that immediately after this, "hospital circumcision" for boys was introduced in the Mambere and the

campaign against female ~~ci~~cumcision entered its most militant phase: the medical phase.

On July 21, 1916, an African Church Committee at Kikuyu recommended that female circumcision should be actively prohibited. In a resolution, the Committee declared that "a girl who has been baptized and has made public profession or who is a mission boarder or is the child of Christian parents or their protege may not be circumcised."⁷⁸ This resolution was adopted in 1920 by C.S.M. at Tumutumu and the Gospel Missionary Society (G.M.S.) at Kambui, Kiambu. Apparently, the African Inland Mission (A.I.M.) at Kijabe had started the campaign in 1914 and the Gospel Missionary Society had started it later. At an A.I.M. Conference in Kijabe in 1921, female circumcision was forbidden in all A.I.M. stations. At Kahuhia, the Anglican Missionaries of C.M.S. did not forbid the custom; rather they taught against it. But at Kabete, the C.M.S. forbade it.⁷⁹

Another resolution was passed in September 1921, this time by the Gospel Missionary Society at Kambui. The resolution stated that:

If a circumcised woman wishes to have a church marriage she would first be ex-communicated for two years before her wedding.

If she completed her ex-communication satisfactorily and still sought a church marriage, the wedding would be performed in the church verandah, not inside, and no spectators were allowed to watch it except the official witness, the bestman, the maid and the minister.⁸⁰

This resolution meant that no circumcised woman could be fully accepted in the church. Moreover, the conditions set out in the resolution were such that circumcision for the girls was out of question.

The wording of these resolutions was becoming more militant and forceful because the missionaries thought that they had now found medical justification to forbid female circumcision. Before this they could only preach against it on moral grounds. They could not find biblical justification to forbid the custom.

In 1920, the case of one Elizabeth Ndobi aroused the sentiments of Dr. Philp and other missionary crusaders against female circumcision. Elizabeth had died giving birth at Tumutumu hospital. Dr. Philp performed the postmortem. He alledged that Ndobi had died because she had undergone

clitoridectomy.⁸¹ He sent the medical report to Dr. Arthur at Kikuyu. The two redoubled their efforts against female circumcision. They even invented two types of female circumcision; the minor and the major operations which in fact, never existed. As Kenyatta has pointed out, "with a stroke (of the razor, the circumciser) cuts off the tip of the clitoris (rung'uthu). As no other part of the girls sexual organ is interfered with this completes the girls operation."⁸²

Following Ndobi's case, Drs. John W. Arthur, A. Clive Irvine, and W.M. Brown wrote a very sentimental medical report. Apparently, the report was written to arouse the emotions of other missionaries and to inform the "home" churches of the "just" struggle to abolish female circumcision. The publication of this report thereby internationalized the issue.⁸³ It would also appear that through this report, the conservative missionaries thought they might influence the colonial government which up to now had been indifferent towards the custom.

This medical report⁸⁴ quoted and summarised here below in full is a very important document for it set the stage for the confrontation between the Agikuyu Karing'a and the missionaries and their

supporters. It also acted as a unifier between the moderate and the conservative missionaries and the colonial government.

The opening remarks in the document describe the two types of operations, thus; "female circumcision ... comprises cutting away the inner and outer soft parts lying round the birth canal. In its severest form, the cutting extends in front up on to the pubis and into the birth canal itself. The result is the replacement of much of the normal elastic tissues of these parts, and by unyielding ring of hard fibrous tissues." The document goes on to suggest that "because of the severity of this operation, infection of the bladder with danger of spreading up to the kidney could occur. If the operation is very severe, sterility can occur due to impossibility of sexual intercourse."

The doctors went on to argue that death can occur to either the mother or the child during the childbirth because of the hardening of the tissues on the birth canal. They claimed that they had treated many first births where owing to female circumcision the child could not have been born without either severe tearing or incisions.

As for the circumcision of boys, the doctors

observed that the effect of male circumcision at puberty is bad psychologically and for this reason the doctors suggested that if circumcision was to be performed at all, it should be done in infancy.

Finally, the doctors listed several reasons why female circumcision is undesirable from a medical point of view. They argued that since the operation is limited to the clitoris only a medical man operating under the best conditions of light and posture could avoid injury to the urinary canal; that the operation posed the danger of sepsis, including lock-jaw; that it was too painful an operation; that it had had psychological effect on the girls for drawing attention to sexual organs at such an early age; and that although this organ is not, as is erroneously supposed the main seat of sexual gratifications it certainly contributes to this, which makes its unnecessary excision all the more indefensible.

After the publication of this document, the campaign against female circumcision and Mambura rituals was stepped up. The missionaries had now obtained a "scientific proof" that female circumcision was not only morally wrong but that it was medically harmful and that male circumcision at puberty was

psychologically bad. An intensified campaign was carried out among the teachers, hospital staff, the church elders, the preachers, and all the church members at Tumutumu, Kikuyu, Kambui, and Kahuhia. A committee to deal with female circumcision was set up at Tumutumu in 1920. This committee sought to convince African Christians to stop the practice and not to join any political organization. According to Waruiru, the Tumutumu Committee drafted resolutions demanding that female circumcision be abolished and that Christians should not participate in politics.

When the Committee presented the resolutions to church members and asked them to endorse them by signing, some members like L. Macharia, Philp Mukere, J. Kuniha, and Willie Jimmy Wambugu refused to sign the document.⁸⁵ Consequently, the Church was split into two groups, "Agikuyu a Kirore" or the "Abolitionists" and "Agikuyu a Karing'a" or the cultural nationalists. Waruiru's information has been collaborated by Welbourn. Welbourn has observed that the split of the Church of Scotland at Tumutumu led to a similar reactions in African Inland Mission and the Gospel Missionary Society's Churches in Nyeri and Murang'a. For instance, in

1923, the A.I.M. and G.M.S. Missions at Kihumbuini, Murang'a were attacked by the new Karing'a group. African clergy and teachers were abused; hostility towards missionaries developed; people began to question the motives of the missionaries; the church at Tumutumu was accused of acquiring land in order to sell it to the settlers; and the Christians were urged to continue circumcising their daughters.⁸⁶ This was the first organized reaction by the Agikuyu to protect and defend their culture and religion. It is also interesting to note that this reaction coincided with the arrest of Harry Thuku in 1922 and the formation of Kikuyu Central Association in 1924. The Association became the mouthpiece for those who were against the abolition of female circumcision. In fact, the Kikuyu Central Association carried the crusade for the restoration of the Agikuyu religion and culture until 1929 when Karing'a movement was formed. However, its crusade was more political than cultural. Moreover, the K.C.A. consisted of a small group of political activists, hence it was not a mass movement as Karing'a later came to be.

Following the disturbances in Nyeri, Murang'a, and Kiambu, the colonial government got directly

involved in the campaign against female circumcision. In Kiambu, for example, the Local Native Council met in July, 1925 to discuss the issue. The District Commissioner tried to persuade the Council to pass a resolution to stop the custom. The Council refused. At the end of the meeting, the D.C. issued a government directive stating, among other things, that those who wanted to continue with the custom could do so as long as they performed what had now become known as the minor operation as opposed to the major operation.⁸⁷ Either before or after this meeting, there was an undated circular entitled "Standard Resolution No.1" which discussed the two types of operations and which was supposed to be used as a guidance for all the circumcisers in Kiambu District. According to this circular, which apparently was issued by the D.C., Kiambu, the major operation involved

the removal of not only the clitoris but also the labia minora and half the labia majora together with the surrounding tissue. [This resulted] in permanent mutilation affecting the woman's natural functions of micturition, menstruation, and parturition with disastrous results not only to the birth rate but to the physique and vitality of the tribe.

The milder form [of operation] is the

traditional /type/ the
 more brutal one being
 a comparatively modern
 innovation.⁸⁸

The circular demanded that all women circumcisers must obtain permits before they could circumcise. They were only allowed to perform the minor operation, the failure of which could result in a fifty-shillings' fine. The circumcisers were required to go to a medical officer for 'demonstration' on how to perform the 'minor operation' and how to take care of the wound and other matters concerning general cleanliness.⁸⁹

Dr. Leakey, a trained anthropologist, and a son of a missionary, attributed the development of the so-called brutal or major operation to an increase of partially trained female circumcisers in the 1920's and 1930's. Leakey claimed that these circumcisers performed the operation unskillfully and as a result there were more cases of death during childbirth. Without substantiating his claim, Leakey went on to suggest that the whole initiation rite of boys and girls should be stripped of its religious significance and be reduced to a social and secular rite. He suggested that a council

should be appointed to deal with matters concerning the initiation. The initiation candidates should present themselves for approval by the Council on the basis of their age. The qualified candidates should be trained on matters concerning good behaviour. They should be taught about sex, including definite warnings against sexual indulgence at too young age but this teaching should not be based upon religion, rather it should be based on medical and hygienic grounds. Dancing based on traditional dances should be encouraged but obscene parts should be omitted. The candidates should be taught how to respect their traditions and customs but should be encouraged to abandon those customs that were not suitable "to present day conditions." After the candidates have gone through this training, they should gather at a ceremonial ground for the initiation. The initiation could be "a cut on the arm or thigh designed to leave a scar of a particular shape."⁹⁰

Leakey's suggestions do not seem to have been taken seriously by either the missionaries or the government. But it is important to note that his suggestion on reducing the initiation rite to a social and secular rite was slowly gaining

momentum in the 1930's through the introduction of the "hospital circumcision" in the mission hospitals.

Leakey's anthropological observations came rather late for by the time he wrote the article the debate on the female circumcision had already reached the Legislative Council. At the East African Governor's meeting of 1926, a resolution was passed recommending that through education, the custom would come to an end, and if practised at all, only a small excision of clitoris should be cut. This resolution was to be enforced in all districts. The resolution, which conservative missionaries wanted was never enforced in any district. Subsequently, Dr. Arthur, the chief advocate of the abolition of female circumcision, resigned from the Legislative Council where he was representing African views.⁹¹

Following the 1926 Governor's resolution, a meeting was held at Kiambu by the Local Native Council. The meeting resolved that no unauthorized person should perform or assist in the performance of the female circumcision; that the authorized person shall only perform the milder form of operation with the consent of the parent or lawful guardian of the girl and that any person who shall perform the major form of operation shall be guilty of an offence

punishable under Section 8(2) of the Native Authority Amendment Ordinance, 1924.⁹² When these resolutions were presented to the people, they were flatly rejected. Female circumcision went on. It is interesting to note that what had started as a moral issue had turned into a medical and political issue and soon it would turn into an economic issue.

In the mid and late 1920's, the number of "squatters" in the European farms had increased substantially. The sons and daughters of these "squatters" were part of the labour force in these farms. When the time for circumcision came, they would usually return to the "reserves" to be circumcised or would be circumcised on the farms. This meant abandoning the work on the farm for several months. The European settlers were not happy about this. They pressurised the Local Native Councils to look into this matter.

In 1927, a resolution was passed by the Kiambu Local Native Council stating that "no native either male or female should take part in any circumcision ceremony except in March and April in the higher locations and May and June in the lower locations."⁹³ Although the resolution does not specify what lower

and higher locations are, nevertheless it was not too helpful to the settlers because it dislocated the flow of labour to their farms. Boys and girls from lower locations could go to higher locations and vice versa for the ceremony. Consequently, this resolution was changed in February 1929 to read "no male native shall take part in any circumcision ceremony in the Kiambu Native Reserve at any time other than in the months of March, April, and May in any year."⁹⁴ Unlike the 1927 resolution, which allowed both boys and girls to be circumcised, the 1929 resolution allowed boys only to be circumcised. The reasons given for passing this resolution, which now became a bye law was that it was hoped that "the dislocation of labour will be restricted to three months in the year, drinking bouts will be curtailed and general industry will be allowed full play."⁹⁵ A circular about this bye law was sent to all mission stations and to District Officers in "white areas" in Kiambu District.

Dr. Arthur does not seem to have been satisfied with the new bye law because it did not specify the restrictions on the periods of female circumcision. He immediately appealed to the D.C. Kiambu, suggesting

that if the girls were allowed to be circumcised any month of the year, "it will be far more difficult for lady workers in charge of girls' boarding schools and girls' work generally to look after and protect the uncircumcised girls under their charge."⁹⁶ The D.C. turned down his request and asked him to present it to the Local Native Council. Dr. Arthur does not seem to have followed the matter any further.

Although Dr. Arthur's appeal was rejected, it appears that by 1929 a bye law had already been passed in Kiambu Local Native Council preventing the circumcision of girls below the age of twelve years. A letter dated March 17th, 1930 and addressed to the Senior Commissioner, Nyeri by Kiambu District Commissioner pointed out that the missionaries were complaining that girls of nine or ten years old were being circumcised. The missionaries were requesting the D.C. to persecute those parents "on the ground that the girls [were] below the age of twelve years which is the age of consent."⁹⁷ This law was not practical nor even acceptable by the Agikuyu because traditionally it was a taboo to circumcise a girl after her first menstrual period. She had to be circumcised before her first period

which is normally before the age of twelve.

The enactment of these bye laws suggests, among other things, that the colonial government in collaboration with the missionaries was trying to protect the economic interests of the settlers and in so doing the initiation rite for girls would gradually be abolished. Up to this time there was a strong belief in government circles that gradualism would bring the Agikuyu to their senses. As the D.C., Kiambu had once written to Canon Leakey:

The Kikuyu is ever suspicious and direct opposition is most apt to arouse his stubborn spirit. It takes a long time to bring them to reason but they generally arrive there if handled with care.⁹⁸

Gradualism or no gradualism, the events following the passing of these bye laws suggest that the Agikuyu were not going to be brought "to reason" after one of their fundamental traditional customs was declared illegal. Moreover, what the Agikuyu had thought at first was a Church issue had now become an issue affecting both the Agikuyu Christians and the traditional Agikuyu. The Church

and the state had become involved. Each had become involved for different reasons and interests. The Church had become involved ostensibly for moral and medical grounds. Its motivation was evangelical hoping to "save" the lost souls of the Agikuyu. The state, on the other hand, had become involved primarily for economic and educational reasons. Its motivation was to avoid dislocation of labour force in the settlers' farms and to gradually educate the Agikuyu against the custom hoping that they would soon come to their "senses" and abandon the custom. We can, therefore, rightly argue that the aim of both the state and the church was one - to abolish the initiation rite for girls. The only difference was the method and the tactics that each one of them used.

As we have already seen above, we can make several observations before concluding this chapter. First, by 1929 it had literally become a crime against the state and the church for the Agikuyu to exercise their cultural and religious rights. Second, the "land and cultural" tales that had been circulating in the 1920's had begun to bear some truth. With the abolition of the female circumcision, the Agikuyu Karing'a would be exterminated mentally if

not physically and their land would be taken by Europeans. Third, the campaign against the female circumcision is a good example of forced culture change on the core level. The missionaries, the settlers and the colonial administrators tried to use every form of authority available to them to force the Agikuyu to change their basic values which were enshrined in the initiation rite. This change was greatly resisted as we shall see later. Fourth, the situation had now reached a point where the Agikuyu were faced with two alternatives; to either submit completely to European rule or to fight back with all the risks involved. They decided to fight back by using the two major weapons that Europeans had used mainly, education and religion. We now turn to an examination of this fight and how it led to the development of the Karing'a movement.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

- ¹Mambura rituals were divine services which were associated with the Agikuyu initiation rite. They were also called Matuumo rituals. For further details, see Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya, pp.133-137.
- ²Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.128.
- ³Cagnolo, The Akikuyu, p.82.
- ⁴0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ⁵Kenyatta, op.cit., p.127.
- ⁶Lambert, Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, p.68.
- ⁷0.1. Wangui-wa-Karanu, Interviewed 3.8.76 and 5.8.76, Kambui, Kiambu.
- ⁸0.1. Paul Mathenge, Interviewed 9.7.76, Thigingi, North Tetu, Nyeri.
- ⁹0.1. Karimu-wa-Kibiru, Interviewed 23.9.78, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹0.1. Paul Mathenge, op.cit.
- ¹²0.1. Wangui-wa-Karanu, op.cit.; Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.; and Mucone wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ¹³0.1. Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ¹⁴Ibid., Interviewed 6.5.79.

- ¹⁵Ibid., This information was collaborated by Ibrahim Njoroge and Ndubiru wa Mbete, op.cit.
- ¹⁶0.1. Nyamu Kamau, op.cit.
- ¹⁷Wanyoike, An African Pastor, p.88.
- ¹⁸Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.140.
- ¹⁹0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.
- ²⁰Nyamiti Charles "Christian and Tribal Initiation Rituals: A Comparative Study of Maasai, Kikuyu and Bemba Rites in view of Liturgical Adaptation, Part I", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Universite Catholique de Louvain, Rome, 1969, p.36.
- ²¹Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.129.
- ²²0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ²³Gathigira, Miikarire ya Agikuyu, pp.42-43.
- ²⁴0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, Interviewed 9.5.79, Ndenderu, Kiambu, and Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ²⁵Gathigira, op.cit., pp.42-45.
- ²⁶0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and Karimu wa Kibiru, op.cit.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Gathigira, op.cit., pp.43-45.
- ²⁹0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ³⁰The work of these four students can be found in the Department of Philosophy and Religious

Studies, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi.

- ³¹Nguru, G. Gerald, "Agikuyu Rites of Initiation".
- ³²Mburu, John Kairu, "The Initiation Rite: Among the Agikuyu".
- ³³Kamau, Isaac Ngotho, "The Agikuyu Rite of Circumcision", Kamau's informants were the Agikuyu of Diasphora in Kitale.
- ³⁴Gichuki, A.P., "Initiation Ceremonies of Boys and Girls Among the Agikuyu".
- ³⁵Cf. Gathigira, op.cit., pp.45-57 and Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.125-148.
- ³⁶Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.130-131.
- ³⁷Gathigira, op.cit., pp.44-45.
- ³⁸Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., pp.131.
- ³⁹Ibid., p.131.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p.132.
- ⁴¹0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ⁴²Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.133.
- ⁴³Gathigira, op.cit., p.56. See also Kabetu, Kirira kia Ugikuyu, pp.23-35.
- ⁴⁴The masculine gender will be used to refer to both boys and girls except where specified.
- ⁴⁵Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.134.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p.135.

- 47 Ibid., p.137.
- 48 Ibid., p.136.
- 49 0.1. Mucone wa Kibiru, op.cit., Karimu wa Kibiru op.cit., and Munyui wa Gichura, op.cit.
- 50 Gathigira, op.cit., p.48 and Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.136.
- 51 Gathigira, op.cit., p.51.
- 52 Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.146.
- 53 0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- 54 0.1. Kagia Rungu wa Gathiri, Interviewed 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu.
- 55 0.1. Paul Kahuhu Gachomba (Rev.), op.cit.
- 56 0.1. Johana Kamau, op.cit.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 See Barlow Papers.
- 59 Welbourn, East African Rebels, p.127.
- 60 Leakey, L.S.B., "The Kikuyu Problem of the Initiation of Girls," 1930, p.281 in Barlow Papers, op.cit.
- 61 Welbourn, op.cit., pp.137-138.
- 62 Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, p.108.
- 63 For a detailed account on C.M.S. policy on female circumcision see Murray's thesis "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy."

- ⁶⁴Welbourn, op.cit., pp.136-137, The letter was dated 12th October, 1931.
- ⁶⁵See Macpherson, op.cit., passim; Welbourn, op.cit., passim, and Waruiru, "Female Initiation Controversy at CSM Tumutumu, 1912-37," passim.
- ⁶⁶0.1. John Wandimi Wang'ombe (Rev.), Interviewed 20/7/76 and 25/7/76, Kambui, Kiambu.
- ⁶⁷0.1. Paul Kahuho Gachomba, op.cit.
- ⁶⁸Oliver, Roland, The Missionary Factor in East Africa, London, Longmans Press, 1966 impression, p.209.
- ⁶⁹Routledge, With a Prehistoric People, pp.166-167.
- ⁷⁰0.1. Paul Kahuho Gachomba, op.cit., Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and Girishoni Kirangi, Interviewed 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu.
- ⁷¹See Romans 2:29 and Galatians 5:6.
- ⁷²Macpherson, op.cit., p.107.
- ⁷³Waruiru, op.cit., p.21.
- ⁷⁴Macpherson, op.cit., p.107.
- ⁷⁵According to Kahuho, the Agikuyu called the mission stations Mambere because they associated them with the biblical house of Babel - a house of confusion where people spoke different languages and could not understand one another. The boys and girls in the mission stations were generally called Andu a Mambere - (the confused ones).
- ⁷⁶0.1. Paul Kahuho Gachomba, op.cit.
- ⁷⁷Ibid.

- ⁷⁸Welbourn, op.cit., p.136.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., p.137ff. See also Murray, op.cit., pp.175-199.
- ⁸⁰Wanyoike, op.cit., pp.72-73.
- ⁸¹Waruiru, op.cit., p.24.
- ⁸²Kenyatta, n.d., op.cit., p.140.
- ⁸³For further details on internationalization of female circumcision controversy see Murray, op.cit., pp.280-298.
- ⁸⁴See Barlow Papers, op.cit., The medical report can be found in the file on female initiation.
- ⁸⁵Waruiru, op.cit., p.26.
- ⁸⁶Welbourn, op.cit., passim.
- ⁸⁷Wanyoike, op.cit., p.90ff.
- ⁸⁸See a letter to a Dr. Reid, Native Civil Hospital from the District Commissioner, Kiambu dated 25/5/29 in the KNA/DC/KBU/7/3.
- ⁸⁹Ibid.
- ⁹⁰For a detailed account of Leakey's proposals see his article "The Kikuyu Problem of the Initiation of Girls" in Barlow Papers, op.cit., passim. This article was written in 1930. For further details on the missionaries' attempt to christianize and modernize African initiation rite see Ranger, T.O., "Missionary Adaptation of African Religious Institutions: The Masasi case" in The Historical Study of African Religion, edited by Ranger and Kimambo, pp.221-251.

⁹¹Welbourn, op.cit., passim.

⁹²KNA/DC/KBU/7/3, op.cit.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid. See a letter written to Canon Leakey by the D.C., Kiambu, dated December 6, 1926.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RADICAL RE-AFFIRMATION OF
THE AGIKUYU RELIGION AND CULTURE

The passing of the "initiation bye-laws" by the colonial government marked the peak of the intensification of the war against the Agikuyu religion and culture. It also marked the peak of forced culture change whereby attempts were being made by the missionaries and the colonialists to penetrate the core values of the Agikuyu. The missionaries, the chiefs, and the colonial administrators were now empowered to fight against the Agikuyu religion and culture. As already mentioned in the last chapter, the fight was no longer limited to a handful of Agikuyu Christians who were resisting the missionaries' demand to abolish female circumcision. The fight now was against the religion and culture of the Agikuyu. For at least thirty years, the initiation issue or what might as well be called the "cultural issue" had remained a church issue. The Agikuyu do not seem to have taken this "cultural issue" seriously since it only affected a small group of what they called "Athomi" (the readers).¹ They seem to have concentrated on the "land issue" which had apparently affected all of them.

However, the passing of the "initiation bye-laws"

moved the "cultural issue" from the church into the entire Gikuyu country. Now the Agikuyu had two "national" issues to face, one of the land and the other of culture and politics. Out of these issues, the Karing'a movement emerged.

On the other hand, after the missionaries realized that the state was sympathetic to their cause, although for different reasons, they took advantage of the situation as explained below. By so doing, they underestimated the explosive situation which was seething in the Gikuyu country.

The female circumcision crisis came to a head in Nyeri District in April, 1928. A meeting was held in Nyeri by both the missionaries and the church elders to announce "a campaign against female circumcision in the districts, whose Local Native Council, alone among those in Kikuyu country, had refused to pass the bye-law regulating the custom".² Shortly after this meeting seven of the church elders left the church. Among those who left the church were Willy Jimmy Wambugu, Meshak Matu, Joseph Kanua, Gideon Michuki, Ezekiel Kabora, Grishon Waititu and Simon Wambugu.³

The April meeting was followed by another one

in March, 1929 at Tumutumu. This meeting resolved that "the female circumcision was evil and should be abandoned by all Christians [and that] all Christians submitting to it should be suspended by all churches everywhere."⁴ The meeting made no recommendations as to the period of suspension but it referred the matter back to the churches, asking that it be carefully considered 'with a view to getting a definite decision at a future conference.'

The Tumutumu resolutions led to a series of crises. In May, 1929, the Kikuyu Central Association published the Tumutumu resolutions in their newsletter, Muiguithania. This stirred the anger of the people who were already angry and made them more hostile to the churches. The Nyeri CSM reacted to KCA militancy and "demanded assurances from those KCA leaders and members who were also baptized members of the Tumutumu church that they would continue loyally to accept all the laws of the church including the one prohibiting female circumcision."⁵ The KCA members refused to accept this ruling and decided to leave the church but the church "retrieved the situation ... and at the end of a two year period of grace only 200 names [at Tumutumu] ... had been

removed from the Communion roll."⁶

In Kiambu District, the crisis came to a head in June, 1929 when the case of one Ng'endo was reported to Rev. Knapp of the Gospel Missionary Society at Kambui. Ng'endo, a student at Kambui Boarding School, had been seized on the road and forcibly circumcised. Rev. Knapp reported the case to Kiambu Native Court. The case was dismissed by the magistrate alleging that the girl had in the end consented to be circumcised. The offenders were fined thirty shillings "for exceeding the amount of cutting permitted under the Kiambu Local Native Council Bye-Law."⁷

The missionaries at Kambui were dissatisfied with the magistrate's ruling. They took the case to the Kenya Supreme Court. The Supreme Court threw out the case on a technicality under Section 88 of the Indian Penal Code which states:

Nothing which is not intended to cause death is an offence by reason of any harm it may cause or be known by the doer to be likely to cause to any person for whose benefit it is done in good faith, and, who has given consent, whether expressed or implied of that harm.⁸

The churches were infuriated by the Court's decision. Dr. Arthur of the CSM, Kikuyu, published a letter in the East African Standard on August 17, 1929 condemning the decision taken by the court. In his letter, he reiterated that the judgement arrived at in the High Court could not help the general public to know the seriousness of the matter. He went on to say that female circumcision led

to possible damage of the soul as well as of body for Christian women The result of this judgement is that any heathen relatives can now seize anyone of these young girls ... and finally have her circumcised; if the fine imposed is only a fine of say 30/= this will be easily paid either by the circumcised or the parents.⁹

Dr. Arthur was supported by Dr. Philip and the Kenya Missionary Council. In a letter to the East African Standard, Dr. Philip argued that "the present Kikuyu rite of mutilation performed on girls is in many instances sheer murder." He gave an example of how he and a Dr. Janet Welch had witnessed a woman and her baby die in childbirth at Tumutumu hospital. He went on to support Dr.

Arthur's claim that this custom damaged the soul and
the body and even

its effect on the male
sex, too cannot be
overlooked. As long as
crowds of young boys
and lads can go and
have an afternoon's
enjoyment witnessing
these terrible orgies,
their attitude to
sexual questions and
to women generally can
never be a right one.¹⁰

The Kenya Missionary Council wrote a similar
letter to the East African Standard deploring the
Supreme Court decision on Ng'endo's case. The
Council argued that the decision meant, among
other things, that the will of even a Christian
girl to resist such an operation of heathen sanc-
tion is of no legal value, and that the impression
created upon the native mind will be that such
operations are upheld by the country. The Council
urged the Legislative Council to pass a law to

protect the freedom
of the individual
and to guarantee
liberty of personal
choice in a matter
so obviously contrary
to justice and morality;
as these will be
understood by anyone
progressing from

heathenism towards
Christian civilization
 (italics mine)¹¹

In reply to Dr. Arthur and the missionaries, the KCA wrote a letter to the East African Standard with copies to the Chief Native Commissioner, and the Senior Commissioner, Nyeri stating that:

The Association is unable to understand what has happened in the minds of Dr. Arthur and his fellow missionaries We view with much fear such propoganda ... is an attempt on the part of a church to demolish an ancient Kikuyu custom, and thus lead into an avenue of general demoralization of the ancestral tribal customs The allegations of mortality amongst circumcised mothers is exaggerated and that such mortality occurs among other peoples irrespective of the custom Since the arrival of missionaries in the country, the natives have never been taught that the Christian creed differed in its opinion of circumcised and uncircumcised.¹²

The KCA reiterated in the same letter that no circumciser should be taken to court since she

would "only be carrying out the custom of the tribe."

This letter was followed by a circular written by the president of the KCA, Joseph Kang'ethe. The circular was addressed to all the chiefs in Gikuyuland and all the branches of the KCA. It read in part:

We have discovered a law and it has been made public in the Europeans' newspapers and it has been written by Dr. Arthur and another European from the Kambui mission. This new law has made us very sad for it says that the circumcision of girls is done away with and that there is an agreement in force, to abolish it; that anyone who circumcises will be fined or if the fine is not forthcoming will be imprisoned.

It is a great sorrow that all the Agikuyu are thus prohibited circumcision and this is done by Dr. J.W. Arthur and others such as the Europeans of Kabete, Tumutumu, and Kambui. 13

Macpherson does not say how and where he got a copy of the letter but he goes on to say that the circular called for a meeting of all the Agikuyu

to discuss the "new law". A general KCA meeting was held at Nyeri township in which the KCA strongly attacked the missionaries. It also demanded to be allowed to run in the forthcoming Local Native Council elections "on a platform of preserving native customs including female circumcision."¹⁴

In order to oppose the KCA's platform, "the CSM at Tumutumu sponsored a political association of 'really educated, sane men' called the Progressive Kikuyu Party (PKP)."¹⁵ The PKP's platform was to abolish female circumcision and to cooperate "with men of all races (white, brown, black) in progress for the Kikuyu country in particular, and for Kenya colony."¹⁶ It appears from Waruiru's account that the Progressive Kikuyu Party succeeded in putting up a candidate in Tumutumu for the L.N.C. elections while the KCA did not.¹⁷

In the meantime, the PKP held a meeting at Kianjogu, Nyeri, to denounce female circumcision and the KCA. One by the name of Rev. S. Ngari declared at the meeting that he had seen a Kirigu at Kihumbui-ini who was a mother of twelve children. Upon hearing this, several women declared publicly that they would not be circumcised. Some of these

women, like Margaret Wairimu and Wakenya Ndirangu, were circumcised by force later. Those who circumcised Margaret Wairimu, her mother included, were arrested and imprisoned for six months.¹⁸ The KCA dramatised this event by publishing another letter in the East African Standard on August 29, 1929. It accused the missionaries of interfering with Agikuyu customs. The letter went on to state:

We view [the court's judgement] with great concern for we feel it is an attempt to abolish an ancient custom and thus lead us into an avenue of general demoralization of the ancestral tribal custom.

Missionaries have tried on many occasions to interfere with the tribal customs, and the question is asked whether circumcision, being the custom of the Gikuyu Christian, he is to be a heathen simply because he is a Gikuyu.¹⁹

This letter and the events that had followed gained the KCA mass support not only from the Agikuyu Christians but the traditionalists as well. For the first time, the Agikuyu saw the KCA as the champion for their culture and religion.

The events were rapidly moving towards a confrontation. The churches and the missionaries were getting alarmed by the KCA activities. They

redoubled their efforts by seeking outside support. First, they sought support from the settlers' organizations such as the Convention of Associations and its auxiliary the East African Women's League. Both associations condemned the custom and castigated what they termed the "seditious tendencies among a section of the natives."²⁰

The following year, the question of clitoridectomy was raised in the House of Commons. A committee was appointed to investigate the issue. According to Kenyatta, who apparently was invited by the Committee to give the Agikuyu point of view, the Committee "agreed that the best way to tackle the problem was through education and not force of an enactment, and that the best way was to leave the people concerned free to choose what custom was best suited to their changing conditions."²¹ The Committee's decision might have disappointed the missionaries. However, their cause was fully supported in a conference on African Children held in Geneva in 1931. This conference was sponsored by the Save the Children Fund. In this conference, it was resolved that

the time was ripe when

this 'barbarous custom' should be abolished That it was the duty of the Conference for the sake of the African children, to call upon the Governments under which the customs of this nature were practised to pass laws making it a criminal offence for anyone who should be found guilty of practising the custom of clitoridectomy.²²

This resolution does not seem to have been taken seriously by the Colonial Government in Kenya. The Government refused to pass any legislation against the practice of the custom.²³ This angered the missionaries in general and Dr. Arthur in particular. He changed his tactics. Rather than seek the support from the outside, he now sought it from the inside.

According to Rosberg and Nottingham, Dr. Arthur sought and got support from "the Progressive Kikuyu Party and the leading chiefs of the Kikuyu Association."²⁴ He also got support from some of the church members. On September 6, 1929, the Thogoto Kirk Session hurriedly prepared a petition to request the Government to give protection to those girls who did not want to be circumcised.

The petition was presented to Kiambu churches on the following day. It was accepted with minor changes. The petition "humbly" and "respectfully" begged the Colonial Government to pass

an Ordinance that can support the uncircumcision for female; that when a girl is circumcised unwillingly and without the authority of her parents, both father and mother punishment may be awarded to the operators and others of circumcision.²⁵

Dr. Arthur, one of the authors of the "Thogoto Petition", decided to take the petition to the churches in Gikuyuland for support. On September 24th, he and several African elders set off for a long trek that took them to Kahuhia, Weithaga, Embu, and Meru. At Kahuhia, Dr. Arthur was received with hostility by what he later described as "Bolshevist looking individuals ... [whose] spirit of indiscipline and absolute devilment must be exorcised somehow."²⁶ At Kabare, Embu, he found that the KCA had no hold on the church members.²⁷ However, he was warned by the missionary in charge, the Rev. Comely, "not to mention the female circumcision issue for the time was not ripe."²⁸

When he reached Chogoria, Meru, Dr. Arthur

found that the church there was in great trouble. It was being accused of being sent by the government to steal the land; that it asked for money which could be well utilized by the KCA; and that its teachings were opposed to Meru customs. Dr. Arthur asked the Christian community at Chogoria to "sign a pledge of their loyalty to the Church rules and to repudiate the Kikuyu Central Association because it seeks to destroy the church."²⁹ This pledge enraged many KCA supporters and only succeeded in making the KCA stronger in Chogoria and neighbouring areas.

In spite of the trouble at Chogoria, Arthur was overcome with joy because of what he described as "Chogoria's pentecost and revival spirit" among the few members who chose to remain in the church after defying the KCA. Apparently, only 14 out of 120 members had remained loyal to the church. Dr. Arthur saw this as a success for his crusade. He was so overwhelmed that he later wrote in anger

Joseph Kang'ethe and
Johnstone Kenyatta
deserve to be hanged.
Kikuyu Church is the
next for testing and
Kahuhia and Weithaga,
to say nothing of
Embu and Kabete, will
never be right till

they too are made to
face their church
members with the choices
of two masters.³⁰

After the trip Dr. Arthur's delegation reported about their trip to the Kirk Session at Thogoto on the 15th October. It was agreed that a meeting between the African Inland Mission, the Gospel Missionary Society, and the Church of Scotland Mission should be held immediately. When the meeting was held later that month, the three missionary societies resolved that any African church member who did not abandon female circumcision was to be excommunicated and that those who agreed to abandon the custom should sign a declaration under oath stating that,

I ... reaffirm my
vow to the Church
of Christ and wish
to disassociate myself
with the practice of
female circumcision
which I hereby
renounce.³¹

By a vote of 34 to 16 with 4 abstentions, the "Thogoto Declaration of Loyalty" was thereby accepted by the churches. The church elders were requested to travel around the country getting signatures of those who wished to renounce the

custom. Since most people could not read and write, they made thumb prints or marks. Those who either signed or made thumb marks became known as Agikuyu a Kirore (the thumb printers or the abolitionists) and those who rejected it became known as the Agikuyu a Karing'a (the Agikuyu who are attached to Agikuyu cultural traditions and practices).

The Thogoto Declaration provoked widespread disturbances throughout Gikuyuland. Teachers were threatened with dismissal if they did not sign the Declaration. Church and school attendance was halved at Chogoria. At Kihumbuini, Murang'a, only six families signed the Declaration; and at Tumutumu 200 people left the church.³² At Kijabe, the African Inland Mission "lost all but 50 of its adherents."³³

However, the "purge" of all KCA members and supporters was more dramatic at Thogoto. Dr. Arthur demanded:

every paid "agent"
of the CSM ... to
sign a declaration
of support of the
mission's position
on female circumcision
and of their non-
membership of KCA.

Thirty-six signed,
five agreed to make
a verbal declaration,
but twelve teachers
refused and left
CSM employment.³⁴

The church elders were also asked to sign the "Declaration". Thirty four out of fifty elders signed.

It is quite clear that Arthur had taken things in his own hands. By so doing, he had disregarded the government's policy on the female circumcision issue. This was an embarrassment to the government because "many Kikuyu were coming to look upon him as an official government spokesman."³⁵ Arthur had been a representative of the Africans in the Governor's Executive Council since 1928. His uncompromising stand on the female circumcision issue led the government to put pressure on him to resign from the Executive Council; which he did on November 9, 1929.³⁶

The "Thogoto Declaration" and the events that followed were seen by the KCA as a declaration of war against Agikuyu cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices.³⁷ The KCA decided to strike back - this time not through the press but inside the

church.

The first incident took place at Kihumbuini, Murang'a, in September, 1929. Revs. W.P. Knapp and Wanyoike Kamawe of the Gospel Missionary Society went there to preach and administer holy communion. After the usual asking of the non-communicants to leave, one Mwalimu Mutaru informed Rev. Knapp that some Karing'a people and others already excommunicated for practising polygamy were still in the Church and had refused to go out. Rev. Knapp stood twice and demanded that they leave. Suddenly four angry people stood up. One of them declared angrily:

We are going to receive
the sacrament. If you
do not give it to us,
then it will not be
served to anyone in here
unless you go out and
have your sacrament on
the top of the trees.³⁸

After this another person said that the sacrament must be served for it is God's and not Arthur's. The third person reiterated that if the sacrament was not going to be served, the people would serve it by force. But the last person broke the silence by declaring "we are circumcised and we want our children to be circumcised. What is wrong with that."³⁸

The atmosphere became so hostile and tense that the sacrament was called off. Rev. Knapp reported the matter to the District Commissioner, Murang'a. He alleged that the KCA was involved in organizing the whole affair. This was the second time, and in this case, the Gospel Missionary Society had taken church matters to the colonial authorities. Rev. Knapp's action only helped the KCA to gain more support from the church members thereby increasing the possibility of organizing a movement by the Agikuyu Karing'a. The four accused were found guilty of causing a disturbance in a public place and sentenced to several months imprisonment.⁴⁰ This led to a split in the church at Kihumbuini.

In Kiambu a similar incident occurred. It was prompted by one Josiah who had accompanied Dr. Arthur to Ngeca to force people to accept the Thogoto Declaration. According to Kagure a scuffle occurred. The people demanded to kill Josiah but Kagure intervened. After this incident, the church at Ngeca split into two groups, the Karing'a and the Kirore.⁴¹

According to Kagure, Kuria Runo, Johanna Kamau and Girishoni Kirangi, the Karing'a group at

Ngeca continued to go to church. However, their services were held at different times from those of the Kirore group.⁴² At one time when the Karing'a group was holding a Sunday service, the police walked in and arrested six people through the help of Dr. Arthur and his supporters. The six were imprisoned for six months each.⁴³ This constant harrassment led the Karing'a group to leave the church completely. They decided to build their own schools and churches. However, they were not interested in building the churches. For seven years, the Karing'a group, not only in Kiambu but also in Murang'a and Nyeri, had no churches. According to Kagure, the churches were built later when the Karing'a found they were losing their supporters. As Kagure put it:

Ithui tutiendaga Kanitha.
Twendaga ugi. Gitumi
kiria giatumire Karing'a
icirie uhoro wa Kanitha
niundu wa ciana na
atumia na andu anyinyi
(nimagucagio) ni kirore
nigetha mabatithio.⁴⁴

(We were not interested
in the church per se.
We were interested in
education. The reason
why Karing'a group
decided to have their
own churches is because

children, women and young people were being attracted by the Kirore group in order that they could be baptised.)

It would also appear that the Karing'a group soon realized that they could use churches to consolidate their forces and consequently use them as a platform to fight the Kirore group, the missionaries, and the colonialists.

While the Karing'a group established itself in Ngeca, Kiambu, and Kihumbuini, Murang'a; another group emerged in Nyeri around 1929. According to Paul Kahuho, an incident occurred at Mahiga Church where he was a pastor. While the service was going on, a man stood up and declared that the day for separation had come for those who wanted to circumcise and those who did not want. This aroused and angered the people. According to Kahuho everybody left the church except himself and three other men. One of these men, whose name Kahuho could not remember was beaten and forced to write:

My father and mother
were circumcised
I am not against cir-
cumcision. I am going
to follow my father
and mother and reject
Paul Kahuho's group.⁴⁵

Apparently this letter which could not be traced was given to Paul-Kahuho.

In the meantime, while the incidents at Kihumbuini, Ngeca and Mahiga were taking place, a dance-song called Muthirigu swept the Gikuyuland overnight. The struggle that had primarily involved the church elders had now been taken up by the youth. Soon the situation would get out of hand and the government would step in.

According to Murray-Brown, the Muthirigu dance was derived from a Swahili tune but,

the Kikuyu added ingredients to it from their own imagination and with the exotic accompaniment of bells and pieces of metal, struck to the rhythm of the dance. Masters of improvisation, they invented any number of verses, most of which Europeans regarded as quite unprintable.⁴⁶

Kagia Rungu wa Githiri collaborates Murray-Brown's view on the origin of Muthirigu. According to Kagia, Muthirigu was a Swahili song sung by coastal people. At first the song was known as "Githiba"

it was called Muthirigu.⁴⁷
 I agree with Kagia. They
 a Kikuyu adaptation of a
 singing chorus and an unlimited
 verses The apprentice
 at Industrial Training Depot
 tune back with them after
 tion job in Mombasa."⁴⁸

NITD started the Muthirigu to
 missionaries, the abolitionists,
 attitudes towards the Agikuyu

These young men "were angry
 were doing for permitting
 abolish female circumcision."⁴⁹

note that these young men were
 that if their parents accepted
 hand, they would either have
 they would be forced to marry
 (and girls). This would be
 Kikuyu customs and it would mean
 the Agikuyu cultural traditions.

Ephraim Nguya, the Muthirigu
 Muthu wa Gathera a young student
 it, the song was started by
 in order to dramatise the

song, the dancers wore hats decorated with feathers; rattles on the ankles; wooden knives; and their clothes were decorated with beads. The leader played a Karing'aring'a, an instrument made of a piece of metal bent into a ring. This metal ring would be hit with a small metal rod and would produce the desired rhythmic sound. The partners danced facing each other and walked majestically as they followed their leader. The song was usually sung on Sundays. People would come from as far as Thika, Kiambu "reserves", and adjacent suburbs of Nairobi to sing the Muthirigu at Kabete. Within a very short time the song-dance had spread throughout Gikuyu-land.⁵²

The popularity and the content of the song-dance began to bother the authorities. In November, 1929 at the NITD 2000 young men and women staged the Muthirigu on the school compound. This infuriated the ex-Naval officer in charge. He quickly and angrily dispersed the crowd. According to Rosberg and Nottingham, "forty NITD boys were flogged on the Monday following and fifteen were given a month in a detention camp, and amongst these were most of the Muthirigu leaders."⁵³ The ~~ar~~rest of Muthirigu leaders only made the song-dance to spread more and to make the Agikuyu more angry. The Muthirigu song-dance had

become the anthem of resistance against the interference *with* the core value system of the Agikuyu. Although the song was abruptly banned by the Government in January, 1930, it continued to be sung underground. And today, the Muthirigu is one of the most popular songs among the Agikuyu.

Immediately after the Muthirigu was banned, Joseph Kang'ethe, the president of the KCA, was arrested for allegedly attending a meeting on January 11, 1930 where the Muthirigu was going to be sung. He was sentenced to one month in jail. After the appeal, he was fined one hundred fifty shillings.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, an editorial appeared in the East African Standard in which some members of the House of Commons in England were accused of sympathising with the Agikuyu problems. The editorial castigated them for meddling with the Kenyan situation which they did not understand because they had no conception of how backward and ignorant most of the "advanced young natives" were. It went on to state that "what the public in the colony would like to hear is the opinion of the masses and not the unbalanced and immature views of a few semi-

sophisticated young men whose real grievance is a dislike for parental authority and who are fascinated by their own acquired cleverness." (italics mine)⁵⁵

In spite of such a strongly worded and contemptuous editorial, the so-called "semi-sophisticated young men" in Gikuyuland continued to defy the colonialists and the missionaries through the Muthirigu. They sang of the missionaries and the colonial administrators:

Dr. Arthur has given birth
And his wife has given birth too
I found them asking each other
Who will take care of us.⁵⁶

The District Commissioner has
been bribed
He has been bribed with
uncircumcised girls.
So that we may lose land.⁵⁷

They questioned the divinity of Jesus and defied the Mission Schools.

I thought Jesus was God
or the Son of God
I have now found
He was an Indian or a
picture or the prophet
Mohammed.⁵⁸

Listen the shocking news
The youth of Agikuyu
Any school run by a whiteman
Is like a graveyard.⁵⁹

They castigated the abolitionists and accused them

of being the collaborators with the missionaries and the colonialists:

Leakey is a whiteman
Dr. Arthur is a whiteman
Now you, Musa King'ethu⁶⁰
What race are you?⁶¹

Hondi! Welcome!
Who is outside?
She sounds like the
mother of kirigu
Tell her to go away
We have no marriage
relationship with her.⁶²

They accused the chiefs of allowing the British to kill the Agikuyu:

Chief Waruhiu
You are a big fool
(kumanyoko)⁶³
Chief (Koinange) Mbiyu
You are a big fool
How dare you get the
British to kill the
children of Mumbi.⁶⁴

And they radically defended and praised their culture, religion, land, and leaders:

My father is circumcised
My mother is circumcised
I will never change my
(Agikuyu) religion
Because I am a Mugikuyu
Karing'a.⁶⁵

This is the religion of
Agikuyu
Given to us by Mwene Nyaga
We shall never abandon it.⁶⁶

I have no enmity against
 anybody
 Those who hate or love me
 The only one I have enmity
 against
 Is anyone who sells our land. 67

I am told to marry uncircum-
 cised girl
 My mother is circumcised
 When the two are in the kitchen
 What will she converse with
 my mother. 68

It was queried whether
 Circumcision should go on
 Kenyatta wa Muigai
 Raised his hand
 And said
 We shall never stop circumcising. 69

Praise the leaders of KCA
 For sending Jomo to Britain
 He is greater than the
 Governnor of Kenya
 Because he has defeated him. 70

The above verses represent a cross section of various themes in the Muthirigu (see Appendix II). The researcher has been able to identify at least three themes. The first theme consisted of the verses expressing anti-church, anti-missionary, and anti-colonial sentiments.⁷¹ The second theme expressed strong resentments against the abolitionists, the chiefs, and the clergy. The contemptuous nature of this theme indicates, among other things, the strong resentment and even hatred the Agikuyu had

for those who collaborated with the whiteman.⁷² The third theme was an expression of total commitment and re-affirmation of the continuity of the Agikuyu religion, culture, leadership, rites and practices. It also expressed total commitment to Agikuyu land. This theme contained some of the strongest statements against the uncircumcised girls.⁷³

A brief look at these themes would reveal some very interesting points. To begin with, the first and the second themes are interrelated. The attack on the missionaries and the colonialists was an indirect attack on their collaborators and vice versa. In fact, the content of some of the verses is very similar. For example, compare the second stanza in section one, part two and the fourth stanza in section two, part two. Second, out of the seventy two stanzas collected from more than twenty informants, thirty eight of them belong to the first and the second themes.⁷⁴ This represents more than fifty per cent of all stanzas. This suggests, among other things, that the feelings against foreign domination, whether in religion or politics, were already very strong among the

Agikuyu by 1930 and earlier. However, a very striking point is that of all thirty stanzas, only three appear to be directly against Christianity (see section one, part one). Apparently, the Agikuyu Karing'a "never said (they) would have nothing to do with God. (They) were anti-mission and not anti-God."⁷⁵ In fact, the Agikuyu Karing'a continued to be Christians after they broke away from the mission churches.

Another important observation to make is the great number of stanzas expressing anti-abolitionists sentiments. Out of the thirty eight stanzas in the first two themes, twenty four of them express anti-abolitionists feelings.⁷⁶ When asked why this was so, the informants spoke bitterly about the fact that the abolitionists were worse than the missionaries and colonialists because they sold the land to the foreigners.⁷⁷ They also spread anti-female circumcision propaganda more than the missionaries. The fact that they could speak the language of the people and had been convinced by the missionaries that female circumcision was evil accounted for their greater and effective participation in the anti-female circumcision campaign. Waruiru gives an example of "one chief Gideon Gatere [who] used to ride a horse to spread anti-female circumcision

propaganda and to check any secret circumcision ceremonies [in the Tumutumū] area."⁷⁸ One can also suggest that by letting the abolitionists carry out the propaganda, the missionaries could justify that their adherents, the abolitionists, were to blame for most of what was happening in the churches and in the country. Indeed, this is what the missionaries did. After the flare up in 1929, the European leaders of the AIM, the CMS, and GMS issued a joint memorandum to the Kenya Land Commission to claim that the African church elders were, indeed, to blame for the crisis in the country. They declared, "the insistence of the African Church on the abandonment of certain native customs as a condition of church membership had led to secessions among church and mission adherents."⁷⁹

There is yet another interesting observation to make. In theme number three,⁸⁰ the number of stanzas that contemptuously express feelings against uncircumcised girls, Irigu are comparatively high. The young men at NITD were bitter because, the missionaries were persuading Athomi (the readers) to marry uncircumcised girls. Traditionally, no man could marry a woman who was housed in the same

initiation homestead with him. As one informant put it:

Ndungigura mundu mwaruire
nake nyumba imwe.⁸¹

(You can never marry a
woman who was in the
same initiation homestead
with you).

Secondly, it was unconceivable to circumcise boys without girls. As one informant put it emphatically:

Gutiri irua ringiruo
ritari airtu.⁸²

(There is no circumcision
without girls).

The young men who sang the Muthirigu were, therefore bitter because, if female circumcision was to be abolished, they would have no recently circumcised girls to marry. They would be forced to marry girls from the older age grades.⁸³ However, they preferred to do that rather than to marry the uncircumcised girls. Hence, they sang:

Kaba ngure kamwe kanini
ka rika ria ndege
Tondū nikarute mitugo
ni nyina.⁸⁴

(I would rather marry a
small circumcised one
of the Ndege age-group
For she has been taught

good behaviour by her mother).

This and other stanzas in section three, part one, radically re-affirm the Agikuyu's total commitment to the continuation of female circumcision and all the rituals and practices related to it.

Similarly, through the Muthirigu, the Agikuyu radically committed themselves to the continuation of their religion and to the defence of their core values. They sang, "I will never change my religion because I am a Mugikuyu Karing'a." This radical affirmation and commitment to the Agikuyu religion and culture became the cornerstone of the Karing'a movement.

Lastly note should be taken of the choruses in the Muthirigu. The first one (see section two, part one) appears to have been directed at the abolitionists. They were loved, so the chorus goes, but they could not be welcomed home. The second chorus (see section three, part three) praises the majesty of the Agikuyu Ngai. Symbolically it reflects Agikuyu commitment to their religion and culture. The last chorus (see section three, part four) re-echoes Agikuyu commitment to

their land and express a strong consciousness that this land was left to them by their very first ancestors who had got it from Ngai. It is interesting to note that these three choruses continue to be used in the Muthirigu even today in spite of the fact that most Muthirigu verses have changed.

In conclusion, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the Muthirigu became like a national anthem of the Karing'a movement. Indeed, one sees in Muthirigu the role of the Agikuyu religion and the culture in radicalising the social and political consciousness of the Agikuyu. The religion and the culture of the Agikuyu continued to play a big role throughout the 1930's and the 1940's in the development of the Karing'a movement. Although the Gikuyu church and school independence movement split organizationally into two groups, namely, the Independents and the Karing'a both groups were working for the same goal; to preserve, promote, defend, and develop the core values of the Agikuyu people. All the informants interviewed accept categorically that both groups were one and the same; they only differed in their approaches and methods as we will see later. Lastly, Muthirigu song-dance acted as a censoring mechanism to forced culture change

particularly on the core level. Other mechanisms that the Agikuyu used during this period were the press and defiance of the law. The incidents at Kihumbuini, Ngeca, Kambui, and Mahiga were a manifestation of a people defying the law to resist the forces of change from penetrating the core level of their culture. We shall look in the next chapter how the Agikuyu Karing'a responded to forced culture change by building their own churches.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

- ¹Further details for this term can be found in the Glossary.
- ²Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau, p.115.
- ³Ibid., p.364 reference number 16.
- ⁴Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, p.108.
- ⁵Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.115.
- ⁶Ibid., p.115.
- ⁷Macpherson, op.cit., p.108.
- ⁸Ibid., p.119.
- ⁹The East African Standard, August 17, 1929, MacMillan Library Archives, Nairobi.
- ¹⁰Ibid., September 21, 1929.
- ¹¹Ibid., September 7, 1929.
- ¹²Ibid., August 31, 1929.
- ¹³Macpherson, op.cit., p.109.
- ¹⁴Waruiru "Female Initiation Controversy at CSM Tumutumu", pp.28-29.
- ¹⁵Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.115.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p.115 quoting Dr. Philip.

- ¹⁷ Waruiru, op.cit., p.29ff.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.30ff.
- ¹⁹ Macpherson, op.cit., p.109.
- ²⁰ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.118-119 quoting CSM Memorandum, p.42.
- ²¹ Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya, p.126.
- ²² Ibid., pp.126-127.
- ²³ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.119.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.119.
- ²⁵ Macpherson, op.cit., p.109.
- ²⁶ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.120.
- ²⁷ For details on CMS policy at Kabare see Murray's thesis, "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy", pp.212-220.
- ²⁸ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.120.
- ²⁹ Macpherson, op.cit., p.111.
- ³⁰ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.121 quoting Arthur, "Safari Diary", file on Female Mutilation (PCEA), Nairobi.
- ³¹ Wanyoike, An African Pastor, p.98.
- ³² 0.1. J.W. Wang'ombe, op.cit., see also Waruiru, op.cit., pp.26ff; and Macpherson, op.cit., p.111ff.

- ³³ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.124
quoting The Times, February 27,
1930, p.13.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 123 quoting CSM Memorandum. p.47.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.123.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p.123.
- ³⁷ 0.1. Petro Kagure, op.cit.; Joshua Muceru,
op.cit.
- ³⁸ Wanyoike, op.cit., p.101;
- ³⁹ Ibid., p.101.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p.102ff.
- ⁴¹ 0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.,
Kuria Runo, op.cit., and Johanna
Kamau, op.cit.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ 0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.,
and Kuria Runo, op.cit.
- ⁴⁴ 0.1. Peter Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.
- ⁴⁵ 0.1. Paul Kahuho, op.cit.
- ⁴⁶ Murray-Brown, Kenyatta, p.138.
- ⁴⁷ 0.1. Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.
- ⁴⁸ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.121.
- ⁴⁹ 0.1. Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.

Nguya, op.cit.

Wakarura Kang'ethe, Interviewed
and 29/7/76, Kambui, Kiambu.

Njoroge, op.cit.; Kagia
Githiri, op.cit.; Nyamu
op.cit., and Rutha wa
Interviewed 2/7/76,
ni, Murang'a. See also
op.cit., p.144.

Stingham, op.cit., pp.122-123
from "The Crisis at Kikuyu"
Arthur, p.9. See also
KS/10B/12/1 and KNA/DC/KBU/
um on "The political situation",
ry, 1930.

an Standard, April 5, 1930;
930, and May 10, 1930.

, 1930.

ngu wa Githiri, op.cit.

Njoroge, op.cit.

na, Agikuyu, Mau Mau, na Wiyathi
(Mau Mau, and Freedom),
ni, Nyeri, Gakaara Book Service,
.54.

knamed King'ethu was a Church
r at Thogoto Mission and was a
rong supporter of the missionaries.
d King'ethu means the toothless one.

anjiru Tiara, Interviewed 20/7/76,
u, Nyeri.

- ⁵⁰0.1. Ephastus Nguya, op.cit.
- ⁵¹C.1. Hannah Nyakarura Kang'ethe, Interviewed 27/7/76 and 29/7/76, Kambui, Kiambu.
- ⁵²0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.; Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.; Nyamu wa Kamau, op.cit., and Rutha wa Muthoni, Interviewed 2/7/76, Gathukiini, Murang'a. See also Murray, op.cit., p.144.
- ⁵³Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.122-123 quoting from "The Crisis at Kikuyu" by J.W. Arthur, p.9. See also KNA/DC/MKS/10B/12/1 and KNA/DC/KBU/Memorandum on "The political situation", 12 January, 1930.
- ⁵⁴See East African Standard, April 5, 1930; May 3, 1930, and May 10, 1930.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., April 4, 1930.
- ⁵⁶0.1. Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.
- ⁵⁷0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ⁵⁸Ibid.
- ⁵⁹Wanjau, Gakaara, Agikuyu, Mau Mau, na Wiyathi (Agikuyu, Mau Mau, and Freedom), Karatina, Nyeri, Gakaara Book Service, n.d., p.54.
- ⁶⁰Musa Gitau nicknamed King'ethu was a Church Minister at Thogoto Mission and was a very strong supporter of the missionaries. The word King'ethu means the toothless one.
- ⁶¹0.1. Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, Interviewed 20/7/76, Tumutumu, Nyeri.

⁶²0.1. Ibid.

⁶³For the meaning of Kumanyoko and Kumanina see the Glossary.

⁶⁴0.1. Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit.

⁶⁵0.1. Hannah N. Kang'ethe, op.cit.

⁶⁶0.1. Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit.

⁶⁷0.1. Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, op.cit.

⁶⁸0.1. Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit.

⁶⁹Wanyoike, op.cit., p.102.

⁷⁰Kuria, J. Mungai, "The African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa" in The Story of My Church, a collection of essays, edited by David Shenk, 1973, p.44. These essays can be obtained at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi.

⁷¹See Appendix II, Section one.

⁷²See Appendix II, Section two.

⁷³See Appendix II, Section three.

⁷⁴All the stanzas were collected from the informants in Kiambu, Murang'a, and Nyeri. Very few have been collected from written sources. The researcher has not mentioned all the informants by name because some of the stanzas were sung to him by more than five informants. In fact some of the stanzas, especially those in section

three, were known to almost all the informants.

75 Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.126 quoting Johanna Karanja who was the president of the Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association.

76 See Appendix II, Section One, Parts one and two.

77 Most of the informants interviewed shared the same views.

78 Waruiru, op.cit., p.31.

79 Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.125 quoting Kenya Land Commission: Evidence, 1, 1100, 1931.

80 See Appendix II, Section three, part one.

81 0.1. Ngua wa Kiarrii, Interviewed 8/12/78, Kahawa, Nairobi.

82 0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.

83 0.1. Ngua wa Kiarrii, op.cit.

84 See Appendix II, Section three, part three.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KARING'AMOVEMENT UP TO 1947:THE STRUGGLE FOR THE CHURCH

The female circumcision controversy and the subsequent banning of the Muthirigu led to a series of events. The non-abolitionists were expelled from the mission churches and others simply left the churches in protest. Their children were similarly expelled from mission schools. But some non-abolitionists pulled their children out from these schools.

The Agikuyu reacted by attacking the "out schools" which were normally run by African evangelist teachers. They demanded that the Karing'a teachers should teach in these schools. When this demand was not accepted, parents withdrew their children from these schools. Teachers were attacked and abused. School property was destroyed and in some cases Sunday services were disrupted. The landowners who had given their land to be used for building mission schools and churches were threatened. At Kijabe, Hilda Stumpf, a missionary of the African

Inland Mission was murdered in January, 1930.¹ In August, 1930, the D.C., Kiambu declared that if these activities continued, the Government would withdraw its grants from these "out schools" and no more schools would be opened.² The D.C.'s warning went unheeded.

These events created an educational crisis throughout Gikuyuland. An atmosphere of hostility and suspicion grew between the Agikuyu, the government, and the missions. And "neither mission nor government authority could any longer command the veneration it once possessed."³ The need to open Karing'a schools and churches became increasingly urgent.

In the meantime, a very interesting group, that had some characteristics similar to those of the Karing'a group, emerged. The group, the Watu wa Mungu (God's people) or, the Arathi (the prophets) advocated the retention of the Agikuyu traditional culture and religion but in a somewhat different way.

While it is not the aim of this work to discuss this religious sect in detail, a very brief look at it would shed some light on some

very striking similarities between the sect and the Karing'a group. According to a Father Chilardi, the Arathi sect was started by one Thuo wa Muikamba and its members were ex-mission boys who had been expelled from mission schools.⁴

Delphino Kamuti wa Kamuga claims that the sect was "prominent in 1928, 1929, and 1930."⁵ While we do not intend to go into any further details on the founder and the origins of the sect,⁶ we should point out that like the Karing'a, this sect was against white domination and demanded total socio-cultural independence from the Europeans. The group had a very strong hatred of the missions. They advocated a complete return to Agikuyu culture although there was a lot of syncretism in their religious beliefs. Like the Karing'a, they believed in worshiping the Agikuyu Ngai. And like the Karing'a, they were against the missionaries' interference with Agikuyu traditional customs and practices. To this extent, they were just as nationalistic as the Karing'a group. However, similarities between the two groups ended there.

Unlike the Karing'a group, the Arathi were a violent group that carried bows and arrows to

fight Europeans and evil spirits, just as the Europeans carried guns to fight the Agikuyu. They rejected anything associated with the white man including the wearing of European clothes, living in European - style houses, and using anything that had been brought by Europeans. They wore hides and lived in caves. The Arathi idealized the Agikuyu culture. For example, they sanctioned polygamy, believed in the ancestral reverence, and lived a communal type of life.

Although the life style and beliefs of the Arathi appeared very traditional, they had to be justified biblically. And although they tried to idealize the Agikuyu culture, they saw no meaning in it other than the cultural and religious satisfaction it gave them. The world was evil and had to be destroyed by the "Ruhiu rwa Jehova" (the Lord's sword). They therefore, discouraged their members from accumulating property in this world and from joining any political organizations.

The religious fanaticism of the Arathi led to the development of rather unusual behaviour patterns of its members. When they prayed they uttered cries like wild animals and trembled very

violently as the Holy Spirit allegedly possessed them. Whenever they shook hands, they claimed it was the Holy Spirit shaking them. They never took food with them on a journey because they believed "Jehovah" would provide it for them. They lived in caves, mountains, and hills. When arrested, they refused to talk and would only chant prayers. They claimed that they were one of the lost tribes of Israel. They did not fear guns, for they believed that bullets could not go through their bodies.

In 1934, a confrontation between the Arathi and the police broke out. Three of the Arathi were killed. The Arathi movement was thereafter banned by the colonial government.

In contrasting the Arathi and the Karing'a group, several observations can be made. First, although the factors that led the two groups to emerge were the same, the Arathi group was more otherworldly and fanatical than the Karing'a group. Second, the development of the Arathi took the form of a millennial movement while that of Karing'a took the form of cultural nationalist movement.⁷ Third, their interpretation of the cultural

traditions of the Agikuyu was conservative, inward looking, and more orthodox than that of the Karing'a group. Unlike the Karing'a movement which utilized many aspects of Agikuyu cultural and religious traditions, this group utilized at least two such traditions; namely, the belief in Ngai and the prophetic tradition inherent in the Agikuyu religion. Lastly, it is important to note that during the process of rapid social change, one or more resistance movements can occur in a group undergoing change; and that each movement will react to change differently. For example, the Karing'a movement accepted change on the peripheral and rationalization levels of culture change but they resisted change on the core level. On the other hand, the Arathi group resisted change on all levels of culture change. Consequently, the Arathi group became millinial in its approach to social and cultural change while the Karing'a group became political.

After the banning of Arathi movement by the colonial government, the Karing'a group⁸ continued to challenge the missionary churches. The group declared that they would never give up their customs and religion. They sung:

Baba ni muruu
 Maitu ni muruu
 Ndigacenjia ndini tondu
 ndi
 Mugikuyu Karing'a.⁹

(My father is circumcised
 My mother is circumcised
 I will never change my
 traditional religion
 Because I am Mugikuyu Karing'a.)

They asserted that their religion was given to them
 by Ngai:

Ino ni ndini ya Mugikuyu
 Twaheiruo niwe Mwene Nyaga
 Tutigatiga onari.¹⁰

(This religion of the Agikuyu
 was given to us by Mwene Nyaga
 We shall never give it up).

They beseeched Ngai to understand and forgive them;

Mwathani tuohere
 Tiwe turarega
 Ni kirore twarega.¹¹

(Lord, Ngai, forgive us
 We are not rejecting You
 Rather we are rejecting
 Those who tell us to
 reject our religion and
 culture).

These songs popularized the new usage of
 the term 'Karing'a.' For example, if we look at
 verse one above, the term 'Karing'a' is not used
 in relation to an initiation guild but, rather
 to circumcision in general whether it is in a

Karing'a or Ukabi initiation. In other words, to be circumcised became a religious act and a political and cultural symbol. Verse two echoes the meaning implied in verse one. As in verse one, no differentiation is made between Ukabi and Karing'a initiation.

Similarly, the songs popularized the need for cultural and ethnic identity and pride as the above verses show. One informant expressed this pride when he said:

To be a Mugikuyu Karing'a means, I was born a Mugikuyu whether I am educated, rich, poor, a Christian or not a Christian. I will die a Mugikuyu Karing'a.

I will neither be a white man nor, an Indian. Whether I am loved or hated, I will still remain a Mugikuyu Karing'a.¹²

The Karing'a group was quite emphatic about their cultural identity. For them, neither the white man's education nor Christianity could be the basis for changing one's culture and religion. But they were also emphatic about change. They accepted change as long as they controlled the direction of that change. However, they never

advocated a return to "conservative" traditionalism nor did they associate the term 'Karing'a' with the Agikuyu Karing'a initiation guild. Rather they readily accepted the fact that change is inevitable but change in all its forms should not lead to a rejection of one's cultural and ethnic heritage. This concept of change was different from the one that the missionaries held. The missionaries held that change should lead to a rejection of one's cultural and ethnic heritage. In other words, change should lead to a rejection of one's core values. This concept of change was very well illustrated during the female circumcision controversy.

The Agikuyu Karing'a were very conscious of the missionaries' concept of change. This is well illustrated by the "land and cultural tales" that were circulating in the 1920's and 1930's. In an effort to gradually make the Agikuyu reject their heritage, and hence, their core values, the missionaries had devised a method of making this possible. According to Macpherson, the missionaries had divided the traditional customs and practices in three categories. The first category included

all the beliefs and customs regarded as being at variance with Christian principles but not necessarily actively opposed to them. The missionaries expected these beliefs to die gradually. These beliefs included the customs related to reverence for ancestral spirits, magic, and the sacrificial rites. The second category included customs regarded as incompatible with Christian principles and, therefore, unacceptable in a practising Christian community, such as polygamy and the sexually motivated dances. By 1926, the following dances had already been stopped: Nguru, Mugoiyo, Ndarama, Muthunguci, and Kibata.¹³ The third category included customs regarded as medically or hygienically undesirable, and, therefore, to be actively taught against, such as the exposure of the dead and female circumcision.¹⁴ This meant, given time, Christian heritage would replace the Agikuyu heritage - at least this is what the missionaries hoped.

The Agikuyu Karing'a could not find any biblical justification for the replacement of their heritage just because one had become a Muthomi (a reader). For example, Leakey has

pointed out that one of the fundamental questions that the Agikuyu Karing'a raised is why they could not circumcise their girls while the mother of Jesus was circumcised. In the 1926, translation of the New Testament, the Virgin Mary was referred to as Muiritu Mutheru (Mathew 1:23 and Luke 1:27). Leakey goes on to argue that this translation created a problem with the Agikuyu Karing'a since the word Muiritu means a circumcised girl in Gikuyu language. If the mother of Jesus was a Muiritu, so they argued, this means she was a circumcised woman. If this was so, why were the missionaries refusing the Agikuyu to circumcise their girls?¹⁵

In one of Paul's letters, Paul has taught his hearers that "In Christ neither circumcision nor, uncircumcision is of any avail."¹⁶ In the 1926 translation of the New Testament the word used for circumcision is Irua. This word is used by the Agikuyu to mean both male and female circumcision. If the Bible, so argued the Agikuyu Karing'a, does not condemn Irua, why, then, should the missionaries do so?¹⁷

Whether these biblical arguments are valid

or not they nevertheless strengthened the Agikuyu Karing'a's position far much more than would be imagined. These arguments and the "land and cultural tales" further strengthened their attitudes towards forced culture change and gave them the determination to establish their own churches and schools. This determination was later to affect the mission churches.

According to Macpherson, after the Agikuyu Karing'a were forced to establish their own churches, the spirit of the missionary church was never the same again. Church attendances and interest declined. This decline continued into the 1940's. And the Christian enthusiasm which was there before was replaced by conformity and indifference.¹⁸ In some cases, the church went as far as lifting the ban on excommunication to those who had refused to sign the Thogoto Declaration.¹⁹ In other cases the church excommunicated those who had signed the Thogoto Declaration but, had decided to circumcise their daughters. The Church Council at Tumutumu reported the case of one Stephano Njoro who had stayed away from the church for a long time in order that he could circumcise his

daughter. The church excommunicated him for three months. In addition, the church demanded that he should repeat the 'confirmation class' although he had successfully completed the class before he was excommunicated.²⁰

In spite of the success that the Agikuyu Karing'a had in challenging the missionary churches, they were still faced with the problem of how to establish a church that would promote, protect, and defend their cultural and religious heritage. To establish such a church, they needed trained clergy. They had none. Rather than ask the missionary churches to help them, they decided to postpone establishing their own church for seven years. But in the meantime, there developed some division amongst themselves. Although the division was unintentional, it led to the development of two groups: the Independents and the Karing'a.

There is not enough evidence to prove that there was any ideological difference between the Independents and the Karing'a. As one informant after another reiterated, it just happened that one group preferred to call itself Karing'a and

the other one Independent. According to Gatabaki, those people who split from the Church of Scotland Mission became Karing'a while those from the Gospel Missionary Society and African Inland Mission became Independents - at least this was the case in Kiambu.²¹ Other informants have agreed with Gatabaki.²² They agree that there never was a "declared" split between the two groups. It just happened that the Karing'a group was started in Kiambu while the Independent group was started in Murang'a and Nyeri, and that in due course, the Independents took a moderate approach while the Karing'a took a more militant and political approach.

However, there are conflicting views on how these two groups came into existence. One view attributes the term "Independents" to the conflict that arose between the students at Gituamba Seminary which was headed by Archbishop Alexander. Those who accepted the Archbishop's orthodox form of worship remained Karing'a and those who refused declared themselves "independent" of the Karing'a group.²³ This view is not convincing because Kikuyu Independent Schools and Churches had already been started before the

conflict in Gituamba took place in 1936. Another view holds that the Karing'a split from the Independents after the political struggle between Harry Thuku and Jesse Kariuki and that Harry Thuku was the first president of the Independent Church back in 1931.²⁴ The informant was referring to the 1935 struggle when Thuku split from the K.C.A. and formed the Kikuyu Provincial Association. This view is not convincing even if we assume the struggle between Thuku and Kariuki was earlier than 1935. Moreover, the informant seems to imply that Thuku was a member of the Independents. But he was not, as he has confirmed this himself. He states:

I was still in detention at the time these independent schools had started When representatives of the two main groups ... came to enlist me, I used to tell them; 'I was not here when there was that Muthirigu song over the female circumcision; I was not here when you and others ran away from missions to form your own schools. So I don't want you ... to put me in your groups. I will remain GMS'.²⁵

However, Thuku admits that he helped the leaders of breakaway schools at Kambui, Kiambu, to choose

the name "Independent".²⁶ He does not mention, however, whether they accepted the name or not.

It is quite apparent from the above information that there is no concrete evidence to show that there was any split between the Karing'a and the Independents. Whether we accept Thuku's view that he suggested the name "Independent" for the Agikuyu Karing'a²⁷ in Kambui or the view held by some informants that Jomo Kenyatta suggested the name "Independent" when the Agikuyu Karing'a wrote to him in London,²⁸ it is quite apparent that by 1933, the Independents had decided to seek alliance with the missionaries.

In June, 1933, the Independent Schools in Murang'a met with the D.C. and the Inspector of Schools for Central Province. According to Macpherson, the Committee requested the two officials to forward a letter to the Bishop of Mombasa asking for the admission of their students at Limuru Divinity School - a CMS School at that time. This request was forwarded to the Bishop who later forwarded it to the Representative Council of Missionary Alliance in August. The Council called a meeting of the Alliance Missions

in Kahuhia to discuss the issue. The Independents were asked to send their delegates.²⁹

The Kahuhia meeting was held from October, 13, to October 16, 1933.³⁰ It recommended, among other things, that the African Anglican clergy could officiate in the Independent Churches temporarily and that the Independent candidates for the ministry could be accepted at Limuru Divinity School provided that the Independent Schools' Committee could assure the established mission churches that their men, when ordained, would be obedient to the Bishop's authority and church regulations. It was further recommended that the names of the candidates could be circulated to the mission churches in the districts for recommendations.³¹

However, as events turned out, the Independents' initiative to re-establish a working relationship with the mission churches never materialized. The Kahuhia Agreement was rejected by the Church of Scotland Mission. The CSM argued that the Kahuhia Agreement was meant for Murang'a Independents only where the

CMS was predominant. The rejection of the Kahuhia Agreement was prompted by the Kiambu and Nyeri candidates who had been considered for admission to Limuru Divinity School with candidates from Murang'a.

In July, 1934, a meeting of the Representative Council of the Missionary Alliance was held to discuss further the Kahuhia Agreement. In this meeting, the CSM "objected to the widening of the Kahuhia Agreement to include Nyeri and Kiambu where the [CSM] was dominant, until the issues had been thoroughly discussed in those districts."³² The CMS on the other hand held on to the Kahuhia Agreement. They could not find any valid reason why the Independents could not be trained for the ministry as long as they gave "assurances of obedience and loyalty to the Bishop and his appointed officers."³³

However, in order to clarify the issue, another meeting of all the churches in Gikuyuland was held in September, 1934. The proposal of the Independents' admission to any mission divinity schools was again rejected. Instead, the CMS was asked to instruct and confirm the Independent

candidates and then consider them to be members of the Anglican Church. In other words, they would lose their "Independent" status. The Independents were left with two alternatives: either to renounce their Independency and rejoin the mission churches or, retain their Independency and do away with baptism and ordained ministers until they could find some other alternatives.

The events that led to the rejection of the Kahuhia Agreement did not help in cementing the relationship between the Independents and the Karing'a. On the contrary, it made the Karing'a doubt the seriousness of the Independents in promoting and maintaining the cultural traditions of the Agikuyu. The Karing'a had definitely boycotted the Kahuhia meeting although Johanna Kunyiha argues that they did not.³⁴ But the evidence to support Kunyiha's argument is lacking.³⁵ This does not mean, however, that the Karing'a were not concerned about the problem of the ordained ministers. They were but they were opposed to any move to re-establish any relationship with the missionaries. If they were going to establish a church, it had to be the kind of church that would not conflict with their concept of change.

Luckily enough Archbishop William D. Alexander of South Africa provided for them an opportunity to establish such a church when he arrived in Kenya in 1935.

According to James Beuttah, Archbishop William D. Alexander was spotted by a Gideon Rimba, a Giriama fisherman, as the latter was fishing along Kilindini Harbour. This might have been in 1932³⁶ when Rimba introduced Alexander to James Beuttah. Apparently, Alexander was returning from Uganda where he had ordained Reuben Spartas as a priest of the African Orthodox Church.³⁷ James Beuttah, a postal clerk, and a member of Kikuyu Central Association met Alexander at a hotel. Both of them talked at length about the problems in South Africa and Kenya. Beuttah explained to him the religious problems that the Karing'a and Independents faced. Alexander promised to come back and help both groups after a short visit in South Africa. He did not come back for three years. While he was in South Africa, he exchanged letters with Agikuyu leaders. It is, therefore, likely that the Independents were in contact with him while they were negotiating

with the missionary churches.³⁸

In the meantime, James Beauttah arranged with Parmenas Githendu Mukeri to meet Alexander in Cape Town, South Africa on his way from London. Mukeri had gone to England together with Jomo Kenyatta to present the Agikuyu grievances to the British government. Both of them had been sent by the Kikuyu Central Association. However, according to Beauttah, Mukeri was forced by the KCA to come back earlier because of his pro-missionary sentiments when he was in London.³⁹ But a letter addressed to Murang'a KCA branches - Kahuhia, Wethaga, and Gathukeini on March 24, 1933 by Joseph Kang'ethe - states that Githendu and Kenyatta were experiencing hardships in Britain. A meeting of the three branches was called to discuss the issue. The members were reminded of the oath they had taken before Kenyatta and Githendu had been sent to England; that they had sworn that "we shall not let you /Kenyatta and Githendu/ go hungry and rot up in that foreign country." The letter goes on to state in part:

You remember Kiambu people
suggested Kenyatta to go to
England as their representative

.... It is up to them
to bring him back home
while on the other hand
it is our responsibility
to bring Githendu back
home.⁴⁰

Githendu was, therefore, recalled home. On his journey back from London, he was welcomed by Archbishop Alexander in Cape Town, South Africa.⁴¹

In November, 1935, Alexander finally arrived in Mombasa. He was met by James Beuttah "and KISA's reception committee, headed by their president, Johanna Kunyiha of Nyeri."⁴² While in Mombasa, he baptised one Kimani wa Kibero, an old pupil of the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association.⁴³ Beuttah, Johanna Kunyiha and others of KISA committee escorted Archbishop Alexander to the Gikuyu country, "where he remained for nearly eighteen months, baptising, teaching new converts, and training a priesthood."⁴⁴

The life and work of William Daniel Alexander is difficult to assess because very little has been written about him and those who have written of him, have said very little. Welbourn and Brandreth have observed that Alexander was ordained a priest in the United States of

America on September 11, 1927 by Bishop George Alexander McGuire.⁴⁵ McGuire was "a prominent Episcopal clergyman who left his Boston pulpit in 1920 to become Chaplain General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association ...

[and] the head of the new African Orthodox Church."⁴⁶

Although he was consecrated as the head of the new church by the Greek Orthodox Church, there is no evidence that the African Orthodox Church was ecclesiastically associated with the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece.⁴⁷ The African Orthodox Church preached "a new religion" of black people which sought "to be true to the principles of Christianity without the shameful hypocrisy of the white churches."⁴⁸ It preached about a "black God" and a "black Christ"; that black people must be proud of their colour; that Africa was for the Africans just like Europe is for the Europeans; that all black people of African descent must determine their own destiny; and that it is a "sacred" duty of the African people to liberate the African continent.⁴⁹

In spite of the little information that we have on the life and work of Archbishop

Alexander among the Agikuyu Karing'a, a lot is known about the Marcus Garvey Movement of which he was a member. Corfield has argued rather negatively that Alexander was a man of "many aliases;" that his acclaimed status of being a South African of Mauritian descent was questionable; and that the South African authorities had classified him "as an agitator."⁵⁰ Corfield's negative evaluation of Alexander is quite understandable since he was writing for the colonial government and his Report is very biased about the aspirations of the African people.⁵¹

As soon as Archbishop Alexander arrived in Kenya, he was interrogated by the Criminal Investigation Department officers and the Provincial Commissioner in Nyeri. He managed to convince them that his mission among the Agikuyu was religious and not political.⁵²

This then was the man the Kikuyu Independents Schools Association had welcomed in Mombasa. He had brought a religion and a faith which though developed by the people of African descent in North America, had principles that the Agikuyu Karing'a aspired for. As one informant put it:

We, the Agikuyu Karing'a liked Alexander because he did not preach against female circumcision and our customs. He did not own land like the missionaries did and he was not a trader and a farmer like the white man. He encouraged education and he ordained our people.⁵³

There was also a feeling of "black pride" because the Archbishop was supposed to be highly educated and had obtained a Doctor of Divinity degree. He could, therefore, challenge any white man on his own terms.⁵⁴

When Alexander arrived in Gituamba, Murang'a, his first task was to set up a Seminary where he could train candidates for ordination into the ministry of the Karing'a and Independent Churches. The Seminary was opened on November 15, 1935. The majority of candidates who joined the school were from the Independent group of the Agikuyu Karing'a. They were: Stephano Wacira Rugara and Philip Kiande from Nyeri; Daudi Kiragu and Jason Muhungi from Murang'a; William Nyaga and Nathaniel Miano from Embu; and Harrison Gachukia Kamanga and Nathan Ngure from Kiambu.

Arthur Gatung'u from the Karing'a group in Kiambu joined the Seminary in March, 1936.⁵⁵

In the small seminary at Gituamba, Alexander taught his students the art of interpreting the Bible, how to deal with biblical problems pertaining to a given period of time, and how to apply the biblical message to the existing situations. The students "travelled around the neighbouring villages preaching in the improvised prayer houses or in KISA classrooms. Alexander would accompany them as critic, or he would ask the villagers at a later date for their comments on the conduct of the Sunday services and the sermons."⁵⁶ During his many travels in the Gikuyu country, he baptised and administered the sacraments.⁵⁷

After one and a half years, on June 27, 1937, Archbishop Alexander ordained four students: "Philip Kiande, Arthur Gatung'u, Harrison Gachukia, and Daudi Maina Kiragu."⁵⁸ Kiande and Gatung'u remained loyal to the Archbishop. They subsequently established the African Orthodox Church which was closely associated with the Karing'a schools. Harrison Gachukia and Daudi Maina Kiragu remained

loyal to KISA and later in 1938 established the African Independent Pentecostal Church.⁵⁹

The seminary at Gituamba marked a period of co-operation between the Karing'a and the Independent associations. It brought the two groups together to achieve one of their fundamental objectives: the establishment of a church that was totally independent of missionary control. This objective was achieved. However, in the midst of achieving this objective, some misunderstandings and conflicts arose between the Archbishop and the Independents on the one hand and the Karing'a and the Independents on the other.

First, there was the problem of admission of Arthur Gatung'u at Gituamba. Gatung'u had been sent there by the Karing'a⁶⁰ but the latter had not contributed to the expenses for bringing the Archbishop to Kenya.⁶¹ However, the Independents thought that the admission of Arthur Gatung'u could bring the Karing'a back to the fold, and thereby reconcile their differences. Arthur Gatung'u and the Karing'a did not have such intentions.⁶² The Independents "believed that Alexander was aware of this and became very angry

with him."⁶³ Arthur Gatung'u has emphatically stated that Alexander was least interested in the conflicts between the Independents and the Karing'a. His interest was to train them as priests.⁶⁴ At any rate Gatung'u was later expelled from the seminary because he was allegedly "not only a convicted felon but a drunkard and adulterer to boot"⁶⁵ and also because he had refused to re-join KISA. Arthur Gatung'u has denied that he ever was a convicted felon, a drunkard, and an adulterer. He has further said that he never was a member of KISA so the question of re-joining it should not arise.⁶⁶ The conflict between the Independents and the Karing'a is understandable. The Independents might have used Arthur Gatung'u and Alexander as scapegoats. As we have already noted in this chapter, the Karing'a had definitely boycotted the Kahuhia meeting. Their stand against the missionaries was the same as it was in 1929. This was not the case with the Independents. They had attended the Kahuhia meeting and had even initiated discussion with the missionaries. Therefore, a conflict already existed between the two groups even before Archbishop Alexander came.

The conflict between KISA, Alexander, and KKEA deteriorated further when Alexander ordained Arthur Gatung'u into priesthood. The Independents were furious about this because not only was Gatung'u supposed to be a "drunkard" but his admission at Gituamba was considered to be a 'private affair' between him and Alexander.⁶⁷

Arthur Gatung'u admits that he was a personal friend to Alexander but his admission at Gituamba was not a 'private affair'. He had been admitted on the basis of merit just like all other candidates. However, he adds that he had an advantage over the other candidates because he was fluent in English. He naturally became Alexander's interpreter and a friend.⁶⁸ Gatung'u was educated at CSM Thogoto and Alliance High School. In 1933, he started teaching at Gituamba School which was under KISA.⁶⁹

Another problem that created conflict between Alexander and the Independents was the question of money. He was accused of misappropriating funds that he collected during baptism. According to Ndung'u, "each baptism was charged two shillings and fifty cents. One shilling was supposed to go to the local preacher, another

towards the upkeep of the prayer house, and fifty cents towards the school fund. Instead, it is said that he kept money raised in this way for himself."⁷⁰ He was even accused of owning two cars. Considering the fact that he did not receive any salary, it is likely that he kept some of the money.⁷¹

Whether the conflict between Alexander and KISA was prompted by Arthur Gatung'u's admission at Gituamba or because of the already strained relationship between the Independents and the Karing'a is hard to say. But what seems to have happened is that KISA might have objected to Alexander's politics of pan-Africanism. According to Kovar, Alexander had been ordained as a "Bishop and Primate of South and East Africa Upon his return to Africa Archbishop Alexander organized the [African Orthodox Church] in Transvaal and then in Cape Province Natal, Basutoland, Southern Rhodesia, [now Zimbabwe and] Uganda."⁷² Now he wanted to establish another African Orthodox Church at Gituamba. He is alleged to have suggested that the church should be named after him and that it should be affiliated with the Orthodox Church in

South Africa.⁷³ This of course implied that the church would follow the pan-African policy of "Africa for the Africans and Europe for the Europeans." The Independents flatly refused Alexander's suggestion. He was asked to finish his job and go home. After ordaining the successful candidates in June, 1937, he left the country the following month.⁷⁴

After Alexander's departure, the Karing'a established its first African Orthodox Church at Waithaka near Dagoretti under the leadership of Arthur Gatung'u. Philip Kiande, a close friend of Alexander and Gatung'u established another one at Nyeri. He was dismissed by the Independents for doing so. Other churches were established later at Ngecha, Kahuhu, Rironi, Thimbigua, and in the Rift Valley.⁷⁵

The establishment of the African Orthodox Church by the Karing'a marked a new era in the development of the Karing'a movement. For the first time in seven years, the Karing'a embraced Christianity. But it was a Christianity with very strong pan-African and political overtones. Second, it marked a period of strained relations between the Karing'a and the Independents.

After Arthur Gatung'u took the leadership of the African Orthodox Church, he allegedly wanted to maintain the link with the Church in South Africa - something that the majority of the Karing'a were not willing to accept.⁷⁶ Gatung'u has refuted this allegation. He, however, agrees that he maintained a personal link with Archbishop Alexander until he was detained in the early 1950's. Gatung'u has further refuted the allegation by Welbourn⁷⁸ that Reuben Spartas, the head of the African Orthodox Church in Uganda had refused to establish a link with Gatung'u's African Orthodox Church on the grounds that the church was more interested in politics than religion. Gatung'u argues that his relationship with Spartas has always been cordial and friendly. He has, in fact, castigated Welbourn for writing so negatively about him and the Karing'a.⁷⁹

The African Orthodox Church remained what the informants call the Karing'a Church until after Kenya's Independence when Arthur Gatung'u established the link with the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece.⁸⁰ After the Karing'a and the Independent Schools and Churches were banned in

1952, the Karing'a Church "had an active membership of 30,000 drawn from all the main tribes of Kenya ... and had about 309 churches in Kenya and 253 of these were in Central Province."⁸¹

According to many informants, the African Orthodox Church which many of them call the Karing'a Church, borrowed heavily from the Agikuyu religion and culture in its development of worship. The traditional concept of Ngai featured very strongly in their worship. When they prayed, they faced Mt. Kenya with their eyes open just like the Agikuyu used to do traditionally.⁸² They ended their prayers by chanting: "Thaai thaithaya Ngai, thaai" (We beseech thee, Oh! Ngai).⁸³

Informants argue that the Karing'a prayers were very much patterned according to the old Agikuyu prayers. They prayed:

Mwene Nyaga twa kuhoya
 Utuhe wendani - thaai
 Utuhe gitio - thaai
 Utuhe ciana - thaai
 Utuhe mburi - thaai
 Utuhe irio - thaai
 Utuhe mugunda - thaai

Thaai, Thaai
 Thaai thaiya Ngai
 Thaai.⁸⁴

(Ngai we pray thee
 Give us love - we beseech thee
 Give us respect - we beseech thee
 Give us children - we beseech thee
 Give us goats - we beseech thee
 Give us food - we beseech thee
 Give us land - we beseech thee

We beseech thee x 2

Oh! Ngai

We beseech thee).

Another informant jokingly but with serious intention contrasted the Karing'a prayers and those of the abolitionists. The Karing'a would pray:

Ngai, the water you gave us,
 The firewood you gave us
 Anything you gave us
 We are still buying
Ngai, help us in this struggle
 If we are defeated,
 It is you, Ngai, who will
 be defeated
 If we win, Ngai, you win
 If we win,
 We shall build churches for you.
 Thaa, thaithaya Ngai.

The abolitionists prayed:

God help us that "Uhuru"
 may not come
 So that our churches
 May not be destroyed.⁸⁵

Another prayer went like this:

Ngai, the Creator of Mumbi
 and Gikuyu
 Help us like you used to
 help us in the days of old
 Help us in all things

We beseech thee x 2
Ngai, we beseech thee.⁸⁶

Although the Karing'a used traditional prayers, they never went to the Mugumo tree to pray unless it was absolutely necessary. As one informant put it: "Kuhoera mugumo-ini ni gucoka na thutha"⁸⁷ (to pray under the Mugumo tree is to regress). However, the Karing'a did not condemn the prayers and other sacrifices that were traditionally performed under the Mugumo tree.⁸⁸

According to several informants, most of the traditional practices that the Karing'a Church had adapted were later abandoned. The informants argue that these practices were abandoned for strategic purposes only. For example, some of the disillusioned abolitionists who wanted to join the Karing'a Church were repelled by what they considered to be too much traditionalism. The Karing'a felt they could compromise on this issue as long as their primary objective of solving the Agikuyu problems politically was maintained. They, therefore, needed as much support as they could get to achieve this objective.⁸⁹ In other words, the Karing'a soon found out that too much tradi-

tionalism was a hindrance to the development of the movement. They stopped chanting "thaai; thaithaya, Ngai" and replaced it with the Christian "Amen", and they seldom faced Mt. Kenya when they prayed. But this traditional worship was later re-established in the late 1940's and during the Mau Mau revolution.⁹⁰

Although the Karing'a Church abandoned many of the traditional practices, they never condemned such practices. They allowed their members to practice and perform traditional rites and rituals without any hindrance. This strategy helped the Karing'a to gain support from both the traditionalists and the abolitionists. As one informant put it:

Karing'a matiatonyagirira andu
Kimuciini ta misheni.⁹¹

(The Karing'a never interferred
with peoples' home affairs like
the missionaries).

There is also another reason why the Karing'a did not interfere with the traditional practices of the people. According to one of the informants the Karing'a were quite aware of the seriousness of breaking the Agikuyu curses and

taboos. Therefore, they did not want any of their members to be afflicted by any taboo, nor did they want the Karing'a movement to be afflicted either. The informant gave an example of the Thogoto Declaration. This Declaration demanded the Agikuyu to break one of their Migiuro (taboo) that they shall forever circumcise their girls. This Mugiuro (taboo) was passed on to them by the "Agu na Agu" (the ancestors). The Karing'a feared that signing of the Declaration would result in a curse.⁹² It is said that even the Karing'a priests used to perform Agikuyu traditional rites in their homes including going to Mugumo tree during the initiation ceremonies in order to avoid breaking the traditional taboos.⁹³ This illustrates, among other things, the great influence of the Agikuyu religion and culture in the development of the Karing'a movement.

Since the Karing'a Church was essentially a Christian Church with a very strong bias towards the traditional culture and religion of the Africans, a liturgy had to be adopted. They decided to adopt the Anglican Prayer Book and Hymnal. The informants say that the Karing'a

simply adopted the prayer book and the hymnal for convenience just as they adopted the Bible. They did not have their own printed materials. And, moreover, as we have already pointed out in this work, the Karing'a had not rejected Christianity. They simply rejected the way it was interpreted by the missionaries.

On the issue of baptism, the Karing'a interpreted it culturally and politically. To be baptised in the Karing'a Church meant that one had made the decision to disassociate himself with the missionaries and the abolitionists, and that he had now become a true Karing'a⁹⁴. In other words, it meant that the individual believed in the social, political, cultural, and religious principles that were held strongly by the Karing'a movement. Of course one was declared a Christian after baptism but one was a Christian Karing'a. It is interesting to note that the Karing'a saw no contradictions between accepting Christianity and being a Karing'a. The two were compatible. For the Karing'a, baptism was a symbol of being a true Karing'a. One informant has said that the Karing'a used to pour a libation during baptism in order to make the rite truly traditional but this information

has not been collaborated by the other informants.⁹⁵

The Karing'a Church found the Bible to be an inspiring book which could be used for the spiritual development of their members. However, they rejected what they called the missionary commandments, namely, thou shalt not have your daughters circumcised; thou shalt not drink or take snuff, and thou shalt not have more than one wife.⁹⁶

In addition, the Karing'a Church refused to accept the missionary interpretation of the Bible. We have already pointed out, for example, how the Karing'a could not find biblical justification for the abolition of female circumcision. A common story that informants tell is the story of Nicodemus. This story was used by the missionaries to convince the Agikuyu that the only way to Christian salvation is to be born again like small children and to have faith like that of a child. This means that the thinking, the faith, and behaviour of that person would be changed to that of a child. He would think and act like a small child and would have faith in his master just like a small child has faith in

his parents.⁹⁷ The interpretation of this story might have been exaggerated by the informants but, it is not hard to imagine the psychological impact of such a story at a time when most of the missionaries interpreted the Bible literally and expected their followers to do the same. Moreover, the Agikuyu had already observed how easily some members of their society who had become Christians accepted whatever the missionaries told them to do. As one informant angrily observed:

"Ndini ya miceni yakigagia
andu ta ng'ondu cia gicegu."⁹⁸

(The missionary religion turned
people into fools like sheep
caged in a house pen).

The Old Testament in particular was very useful to the Karing'a. The historical accounts of the Israelites helped the Karing'a to compare their plight with that of the Israelites. Biblical men like Moses, Joshua, and David were very helpful to them. As one informant said, the Karing'a saw themselves as David and the white man as Goliath. In the end, they would defeat the white man just as David defeated Goliath.⁹⁹ The songs of Solomon, the book of Job, and the Lamentations

contained the words of wisdom that were so common among the Agikuyu. It would, therefore, appear that the Karing'a found the Bible a very useful book, indeed. Its ancient wisdom was definitely an asset to a generation of the young Agikuyu who had not been much exposed to the traditional wisdom. Moreover, it contained one of the fundamental principles of the Agikuyu religion; that religion should not turn one into a fool; rather it should make him wise and prevent him from falling apart. One informant has put it, thus:

Agikuyu metikitie ndini
ni mutirima.¹⁰⁰

(The Agikuyu believed that
religion is like a walking
stick).

In other word, religion must help the individual to be an upright person morally and thus prevent him from becoming a useless person in the society.

In concluding this chapter, it is important to note that one of the fundamental achievements of the Karing'a in the 1930's was the establishment of their own church. We have observed how the establishment of this church was accidental rather than by design; that in fact, the presence

of Arthur Gatung'u at Gituamba as a teacher was not designed by the Karing'a. What is important is that the Karing'a seized the opportunity to get out of their seven years of religious isolation. They had held strongly the old Agikuyu proverb that no foreigner can officiate in Agikuyu sacrifices - (Mugikuyu ndarutagiruo igongona ni muuki). With this strong belief they had refused any co-operation with the missionaries.

When one looks at the development of the Karing'a Church, one is struck by the Karing'a's uncompromising stand that the role of their culture and religion was supreme in developing an institution that would directly or indirectly affect change in the society, and that would prevent the forces of change from penetrating the core level of culture change. They further demonstrated that any compromise, if it is necessary, has to be on the stated programme rather than on the principles held strongly by a group. For example, they agreed to abandon some of the traditional practices in their worship but they never compromised on the Karing'a principles. Lastly, they demonstrated that too much traditionalism can be a hindrance to change. In their

struggle for education, the Karing's demonstrated
the same uncompromising stand as we will see in
the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

¹Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau, p.124 quoting Bewes, T.F.C., Kikuyu Conflict (London), 1953, p.45. According to Bewes, this woman was forcibly circumcised. But according to the informant interviewed at Kijabe she was not circumcised. Harrison Munyua interviewed 7/6/77 has refuted Bewes' claim.

²See Welbourn, The East African Rebels, Passim.

³Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.125

⁴KNA/KBU/2/66/1927, Nairobi.

⁵Ibid.

⁶For further details on this sect., see Kenyatta, Facing Mr. Kenya, pp 263-269; KNA/KBU/3/2/66 1927, op.cit., Jocelyn Murray's article on "The Kikuyu Spirit Churches," Kenyatta University College Library, Africana Section, Nairobi, and Elijah Kinyanjui "The Rise and Persecution of the Aroti Prophets" in Kenya Churches Handbook, edited by David B. Barrett, et al, pp. 124-127.

⁷For a detailed study of the millennium movements, see Peter Worsley, The Trumpet Shall Sound, New York, MacGibbon and Kee Ltd., 1957. A somewhat similar study has been done by Lanternari in his The Religions of the Oppressed; and Sundkler, G.G.M., Bantu Prophets in South Africa.

- ⁸The term "Karing'a group" is used here to distinguish it from the Karing'a movement. As we have already mentioned in chapters four and five, the term Agikuyu Karing'a was used in the early 1930's to refer to all those people who did not sign the Thogoto Declaration. Out of this "Agikuyu Karing'a group" emerged the Karing'a movement which organized and supported Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association (KKEA) and the African Orthodox Church (AOC).
- ⁹See Appendix II, Section III, Part III, Stanza 1.
- ¹⁰Ibid., Stanza 2.
- ¹¹Ibid., Stanza 7.
- ¹²0.1. Johanna Kamau, op.cit.
- ¹³See KNA/LEGCO/Debates, 1928, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi; passim.
- ¹⁴Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, p.105.
- ¹⁵See Leakey, L.S.B., "The Kikuyu Problem of the Initiation of Girls," 1930. This article can be found in Barlow Papers, University of Nairobi Library, Africana Section, Nairobi.
- ¹⁶Galatians 5:6.
- ¹⁷0.1. J.W. Wang'ombe, (Rev.), op.cit. and

Johanna Kamau, op.cit.

¹⁸Macpherson, op.cit., passim.

¹⁹This information was given to the researcher by Samuel Mathu, 20/10/75, Ndumberi, Kiambu. He referred to the case of Shem Kang'ethe Munyua (now deceased) who was persuaded by the CMS Church at Ndumberi, Kiambu to rejoin the church on his own terms. Shem Kang'ethe had refused to sign the Thogoto Declaration.

²⁰See Mbuku ya Machira Ma Kiama gia Tumutumu kuuma February, 1934-July, 1938, Tumutumu Archives, Tumutumu, Nyeri.

²¹0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati; interviewed 25/9/76, Githunguri, Kiambu.

²²0.1. Harrison Munyua, interviewed 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru and Njenga Kahira, interviewed 3/3/77, Karura, Kiambu; and Joshua Muceru, op.cit.

²³0.1. Kaggia Ringu wa Githiri, interviewed 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu.

²⁴0.1. Stephano Wacira, interviewed 17/1/76, Mahiga, Othaya, Nyeri.

²⁵Thuku, Harry, Harry Thuku: An Autobiography, edited by Kenneth King, p.52.

²⁶Ibid., pp.52-53.

Agikuyu Karing'a" is used here in the sense it was used by the KCA in Muthirigu.

ntus Nguya, op.cit. According to Nguya, the Karing'a was initially a church group. When the Agikuyu Karing'a broke away from the church, an attempt was made to form local and provincial councils to deal with the problem of primary schools and churches. Johanna Kuniyiha was elected the provincial chairman. The need to find a name which could well express the beliefs and the principles of all the Agikuyu Karing'a arose. A letter was written to Jomo Kenyatta in London. He suggested the name "Independent." However, Johanna Karanja who was the chairman of Kiambu chapter refused to adopt the new name. He decided to retain the name Karing'a. This information is not too convincing because according to another informant, Joshua Mucheru, interviewed on 2/1/75, Ndenderu, Jomo Kenyatta helped set up Karing'a schools before he left for London in 1930.

on, op.cit., p.127ff.

and Nottingham, op.cit., p.127.

on, op.cit., pp.128-129.

.129.

.129.

Johanna Kuniyiha, op.cit.

³⁵ Macpherson in his discussion on Kahuhia meeting does not mention Karing'a nor do Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.126-131. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., also agrees that the Karing'a group did not participate in the Kahuhia meeting. See also Waruiru, op.cit., passim.

³⁶ 0.1. James Beuttah, interviewed 22/8/76, Maragwa, Murang'a.

³⁷ Rosberg, and Nottingham, op.cit., p.129.

³⁸ 0.1. James Beuttah, op.cit.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ This letter has been quoted in full by D. Mukaru-Ng'ang'a in his unpublished paper: "Thirty Years Before The Mau Mau; A Study in Rural Resistance and Political Organizations, 1920-1952," Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, Paper No.104, n.d., pp.9-10. Mukaru-Ng'ang'a has not given the source of the letter.

⁴¹ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.129.

⁴² Ibid., p.129.

⁴³ Ndung'u, J.B., "Gituamba and Kikuyu Independence in Church and School," in Ngano: Nairobi Historical Studies I, edited by B.G. McIntosh, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968, p.143.

⁴⁴ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.129-130.

- ⁴⁵ See Welbourn, East African Rebels, pp.78-81 and Brandreth, H.R.T., Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Church, London, SPCK, 1947, pp.37-38.
- ⁴⁶ Cronon, David E., (Ed.) Black Moses; The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Madison, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969 edition, p.178.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.178-183. See also Pinkney, Alphonso, Red, Black, and Green: Black Nationalism in the United States, London, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp.52-53.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p.178 quoting Talley, "Marcus Garvey: The Negro Moses?" World's Work, XL, 165; and "A Black Moses and His Dream of a Promised Land" Current Opinion, LXX, p.330.
- ⁴⁹ For a detailed account of Marcus Garvey's movement of which the African Orthodox Church was its religious arm, see Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, compiled by Amy Jacques Garvey, Volumes 1-III, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967 edition; Pinkney, op.cit., pp.37-57; Cronon, (ed.), op.cit., and Edwards, Adolph, Marcus Garvey 1887-1940, London, New Beacon Publications, 1967.
- ⁵⁰ Corfield, The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau: An Historical Survey, Sessional Paper No.5, p.173.
- ⁵¹ Corfield's Report can be obtained from the University of Nairobi Library, Africana Section.

- 52 Ndung'u, op.cit., p.143.
- 53 0.1. Ephastus Nguya, op.cit.
- 54 Ibid., and also Johanna Kunyiha, op.cit.
- 55 0.1. Johanna Kunyiha, op.cit., see also Ndung'u, op.cit., p.144, and Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.130.
- 56 Ndung'u, op.cit., p.144.
- 57 Ibid., pp.144-145 and also oral information from Ephastus Nguya, op.cit.
- 58 Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.130. See also Ndung'u, op.cit., p.146.
- 59 Ndung'u, op.cit., p.146.
- 60 0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.
- 61 0.1. Johanna Kunyiha, op.cit.
- 62 0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, interviewed 28/1/79 and 3/2/79, Dagoretti, Nairobi.
- 63 Ndung'u, op.cit., p.145.
- 64 0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- 65 Welbourn, op.cit., p.145.

- ⁶⁶0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁶⁷Welbourn, op.cit., passim. See also Ndung'u, op.cit., p.145.
- ⁶⁸0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁶⁹Ibid.
- ⁷⁰Ndung'u, op.cit., p.145.
- ⁷¹0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁷²Kovar, Michael Harry, "The Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement: Interaction of Politics and Education, 1923-1953", pp. 172-173.
- ⁷³Ndung'u, op.cit., p.145.
- ⁷⁴0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁷⁵Ibid.
- ⁷⁶0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.
- ⁷⁷0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁷⁸See Welbourn, op.cit., pp.151-152.
- ⁷⁹0.1. Arthur Gatung'u, op.cit.
- ⁸⁰Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit. Kagure

has argued bitterly about this link. Although Gatung'u has repeatedly asked him to rejoin the church, he has refused because, as he puts it, "it is no longer the Karing'a Church he once knew." Njenga wa Kahira, interviewed 3/3/77, Karura, Kiambu, holds the same view.

⁸¹Welbourn, op.cit., p.152.

⁸²0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.

⁸³0.1. This information was given by almost all the informants interviewed. Some of them are Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit., Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., Rutha wa Muthoni, interviewed 2/7/76, Gathukiini, Murang'a; and Kuria wa Runo, interviewed 3/2/77, Rironi, Kiambu; to mention a few.

⁸⁴0.1. James Beuttah, op.cit.; Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.

⁸⁵0.1. Ephantus Nguya, op.cit.

⁸⁶0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.

⁸⁷0.1. Njenga Kahira, op.cit.

⁸⁸0.1. Joshua Muceru, op.cit.

⁸⁹0.1. Njenga Kahira, op.cit.

⁹⁰Ibid.

- ⁹¹0.1. Munyui wa Gichura, interviewed 3/3/77, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ⁹²0.1. Njenga Kahira, op.cit. For further discussion on the Agikuyu curses and taboos, see Hopley, Bantu Beliefs and Magic, Chapter Seven.
- ⁹³0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit. and David Ndundu, (Rev.), a priest of the African Orthodox Church, interviewed 9/10/76, Kahuho, Kiambu.
- ⁹⁴0.1. Kaggia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.; Kuria wa Runo, op.cit.; Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ⁹⁵0.1. Stephano Wacira, op.cit., Nyeri.
- ⁹⁶0.1. Ibid.; Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ⁹⁷0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.; and Johanna Kamau, op.cit.
- ⁹⁸0.1. Johanna Kamau, op.cit.
- ⁹⁹0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ¹⁰⁰0.1. Njenga Kahira, op.cit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF KARING'AMOVEMENT UP TO 1950:THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION

The struggle for education by the Agikuyu can be traced as far back as 1913 when the first "Independent" school was opened at Giathiiko near Kanjai in Kiambu District.¹ But this school was not an "Independent" school in the sense of KISA schools, rather it was "Independent" of missionary control. It was opened by parents from Githunguri led by one Mukunga wa Njeku. The parents complained of the fact that Kambui, the only school in the area was too far for their children.² Rev. Knapp of G.M.S. interpreted this move as a revolt against the G.M.S. but the parents never intended this to be so. However, the G.M.S. recognized the school in 1914 and a trained teacher was sent there.³ In 1923, the school broke links with the mission at Kambui but there is conflicting evidence why the link was broken.

According to Anderson the link was broken when Mukunga wa Njeku sold the land on which the school was built. Apparently he had donated the

land for the school. The school committee split over where the school was going to be built. The G.M.S. supported a group led by one Wanyoike Kamau while another group led by Musa Ndirangu built the school at Githunguri.⁴ Anderson does not say where the pro-mission group built its school nor does he say why Mukunga decided to sell the land and who the "untrained" teacher was who ran the school in the first year.

However, Wanjiru wa Kamau has pointed out that the first "untrained" teacher was Musa Ndirangu. She says that when Musa Ndirangu joined the Carrier Corps in 1917 to go to war, Kambui missionaries "dismissed the teacher called Kariuki Warigo, who had taken over from Ndirangu."⁵ Kariuki was replaced by a G.M.S. teacher called Ngai Kimama. When Ndirangu returned from the war, he could not get along with Kimama. Disagreement occurred in the school committee. The pro-mission members of the committee led by Wanyoike built the school at Kanjai where Wanyoike offered a plot for the purpose. The more politically orientated group led by Musa Ndirangu was given a plot by one Wilson Gathuru. They called their school Githunguri primary school.

Gathuru ran the school free of charge. The opening of this school in 1923 was the cause for breaking the relationship with the missionaries.⁶ Githunguri became, therefore, the first "Independent" school in Kiambu.⁷ It was closed during the female circumcision crisis under the pretext that it was operating illegally. The K.C.A. appealed to the D.C. Kiambu, and the school was "allowed to re-open and operate on the strength of its earlier licence."⁸

The second "independent" school was opened at Gituamba, Murang'a in 1922 by Daudi Maina Kiragu. The parents at Murang'a were dissatisfied with the level of education their children were getting. At a meeting with the missionaries in 1922, the parents challenged the missionaries about the quality of teaching in the mission schools. The missionaries

asked the parents to divide into two groups, those not satisfied with the education being given, and those who were satisfied. The majority joined the first group and from that time began to make plans to provide education

for their children on
an independent co-
operative basis.⁹

Although the Githunguri and the Gituamba schools were recognized and supervised by the government,¹⁰ they were nevertheless the first independent schools in Gikuyuland which openly challenged mission education. They were not anti-mission or anti-Christianity as such but they were anti-missionary education which they considered very inadequate. The leaders and organizers of these independent schools eventually became members of Kikuyu Central Association but they concealed as much as possible the link between these schools and the K.C.A. "in order to prevent government action being taken against the schools on political grounds."¹¹

The opening of the first 'independent' schools was a direct challenge to the missionary and colonial educational policies. It was also an indication that the Agikuyu had come to appreciate the need for the Western form of education but the level of that education was too low. Throughout the 1920's Africans became increasingly aware of the difference between their education and that of the

Europeans. They resented the idea that elementary technical and agricultural education was only meant for them as a means to produce skilled labour for the settlers and the colonial administration. They further resented the fact that education in European schools was better than in their schools. The argument given against mixing white and African education was "the fear of the transfer of the qualities of the black to the white. Those qualities are indefiniteness, lack of decision, lack of moral power, and slackness."¹² Accordingly, the government outlined its policy on African education in 1926. It declared:

A study of the examination results ... shows how few of the Africans at present have the power of thought which is required for a high standard of literary education. Generally speaking, the African mind in Kenya has reached the stage of sense perception. The imagination and the emotions are both highly developed but the development of the reasoning faculties must be slow. Just as handwork has been found useful in the training of mentally defective children so the most useful training which the African can receive in his present condition is continual

contact with material
processes.¹³ (*italics*
mine)

The "material processes" meant handwork such as joinery, carpentry, building, agriculture, cooking, and sewing. In a letter addressed to Rev. Hooper by the Director of Education in Kenya, he was advised to "give them [*Africans*] ... a higher general education and make everybody learn one trade thoroughly ... because backward races and backward children must be educated through their hands and their senses."¹⁴

Similarly the missionaries had the same attitude towards the African education. Although they pioneered African formal education, "secular education was not [*their*] main intention. The protestant missions [*in particular*] made literacy a condition for baptism."¹⁵ The teaching of the Bible and manual labour was a common thing in mission schools.¹⁶

In their attempt to cooperate with the government, the missionaries tried to educate a small class of Africans to work as clerks, messengers, and skilled labourers in the administration and on the settlers' farms. In a letter addressed

to the District Commissioner, Nyeri by the Church of Scotland Mission, the missionaries suggested that there should be a "protected class" who should be called to work¹⁷ only two days a month. Those thus protected could forfeit their protection if they failed to

wear a clean cloth,
 or a blanket, or clothes
 and a badge, or should
 they have paint on head
 or body; [or failed] to
 attend school regularly;
 ... [or failed] to help
 to keep the school compound
 clean This protection
 shall be for three years
 only, and shall apply to
 those of 15 years old and
 upwards After three
 years, they would learn
 certain things which will
 make them more useful to
 Europeans, [for example],
 to read and write numbers
 in English, the days of
 the week, the months, and
 the clock.¹⁸

These suggestions seem to have been accepted by the D.C. for on the fourth of December, 1917, he held a meeting at Tumutumu with the missionaries, elders, and the headmen at which it was agreed that from henceforth the authorities should not interfere with the "protected class" whose distinctive symbol would be wearing a badge on their blankets

"to be provided by the missions."¹⁹

In 1933 after sixteen years of developing this "protected class", the Native Exemption Bill was passed in the Legislative Council. This Bill exempted "those Africans who had attained a certain standard of education" from compulsory labour. The Bill described such Africans as

those natives who by their ability and industry have raised themselves to a position superior to the ordinary social conditions which obtain in primitive tribal communities. /These Africans/ should be granted exemption from certain obligations and disabilities that are suited to such primitive tribal communities but are not suited to individual citizens who have attained a reasonable measure of responsibility.²⁰

With this kind of attitude and policy towards African education by both the government and the missionaries and with an increasing awareness that education was the gateway to economic, social, and political power,²¹ it is not a surprise that the Agikuyu seized the opportunity to establish their own schools during the female circumcision controversy.

Before the female circumcision controversy, Africans had made attempts to challenge the government's policy on African education through Local Native Councils and other organizations such as KCA and the Kikuyu Association. The Local Native Councils which were set up in 1925 were used by the Africans as a platform to air their grievances. Africans pressed for more schools. However, the Missions were reluctant to accept such a demand. By 1928, the Education Department acknowledged the fact that the Local Native Councils had "begun to feel that the Missions are unable to provide all that they want, and they [Local Native Councils] fail to see why they should not be allowed to have all they want - government schools for higher education - the more so as they are prepared to pay for it."²²

The pressure that the Local Native Councils put for more schools particularly in Central Province was acknowledged by the government. It expressed the fear that if the situation was not rectified there was "a real danger that the native may in desperation resolve to build schools of his own, uncontrolled either by government or the missions, which may easily become hotbeds of ill-informed

political and anti-government propoganda."²³

This is what happened after the female circumcision controversy. It is important to note that after "Independent" schools were established in Central Province, the Local Native Councils "had some sympathy with the movement and in some cases gave financial support to Independent schools [although] they did not by any means support all the views and methods of ... the Independent [schools and churches]." ²⁴

On the other hand, the Kikuyu Association played its part in pressing for better African education. In 1928, the Association "sent a memorandum to the Hilton Young Commission, demanding girls' schools and also secondary schools for boys so that they could fill posts in government service and improve their country."²⁵ A similar memorandum was sent by the KCA in 1929 to the Colonial Secretary "calling for compulsory primary education, free access to secondary education for successful primary leavers, and government scholarships for training all Africans of ability in local schools or abroad."²⁶ The colonial government does not seem to have taken these memoranda seriously. What was to follow was a confrontation between the Africans on the one hand

and the missions and the government on the other. The female circumcision controversy provided the right opportunity for this confrontation.

As we have already seen in the last chapter, the female circumcision controversy led to a split in the church and the emergence of the Independents and the Karing'a groups. The Independents established the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association [KISA] in 1934²⁷ and the Karing'a established the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association [KKEA].

The Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association was "formed in September, 1933 after an inaugural meeting at Rironi in Kiambu ... with Musa Ndirangu as Chairman, Johana Karanja Kiraka as Vice-Chairman, and Alan Matiri as Secretary."²⁸ Johana Karanja Kiraka became the first president of KKEA.²⁹ The aim of KKEA was "to assert the rights of the Kikuyu people and to develop their abilities to decide upon the pace and direction of the changes which were affecting them so deeply."³⁰ The centre for KKEA was in southern Kiambu where the pace of change was more intense and very rapid. As Rosberg and Nottingham have observed:

In contrast with the other

Kikuyu areas, the impact of social change in southern Kiambu had been far more abrupt and intense; moreover, anxiety arising out of the loss of land and increasing population pressures was more widespread. Members of Karing'a were more closely touched by land issues whose only solution was increasingly seen to be in political action.³¹

It should, therefore, be borne in mind that in setting up Karing'a schools and churches, the KKEA wanted to educate their people about, among other things, the 'nature of this rapid and intense change' and to make them politically conscious of the action to take in dealing with that change, and particularly on the question of land.

The setting up of the Karing'a schools "can be traced back to meetings held between the committees of a number of Independent Schools formed by groups in southern Kiambu in 1929, most of whom had broken from the Church of Scotland Mission station at Kikuyu."³² This view has been collaborated by Joshua Muceru. According to Muceru, several elders including Jomo Kenyatta himself, George Ndegwa Kirongothi, and two other elders were requested by the Karing'a committees scattered

in various parts of Kiambu to set up schools in Kiambu district from the River Chania to Dagoretti. They set up nineteen schools among them Kaigi, Mang'u, Kagwi, Githunguri, Gitiha, Uplands, Rironi, Kahuho, Thimbigua, Waitbaka, Muthurua, and Njiku. Mukui This occurred before Kenyatta left for England in 1929.³³

Kagure on the other hand says that the Karing'a schools were set up during and after the Muthirigu was sung. Since the Muthirigu was banned in 1930, Kagure's information agrees with both Muceru and Anderson. Kagure has added five more schools to Muceru's list, namely, Ruthimitu, Manguo, Githiga, Gathangari, and Kamahia near Githiga.³⁴ Njenga wa Kahira has added another school to the list, Mukui. He argues, however, that Thimbigua belonged to the KISA group.³⁵ Ibrahim Njoroge and Kagia Ringu wa Githiri have disagreed with Njenga. They argue that Thimbigua was a Karing'a school.³⁶ Njoroge has mentioned another school at Kahuguini making a total of nineteen schools. He thus agrees with Muceru.

The first Karing'a school to be built in southern Kiambu was at Rironi in 1930. The

building site was given by one subchief Nyoro who had been directed to do so by Chief Josiah Njonjo. Although Njonjo wanted the school to be built at Kamandura, this was rejected by the Karing'a because there was already a mission school nearby. The school was started by Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, Johana Karanja Kiraka, Johana wa Ndiyo, and Jonathan Mbugua. Johana wa Ndiyo left the school later and re-joined the C.M.S. Church.³⁷ After this school opened, others followed. Ndung'u has observed that "between 1932 and 1952 many KKEA ... schools were established mainly in Kiambu but also among Kikuyu settlers in several other parts of Kenya and even in northern Tanganyika at Moshi and Arusha."³⁸ This observation has been supported by others.³⁹ In southern Kiambu, Kiambaa location was one of the last areas to set up the Karing'a schools. This was because Chief Koinange of Kiambaa was anti-Karing'a until late in 1930's when his son, Mbiyu Koinange influenced him to change his attitude.⁴⁰

The Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association never succeeded in establishing as many schools as KISA. For example, by 1952 when KKEA and KISA schools were closed by the government, out of

"184 schools closed, 149 were KISA; 21 KKEA, and 14 under other management."⁴¹ These figures might be conservative but as Rosberg and Nottingham have observed right from the beginning the "Karing'a ... could never boast the quantitative achievements of KISA, but ... it represented a more politically oriented approach to the solution of its problem."⁴² They go on to point out that KISA was "concerned primarily with educational and religious matters, and sought to provide an African answer to problems of social development and spiritual needs."⁴³

Throughout the struggle to establish their own schools, the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association never accepted government control. As far as the KKEA was concerned "it was pointless for Africans to try to negotiate with Europeans until they were their educational equals." Corfield has further observed:

from its inception the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association was in essence a purely secular society under the influence of KCA, and hence in general opposed to any form of government or mission control ... (But) on the other hand, Kikuyu Independent Schools Association, although many of its sponsors were

members of the KCA,
 attempted to maintain
 a religious basis and
 follow a non-political
 cause (KISA)
 remained reasonably
 loyal and non-political
 ... (until) 1946.⁴⁴

But even after 1946, some KISA schools continued to be loyal to the colonial government. After the KKEA and KISA schools were banned in 1952, "nine KISA schools in Fort Hall (now Murang'a) which (were) under Johana Kunyiha ... were allowed to remain open subject to District Education Board supervision."⁴⁵ The nine schools were not in Murang'a as Corfield has wrongly stated. They were in Nyeri.

The refusal of the Karing'a Schools to be controlled by the government, and of course, the establishment of all the KKEA and KISA schools created feelings of hostility and suspicion in both the government and mission circles. The missions, for example, felt threatened because these schools were encroaching on their "spheres of influence." Moreover, they felt that Africans were not capable of running their own schools. One Roman Catholic missionary described these schools as "real hot beds of bolshevism ... with ever increasing feeling of xenophobia and the childish pretense to be able

and anxious to act by themselves."⁴⁶ Johanna Kunyiha, the first president of KISA relates an incident in which Dr. Arthur and a Mr. Dickson, both of the CSM, Tumutumu likened him with the devil. At a place called Wandumbi in Nyeri, the two missionaries threatened Kunyiha with guns and warned him that he could be exiled to a further place than they had taken Harry Thuku.⁴⁷

Similarly the government felt threatened by the rise and spread of these schools but for a different reason. The government felt that these schools were centres of a nationalist movement.

In 1930, the Kiambu D.C. declared:

I have no longer any doubt
but that the movement is
primarily nationalist.
Africa for Africans and the
elimination of the Europeans
is probably the star on
which the young Kikuyu hitch
their wagon.⁴⁸

In order to curb the building of these schools, the government passed a law in 1930 making it an offence, punishable by a fine of 150/= and two months in jail "for any African without permission from a District Officer to ask another

African for money or take a collection, except the money asked for should be (a) for the payment of the tax (b) in return for goods or services rendered; or (c) for religious purposes in an authorized place of worship."⁴⁹ This law was not approved by the Native Authorities. The KKEA and the KISA continued to mushroom in the country, all the same.

Another attempt was made to control these schools. The government decided to use the Local Native Councils as a means to control them. A meeting was held in 1936 with government officials, and representatives of the councils to discuss the issue. Soon after that "the leaders of the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association agreed to open their schools to government inspection."⁵⁰ During the same year, KISA stipulated in its constitution that its members shall be loyal to the King of England. The constitution read in part as follows:

The object of KISA is to further the interests of the Kikuyus and its members and to safeguard the homogeneity of such interests in matters relating to their spiritual, economic, social, and educational upliftment

All natives of Kenya and negroes generally will ... be eligible to be registered or enrolled as members of the association The members of the Association enrolled or registered as above shall be faithful and loyal to His Majesty the King.⁵¹

This constitution did not please some of the militant elements within KISA. It also came at a time when the Independents were having conflicts with Archbishop Alexander and the Karing'a at Gituamba Seminary. These events led to strained relations between the Karing'a and the Independents. According to Kovar, after the leadership of KISA accepted government supervision, "the more militant political activists in the Kikuyu Central Association identified themselves with the KKEA Many KCA members went over to the Karing'a Association."⁵² They felt that the moderate elements within KISA had succumbed to government threats and persuasion.

The Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association went ahead to build their schools without the support or control of the government. Members of the Association donated land on which to build the schools, while parents donated building materials

and labour. Those who did not have building materials gave goats, sheep, and other livestock to be auctioned. Those who could not donate their labour would send such items as nails, corrugated iron sheets, or even food.⁵³ This communal spirit inherent in the Agikuyu, and in African societies, in general, was later to become a tradition in an independent Kenya in the form of Harambee. Fenner Brockway was later to comment on one of his visits in Kiambu in 1950, how he was impressed by those building the schools. He remarked:

They were working hard, but with laughter and song. It was a happy scene, despite the heavy labour under a scorching sun. These were volunteers building an independent African School. I was moved by their enthusiasm.

I learned that devotion to education went beyond building. When the School was opened the parents would pay fees higher than those paid at the ... government and mission schools. I had never met anywhere a passion for knowledge like this.⁵⁴

Although the school fees might have been higher, there was more freedom of cultural expression in these schools than in the mission schools. African dances

were not condemned, boys and girls could go through the traditional initiation ceremonies without being suspended from school; and the pupils could participate in other traditional rites and practices outside school without being penalized. This "cultural freedom" was not there in the mission schools.⁵⁵ Partly because of this "cultural freedom" and partly because of "passion for knowledge", the standard of education was higher in some of the Karing'a schools than in some of the mission schools.⁵⁶

At first, it was not difficult to get teachers. Most of the teachers who had been expelled from the mission schools taught in the Karing'a schools. Other teachers were the young men who had been expelled from the Kabete Native Training Depot for singing the Muthirigu. The problem of teachers became acute only after the KKEA had opened up more schools.

The salaries for teachers ranged from fifteen to one hundred shillings per month. Most of the money came from building funds, school fees, and donations from the parents. When the money was not available, the teachers were compensated in

kind, for example, they would be given goats, sheep, and chickens. The school fees were about fifty shillings a year.⁵⁷ Fund raising functions included sports, gymnastics, raffles and African dances. An entrance fee was charged for both children and adults. These functions which were mostly held annually became the major outlets for cultural expression and identity. Pupils and adults alike participated in these functions which helped to raise money to run the schools and promoted the cultural and religious expressions of the Agikuyu.

The Karing'a schools used the same textbooks as those used in the mission schools. However, they emphasized academic education more than manual labour. While the Karing'a rejected Christianity as preached by the missionaries for seven years, they devoted their time and energy in developing their own form of modern education. They strongly felt that through education they would have a better understanding of the white man, for example, his language, culture, ideas, and the reasons why he came and colonized them. Through education they would also gain a fundamental knowledge to enable

them to analyse biblical passages which were often used by the missionaries such as 'do not lay treasures here on earth where moth can destroy and a thief can steal. But lay your treasures in heaven.' By so doing they would understand better the nature of Christianity and of the white man himself. They would then use this knowledge to eventually reclaim their land and the freedom they had lost.⁵⁸

The Karing'a people seem to have realized right from the beginning that in order to maintain the cultural traditions of the Agikuyu, they had to understand the white man. This understanding could only be gained through education and not through Christianity per se. They seemed to have resented the fact that the missionaries, for example, "used their monopolistic position in regard to ... education, to impose their own view of religion on their adherents."⁵⁹ This monopoly on education would forever make them ignorant of the actual nature of the white man. They further felt that this monopoly would turn them "into fools like the abolitionists" and missionaries would use their position to turn all the traditionalists "into fools." They, therefore, wanted to

establish their own schools before all the Agikuyu were turned into the abolitionists.⁶⁰

The informants tend to exaggerate the stand that the abolitionists took. They tend to think that the abolitionists had "wholly" accepted the white man's religion and culture. It is highly questionable whether they had done so. As one abolitionist remarked:

We were angry at the white man too. He had taken our land just like he had taken the land of the Karing'a. We only refused to join the Karing'a because we did not want to circumcise our daughters.⁶¹

Another abolitionist related an incident at Limuru Divinity School, which took place in 1935. A certain whiteman from Jeans School (now Kenya Institute of Administration) told a group of divinity students that the land belonged to God and not to the Agikuyu. One student, John Njoroge, asked the white man "Tiri wari wa Ngai kuma ri?" (Since when did the soil belong to God?). Before he could answer, the students told him angrily that "this land belongs to the Agikuyu and we can show you its boundaries.

It was left to us by our forefathers." The white man was kicked out of the room.⁶²

The abolitionists were just as determined as the Karing'a not to give up the land. As one of them put it:

Tuaneana tiri andu acio
angi magatura ku acio
maraciarwo.⁶³

(If we give up the land
where will the next
generation live?)

The activities of the Kikuyu Association particularly on the question of land reflect, among other things, that the abolitionists were not as indifferent to the Agikuyu problems as the Karing'a would like us to believe. The Kikuyu Association which was largely an association for the abolitionists and their sympathisers,⁶⁴ played its part in at least making the colonial authorities aware of some of the problems facing the Agikuyu.

From the above observations, one can argue that while the abolitionists were angry at the whiteman for taking their land, the Karing'a were angry not only because the land had been taken but also because the white man had encroached too much on their culture. Hence, the degree of their hostility

was more intense. In fact one of the major reasons that led to the rise of the Karing'a schools was interference with the Agikuyu culture by the missionaries.

Why the Agikuyu culture and religion were not taught as separate subjects in the Karing'a schools, is understandable for several reasons. First, in view of the fact that several of the Agikuyu dances and songs had already been banned by 1930, it could have been illegal to introduce them in the Karing'a schools. Second, the colonial authorities including the missionaries had already negative ideas about the African heritage, and if anything they wanted it to die a natural death. The Karing'a felt that there was no need to antagonise the government more than they had done already. They left the traditional education to the parents since most of the pupils came from either the Karing'a or traditional homes.⁶⁵ It should be pointed out that although the Agikuyu cultural heritage was not taught in the Karing'a schools every attempt was made to make the pupils aware of it. According to Kamunge Karemi, a former teacher at Rironi Karing'a school, Gathigira's book Miikarire ya Agikuyu (the Agikuyu Traditions) was used as a

required text book in most of the Karing'a schools.⁶⁶

In addition, morning prayers were conducted in the traditional manner in the Karing'a schools. This practice was later dropped to encourage children of the abolitionists to attend the Karing'a schools if they so wished. Second, there developed some form of propaganda education. This education was in the form of "land and cultural tales." We have already discussed some of these tales in chapter three. We shall look at more of these tales below.

One of these tales was related to photography. This tale has already been discussed in chapter three in relation to female circumcision. According to the informants,⁶⁷ the second version of this tale goes that the white man was interested in taking pictures of the indigenous Agikuyu in order to be able to show them to the children of the "New Agikuyu" who had given up the Agikuyu culture. He would tell the "New Agikuyu" that this is not their land; that this land belonged to the indigenous Agikuyu who used to circumcise their girls; that these indigenous Agikuyu used to wear rings on their earlobes; that their clothes were made of cow hides; and that they

used to pray under a Mugumo tree. The white man would tell the "New Agikuyu" that the indigenous Agikuyu sold the land to Europeans. The "New Agikuyu" would then be enslaved and the white man would take all their land.

This tale was used to warn the Agikuyu from being photographed by the white man and from selling the land to Europeans. It appears also that the tale might have been used to warn the Agikuyu against the danger of being turned into the "New Agikuyu". Informants described the "New Agikuyu" as those who did not circumcise their girls and had rejected the Agikuyu culture.

Another tale similar to the one above was about the "mission boys." According to this tale, the missionaries had a plan to alienate the Agikuyu from their land and culture by taking them to live in the "mission estates." The Agikuyu had already observed that most of the "mission boys" had forsaken their ancestral lands and culture and were, in fact, the "confused lot" (Agikuyu a maambere).⁶⁸

Although this tale does not take into account the various factors that led the "mission

boys" to leave their homes, and of course, this is not its aim, it goes further to warn the Agikuyu from being uprooted from their land and culture. The tale goes on to point out the fact that the white man's plan was to use the missionaries to persuade the Agikuyu to live in the "mission estates" while settlers took over the land already vacated. After all, as the Agikuyu used to say "gutiri muthungu na mubia." (there is no difference between a missionary and a settler).

Another cultural tale was connected with Roman Catholic nuns and priests. Traditionally, there is no trace of celibacy in the Agikuyu society. Since the Agikuyu had come to know and detest the white man's cunning tricks, they interpreted the celibacy of Catholic nuns and priests to be yet another trick. As far as they were concerned, the nuns were tricking Agikuyu girls not to have babies while they, the nuns had probably left their own babies in their homelands. This was another trick to exterminate the Agikuyu people. Moreover, it was against the Agikuyu cultural practices for a girl not to get married and have babies. In addition, the celibacy of a man was unheard of in the Agikuyu society. Men were supposed to get married and have

their own families and no man could be called a "father" unless he had fathered his own children or unless the term "father" was used consanguineously, for example, when a nephew addresses his father's oldest brother as "baba mukuru" (the senior father). The Agikuyu argued that to force children to call an unmarried man a "father", who is not a consanguineal relative to them, was another of the white man's tricks to make children have no respect for their own real fathers. This tale went as far as warning the Agikuyu men that there was a plan to inject some poisonous substance in them so that they would not be able to produce children.⁶⁹

How these "land and cultural" tales started and who started them is very hard to say. They may even be described as illogical, superstitious, and at times comical. However, these tales served several psychological, social, traditional, and prophetic purposes. First, they helped the Karing'a group to gain support from the traditionalists and the abolitionists. Second, they acted as a stimulus in committing the Agikuyu into the fundamental principles of Karing'aism, namely, cultural

and territorial pride, self-pride, cultural identity, self-determination, self-reliance, and inevitability of change on the periphery and rationalization levels of culture change. Third, these tales helped the Agikuyu to appreciate and revere their traditions. Fourth, they reflect the ability of the Karing'a to utilize the Agikuyu traditional practice of using folk tales as a means of communication. Folk tales were very popular in the Agikuyu traditional society. They were educative, illustrative, and even sometimes humorous.⁷⁰ And lastly, these tales reflected a very strong consciousness of the prophetic message of Chege wa Kibiru.⁷¹ What is also obvious in these tales is the high degree of suspicion of the white men. When Chege wa Kibiru prophesied about the coming of the "strangers from out of the big water", he advised the people that:

When these strangers
arrived it would be
the best policy to treat
them with courtesy
mingled with suspicion,
and above all to be
careful not to bring
them too close to their
homesteads, for these
strangers are full of
evil deeds and would
not hesitate to covet
Gikuyu homeland and in

the end would want to
take everything from
the Gikuyu.⁷²

It is said that when these "strangers" arrived, the Agikuyu performed a big sacrificial ceremony to beseech Ngai to help them in the greatest calamity that had befallen their country. According to Kibicho,

the ceremony also included the ritual of 'smearing the eyes of all the people including women and children, with the raw fat of the sacrificial lambs (mathunya). This was because their eyes had seen an extremely strange ... phenomenon. The uncanny colour of the strangers seemed to spell out the ominous nature of their advent.⁷³

The point that is being stressed here is that the "land and cultural" tales can be understood in the light of the Karing'a's ability to utilize the prophetic tradition in the Agikuyu society. In this case they utilized the prophecy of Chege wa Kibiru. Second, they also reflected the Karing'a's ability to utilize the Agikuyu traditional practice of using tales as a means of communication and education. The tales were used to remind the people that they

must be cautious and suspicious in dealing with white people.

On the other hand, these tales were used to remind the people about the prophecy of Chege wa Kibiru. The Karing'a knew that according to this prophecy, Ngai would be with them and they would eventually win. They further interpreted the calamities that had befallen on the Agikuyu up to 1930 - the alienation of land, forced labour, the campaign against female circumcision, et cetera - as a punishment from Ngai for having not heeded Chege's prophecy. Chege had advised them not "to welcome Europeans close to their homesteads." They had done this, hence, the calamities. The Karing'a did not want more calamities, hence, their refusal to be controlled by Europeans.⁷⁴

Throughout the 1930's and 1940's Chege's prophecy became a beacon for the Karing'a. This prophecy contributed to a great extent, to the development of what might be described as a "Karing'a personality" - an uncompromising and an unbending personality. This personality is still reflected in some of the Karing'a people.⁷⁵ It is a personality that can be described as a synthesis

between the "abolitionist" and the "traditionalist" traditions. This personality is neither traditional in the strict sense of the term "traditional" nor is it Western. Although the foundation for the development of this personality is the traditional culture and religion of the Agikuyu, too much traditionalism is avoided. The land, and the cultural pride seem to be the basic tenets of this personality.

In order to develop this personality, the Karing'a needed qualified teachers in their schools - qualified in both traditional and Western education. Such teachers were very hard to find in the 1930's. Fortunately, either by coincidence or by chance, Peter Mbiyu Koinange, the son of the late Ex-Senior Chief Koinange came to their rescue in 1938.

Peter Mbiyu Koinange returned from England in 1938. He had been studying there and the United States of America for several years. He had graduated with an M.A. in education from Columbia University in New York and had also been to Cambridge University and the Institute of Education in London University. After his return,

he was offered a job in a government school but at a lower salary because he was an African. He turned down that job "on the grounds that when he was in America and Britain his fees had not been reduced because he was an African."⁷⁶ From henceforth, Peter Mbiyu Koinange turned his attention to the 'independent' schools. The government had unknowingly thrown into the Agikuyu hands the kind of person they had been looking for.

According to Anderson, Chief Koinange called a meeting of both the Karing'a and the Independents to form a joint committee "to set up an independent teacher training college."⁷⁷ The two groups accepted to carry out the joint venture. The college was to be built at Githunguri for reasons which were largely prophetic as we will see shortly. Some informants argue, however, that the college was built by the Independents⁷⁸ whereas others argue that it was built by the Karing'a.⁷⁹ This view is not very convincing. It reflects once more the rivalry between the Karing'a and the Independents. There are, however, some members of the KKEA and KISA who have accepted the fact that the college was built by both KKEA and KISA.⁸⁰

These informants have argued that the Kenya Teachers College, as the college was later called, was built for all the Agikuyu - the traditionalists, the abolitionists, the Independents, and the Karing'a.⁸¹ It was also built for all the Africans in Kenya. Furthermore, the college was built to fulfill Chege's prophecy.

According to Kagure and Gatabaki, Chege wa Kabiru had prophesied that after the Agikuyu had been scattered throughout the country by the white man, a time would come when they would all gather at "Githunguri⁸² kia Wairera"⁸³ Chege had further advised the people to learn the history and the nature of the white man. After they had done this, a big house (thingira) with nine doors would be built at Githunguri where all the Agikuyu would be gathered. This house was built at the entrance of the college in 1950 as a prophetic reminder that the time had come for the white man to leave.⁸⁴ Chege had prophesied that the white man would eventually leave. He had said that "the strangers would eventually leave going west When you hear 'mbu' (screams) from Mt. Kenya [referring to the Mau Mau struggle], you will look for these strangers

and not see them."⁸⁵ But Chege had also said that "not all [the white men] will go, for there will be intermarriage."⁸⁶

In order to remind people of Chege's prophecy, a song had been composed. The people sung:

Mugo (Chege) wa Kibiru
nioigire
Riria thingira uria wii
Githunguri
Riria ugakwo na warika
Noguo Nyakeru ikainuka

Chorus Bururi uyu witu Gikuyu
 Ngai niatigire arathima
 Na akiuga tutikoima kuo

(Thus said Mugo son of Kibiru
The ceremonial house at
Githunguri
When it is built and completed
Then only will the clan of
white man go home.

This our land, Gikuyu
God blessed it
And declared
We shall never leave it.⁸⁷

It is abundantly clear that the establishment of the Kenya Teachers College at Githunguri was, among other things, a response to the Agikuyu prophetic tradition. They utilized this tradition by building a College that remained a symbol of the

fulfilment of Chege's prophecy until it was closed down in 1952.

The Kenya Teachers College (KTC) was built on the site where the Githunguri Primary School had been built. The college was officially opened on January 7th, 1939. It was initially intended to admit twenty five students for teacher training. But on the opening day two hundred and twenty five students showed up.⁸⁸ The following year the number had increased to four hundred and by 1946 the number of students at the college was nine hundred.⁸⁹ Corfield reports, without substantiating his assertions, that the majority of those students were mainly from the Karing'a schools and that "the Africans were well aware that the so-called college was in fact a Karing'a School of inferior standards, to which only children of KCA members could gain admittance."⁹⁰ At the same time, Corfield contradicts himself by giving the figures showing different areas where the students came from. He says, according to 1947 figures, that fifty seven students at Kenya Teachers College came from North Kavirondo, thirty eight from South and Central Kavirondo, one hundred and thirty seven from Murang'a, one hundred and nineteen from

Nyeri, one hundred from Kiambu; sixty three from Nakuru, and forty eight from Embu.⁹¹ These figures do not indicate that these students were Karing'a. In fact, evidence is lacking to show that the students at the Kenya Teachers College were Karing'a. Informants agree that students from all over Kenya were admitted at the college. What is evident though is the fact that the Karing'a philosophy tended to dominate at the college particularly in the late 1940's.⁹²

The overwhelming number of students who sought admission at the college led to the establishment of a very large institution consisting of "an elementary school, a primary school, a teachers college, and eventually secondary and adult education sections."⁹³ This created many problems especially of staffing, finance, equipment, and building. In order to solve some of these problems, the college turned to the Agikuyu traditional riika system. According to Waira wa Kamau, each riika was requested to raise twelve thousand shillings. Waira was elected the General Secretary of all the Mariika in 1947.⁹⁴ In order to raise these funds, each riika competed with the others. A government permit

was required to raise the funds. Since it was difficult to obtain such permits "official fund raising meetings were often held under the cover of sports meetings and dances, when charges could be made and funds collected without question."⁹⁵ Through these fund raising campaigns, the college was able to build more classrooms, dormitories, staff houses, and to pay teachers and buy equipment.

Although the college did not have official sanctions to operate, the official attitude was that it might collapse of its own accord.⁹⁶ With this official attitude, the college was allowed to operate as long as "the government officers especially the special inspectors would have free access to it whenever they wanted to inspect."⁹⁷ However, the government remained suspicious of its activities but on the other hand, the Education Department was sympathetic and impressed by the college because of its "orderliness", "cleanliness", and the "enthusiasm" shown by the pupils and their parents.⁹⁸ Negley Farson has commented on this enthusiasm after his visit to the college in 1949. He writes:

The spirit of that school,
the alertness and discipline
with which they were paraded

and went through a series of gymnastics with ... precision, was the most inspiring exhibition of youthful enthusiasm that I saw anywhere in Kenya.⁹⁹

The factors contributing to this enthusiasm and discipline can be attributed to several things. First, the sheer passion for knowledge for thousands of young men and women who had either been dropped or expelled from the mission and government schools was one of the major factors. Second, the college provided a lot of academic and cultural freedom. Mbiyu Koinange "did not believe in syllabi geared towards passing examinations provided one was educated. He considered examination as reducing the scope of learning."¹⁰⁰ Consequently, teachers were left with a lot of freedom to explore as many fields as they could. Sometimes elders used to come to the college to lecture to the students.¹⁰¹ However, the college made an attempt to teach most of what was taught in the government and mission schools so that students were not disadvantaged when they left the school. Third, students were also receiving cultural and political education. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the college was:

to establish a centre for a big political and educational movement which would be of long term standing. The venture itself was a political challenge to the British colonial authorities.¹⁰²

During one of his visits, Negley Farson observed:

The first book I picked upon entering one of those mud and wattle classrooms was Race Conflicts in Africa. And I am sure that when, or if his /referring to Kenyatta/ young pupils ever graduate - and they come from all parts of Kenya, from nearly all the tribes - that they will teach the young Africans more of what is in such a book than what Iron Duke did to Napoleon at Waterloo.¹⁰³

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that the Kenya Teachers College was not an ideological institute as Wanjiru and Farson tend to imply. If the students were, indeed, politicised at the college, it was only accidental. The primary goal of the college was to develop an educational system which would help the Agikuyu at first, and later, other ethnic communities to exist within

their own social structure and not the colonial structure. As Anderson has rightly observed, the primary objective of the college was to "produce students, who whilst able to handle so-called 'European knowledge and techniques' remained linked firmly with their African heritage and committed to achieving an African form of modern independent society."¹⁰⁴ In fact, what the college did was to offer an opportunity for free discussion and exchange of ideas. It is probably through this process that they became politically aware of their situation. Wanjiru has quoted one of the former students at the college as saying:

The education I received from Kambui Gospel Missionary Primary School was just the key to literacy but the education that I received at /the/ Kenya Teachers College under Mbiyu Koinange opened my thinking ... and it is the one which has helped me through my career as a politician, an M.P. /Member of the Parliament/ from 1963-1969 and now as a businessman, farmer, and Chairman of KANU /Kenya African National Union/ branch at Ruiru.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps the turning point in the Kenya Teachers College came in May 1947 when Jomo Kenyatta took over the control of the college from Mbiyu

Koinange and was elected the President of the Kenya African Union the same year.¹⁰⁶ The two men worked very hard to expand the college. They campaigned for its support throughout the country explaining its aims and objectives. Kenyatta, a trained anthropologist and Mbiyu a trained educator lectured to the students on the need for pride in the African cultural heritage and the significance of developing the traditional concept of education while at the same time accepting the Western form of education. But these lectures though they might probably have had distinct political aims were educational in nature, "rather than training sessions for party organisation or direct subversion."¹⁰⁷ The government, on the other hand, interpreted the teachings at the college to be subversive. The authorities became increasingly suspicious of the college's activities and were concerned that it might be a centre for administering oaths and carrying out anti-government propaganda.

There is no evidence that either the Kenya Teachers College or the Karing'a and the Independent schools were centres of subversive activities. The former students of these schools refute this claim.¹⁰⁸

Although nationalist songs were taught extensively in these schools, the government was unable to prove that these schools were centres of subversion.

However, in 1952, the Central Provincial Commissioner became increasingly suspicious of KISA and KKEA schools including the Kenya Teachers College. He observed:

There is no doubt that Githunguri is a vital link between KISA and KKEA headquarters and the off - schools of those denominations all over the province ... /and/ the so-called Githunguri refresher courses were in all probability little more than instructions on how to be an agitator.¹⁰⁹

The P.C. did not substantiate his claim. Immediately after this observation, the State of Emergency was declared on October 20th, 1952.

Soon after the State of Emergency was declared, all the Karing'a and Independent schools were closed down but they were given the option to exist under the control of either the District Education Boards or under the Missions. The majority of them chose to close down. The Kenya Teachers College was "closed down on November 15th, 1952 and

all resident students were given free transport home. Soon afterwards, the college buildings were razed to the ground with a bulldozer in a frantic effort to completely wipe out the last vestiges of African efforts to acquire and control higher education."¹¹⁰ Later the ground on which the prophetic symbol of freedom and nationalism stood was erected gallows to hang the suspects of the Mau Mau Freedom Movement.

The struggle for a Karing'a educational system had come to an end. But one can argue that it came to an end rather late. By the time the college was closed down, it had achieved one of the fundamental objectives of the Karing'a - to establish an educational system that had neither religious nor educational affiliation with the government and the missions, and an educational system whose foundation was in the African cultural and religious tradition. As Farson was later to observe:

The Kikuyu own efforts to give themselves the kind of education they want and religion which fits conveniently with some of their strongly held beliefs, were shown

both in this school
 /referring to the
 college/ and the pre-
 sence on its grounds
 of the church (which
 taught neither against
 female circumcision nor
 against polygamy).¹¹¹

This was not a small achievement.

Another fundamental achievement of the college was its inter-ethnic nature. As already pointed out above, the student body was composed of students from all over Kenya. This created an atmosphere of ethnic tolerance and opened opportunities for students to learn about the traditions, customs, and beliefs of other ethnic communities. It also created an atmosphere for developing Kenyan nationalism and brotherhood. As Farson has observed: "In the school, the brotherly feeling among these young Africans was exhilarating."¹¹² By the time the school was closed in 1952 "the non-Kikuyu students made about 30% of the entire student population and indeed, some came from as far a field as Tanganyika [now Tanzania]."¹¹³

Although the documents and files relating to the Kenya Teachers College were destroyed, making it

rather difficult to assess the impact of the Karing'a education in the college, it is evident that the college played a major role in the development of Kenyan nationalism. And indeed, it was a symbol of triumph for the Karing'a principles and objectives.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

- ¹For a detailed account on the development of independent schools in Kenya, see Anderson, The Struggle for the School: The Interaction of Missionary, Colonial Government, and Nationalist enterprise in the development of Formal Education in Kenya, pp.112-129; and Richards, E., Fifty Years in Nyanza, 1906-1956, Nyanza Jubilee Committee, Kenya, 1956, passim.
- ²0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, 25/9/76, Githunguri, Kiambu.
- ³Anderson, op.cit., p.116.
- ⁴Ibid., p.116.
- ⁵Wanjiru wa Kamau, "The Role of the Agikuyu Traditional Customs, Beliefs, and Practices, and the Teachings of the Missionaries in the Development of Independent Movement among the Agikuyu with particular reference to the Gospel Missionary Society in Githunguri Division, 1902-1952," unpublished research paper, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi, June, 1977, p.190.
- ⁶Ibid., pp.190-192. This information has been collaborated by Gatabaki Mundati (0.1.), op.cit.
- ⁷Ibid., p.192.
- ⁸Ibid., pp.196-197. Also see Welbourn, East African Rebels, p.152.

⁹Anderson, op.cit., p.116. See also Ndung'u, "Gituamba and Kikuyu Independency in Church and School", pp.131-132.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 116-117 and Kenya Education Department, Annual Report, 1928, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. Peter Gatabaki Mundati has also collaborated this information.

¹¹Ibid., p.117.

¹²Legco Debates, 1924, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, p.150.

¹³Anderson, op.cit., p.40 quoting Kenya Department of Education Annual Report, 1926, p.15.

¹⁴See a letter dated 17/8/20 by the Director of Education in Kenya. This letter is available in the Joint Missionary Archives, Microfish Box 5, No.233, University of Nairobi Library, Africana Section, Nairobi.

¹⁵Kinoti, W. Hannah, "The Era of Missionary Education in Kenya" in Orientation, The Journal of Religious Studies in Kenya, Vol.I, No.2, University of Nairobi Council on Higher Studies in Religion, Nairobi, October, 1976, p.5 quoting A.R. Tucker, Eighteen Years in Uganda and East Africa, New Edition, Connecticut, U.S.A. 1970, pp.233-234.

¹⁶Oliver, Roland, The Missionary Factor in East Africa, Chapters One, Three to Five.

¹⁷This is in reference to forced labour. See Oliver, op.cit., Chapter Three.

¹⁸See in KNA/PC/CP6/5/1, Nairobi. This letter was written by Miss Stevenson, a resident missionary at Tumutumu in November, 1917.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Legco Debates, 1934, p.941, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

²¹In the 1920's Harry Thuku, for example, had become a symbol of what an educated African could be and do for the Africans in dealing with the colonial authorities.

²²Furley, O.W., "Education and the chiefs in East Africa in the Inter-war period" in Transafrica Journal of History, Vol. No.1, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, January, 1971, p. 76.

²³Ibid., p.79.

²⁴Ibid., p.80.

²⁵Ibid., p.79.

²⁶Ibid., pp.79-80 quoting Beck, A., "Colonial Policy and Education in British East Africa, 1900-1950", in Journal of British Studies Volume 2, 1966.

²⁷For a detailed account of KISA see the article by Ndung'u, op.cit.; Anderson, op.cit., pp.118-131; and Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau, Chapter Four.

- ²⁸ Anderson, op.cit., p.119 quoting oral information given by Musa Ndirangu, W. Gathuru, May 4th, 1967 and Rev. D.N. Mugekenyi of the African Orthodox Church, May 28th, 1968.
- ²⁹ 0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, 30/1/77, Rironi, Kiambu; Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu; Njenga wa Kahira, 3/3/77, Karura, Kiambu.
- ³⁰ Anderson, op.cit., p.119 quoting from the oral information given by Stephen Mwaura, April 11, 1967 and Rev. David N. Mugekenyi.
- ³¹ Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.131.
- ³² Anderson, op.cit., p.119.
- ³³ 0.1. Joshua Muceru, 2/1/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
- ³⁴ 0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.
- ³⁵ 0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.
- ³⁶ 0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, 17/10/74, Ndenderu, Kiambu; Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.
- ³⁷ 0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.; Johana Kamau, 10/1/77, Kabuku, Kiambu.
- ³⁸ Ndung'u, op.cit., p.140.

- ³⁹See Corfield, The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau, pp.174-176 and Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.131.
- ⁴⁰0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit., and Joshua Muceru, op.cit.
- ⁴¹Corfield, op.cit., p.190.
- ⁴²Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.131.
- ⁴³Ibid., pp.130-131.
- ⁴⁴Corfield, op.cit., p.41 and p.171.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., p.190.
- ⁴⁶Cagnolo, The Akikuyu, p.265.
- ⁴⁷0.1. Johana Kunyiha, 18/8/76, Thigingi, North Tetu, Nyeri.
- ⁴⁸See in KNA/DC/NKS/10B/121/DC/KBU, "Memorandum on the political situation, January 12, 1930."
- ⁴⁹Leys, Norman, A Last Chance in Kenya, p.71.
- ⁵⁰Furley, op.cit., p.81.
- ⁵¹Ndung'u, op.cit., p.136 quoting KISA Constitution entitled "Independent Rules", pp.3-6.
- ⁵²Kovar, "The Kikuyu Independent Schools

Movement: Interaction of Politic
and Education, 1923-1953", p.204.

- ⁵³0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., Stephano Wacira, 17/7/76, Mahiga, Othaya, Nyeri, James Beuttah, 22/8/76, Maragwa, Murang'a, and Ephantus Nguya, op.cit.
- ⁵⁴Brockway, Fenner, African Journeys, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1955, p.98.
- ⁵⁵0.1. Waira Kamau, 20/2/77, Ruiru, Kiambu.
- ⁵⁶0.1. Ibid., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., see also Welbourn, op.cit., p.154.
- ⁵⁷0.1. Stephano Wacira, op.cit., James Beuttah, op.cit., Ephantus Nguya op.cit., Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., and Kamunge Karemi, interviewed 20/1/79, Ngeca, Kiambu.
- ⁵⁸0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.
- ⁵⁹Anderson, op.cit., p.107.
- ⁶⁰0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., and Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.
- ⁶¹0.1. Daudi Ndirangu, 10/5/74, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
- ⁶²0.1. Girishoni Kirangi, 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴The term "Abolitionists" or the "Kirore" when used by the Karing'a people includes all those people who signed the Thogoto Declaration plus the chiefs, the headmen, et cetera, who were actively involved in what the Karing'a call "Kwendia bururi" (to sell the land/nation to the foreigners).

⁶⁵0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and Joseph Kagiri Kiondoro, interviewed 27/8/76, Cinga, Othaya, Nyeri.

⁶⁶0.1. Kamunge Karemi, op.cit.

⁶⁷0.1. Nyamu Kamau , 14/2/74, Ndenderu, Kiambu; Samuel Mathu, 20/10/75; Ndumberi, Kiambu; Kabui wa Ndura, 20/11/75, Ndenderu Kiambu; and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.

⁶⁸0.1. Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit. Njoroge has further said that the term mambere also means "Athomi aria mari a mbere" (the first readers).

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰For an account of the Agikuyu folk tales see Routledge, With a Prehistoric People, pp.285-326; Kabetu, M.N. Kaguraru na Waithira, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1961 edition and Mwangi, Rose, Kikuyu Folktales: Their nature and value, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1976 edition.

- ⁷¹For a detailed account of Chege wa Kibiru's prophecy, see Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya, pp.41-44 and Charles Mucuha, "Chege wa Kibiru", UCN/HD - RPA/B/2/. History Department, University of Nairobi, n.d.
- ⁷²Kenyatta, op.cit., p.43.
- ⁷³Kibicho, "The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity: with the Kikuyu Conception of 'Ngai' as a case-study", p.11 quoting oral information given by Joseph Karanja Kagi, South Kinangop, 1969.
- ⁷⁴0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- ⁷⁵In several of the interviews conducted by the researcher, the Karing'a informants have lamented the fact that Chege's prophecy has been ignored particularly on the question of the African-European relationship.
- ⁷⁶Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.198.
See also Anderson, op.cit., p. 123.
- ⁷⁷Anderson, op.cit., p.123.
- ⁷⁸0.1. Stephano Wachira, op.cit., Paul Kahuho wa Gachemba, op.cit., and Ephantus Nguya, op.cit.
- ⁷⁹0.1. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit., Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., and

Kagia Ringu wa Githiri,
op.cit.

⁸⁰0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati (KISA),
op.cit., and Njenga wa Kahira
(KKEA); op.cit.

⁸¹For further details on Kenya Teachers
College, see Koinange, Mbiyu,
The People of Kenya Speak for
Themselves, Nairobi, Business
Forms and Systems Ltd., 1979
edition, pp.25-48.

⁸²"Githunguri kia Wairera" means the hill
of prophecy and destiny.

⁸³0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.,
and Petro Kagure wa Kariuki, op.cit.

⁸⁴0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.,
and Waira Kamau, op.cit.

⁸⁵Mucuha, op.cit., p.5.

⁸⁶Ibid., p.4.

⁸⁷Kibicho, "The Kikuyu Conception of God,
Its continuity into the Christian
era, and the Question it raises
for the Christian Idea of Revelation",
p.38.

⁸⁸Kabutu, Mbaara ya Wiyathi wa Kenya, kuuma
1890-1963 (The Struggle for Freedom,
1890-1963), p.36.

- ⁸⁹Koinange, op.cit., p.31.
- ⁹⁰Corfield, op.cit., p.182.
- ⁹¹Ibid., p.183.
- ⁹²0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., Waira Kamau, op.cit., and Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.
- ⁹³Anderson, op.cit., p.123 quoting Peter Mbiyu Koinange, The People of Kenya Speak for Themselves, Detroit Mission Press 1955, pp.27-28.
- ⁹⁴0.1. Waira wa Kamau, op.cit. See also Koinange, 1979 edition, op.cit., p. 30.
- ⁹⁵Anderson, op.cit., p.123 quoting oral information from Peter Gatabaki.
- ⁹⁶Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.207 quoting from KNA/DC/KBU/1/ District Report, 1939, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.
- ⁹⁷Ibid., p.207 quoting from KNA/DC/KBU/30, Kiambu annual Report, 1939, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. See also Koinange, op.cit., p.32.
- ⁹⁸Anderson, op.cit., p.123.
- ⁹⁹Farson, Negley, Last Chance in Africa, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1949, p.121.

- ¹⁰⁰Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.216 quoting oral information from Waira wa Kamau.
- ¹⁰¹0.1. Kagia Rungu wa Githithiri, op.cit.. Kagia was one of the students at the Kenya Teachers College.
- ¹⁰²Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.201 quoting an interview with Waira wa Kamau.
- ¹⁰³Farson, op.cit., pp.121-122.
- ¹⁰⁴Anderson, op.cit., p.124. See also Koinange, op.cit., p.40.
- ¹⁰⁵Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.216 quoting oral information from Waira wa Kamau.
- ¹⁰⁶Ibid., p.209.
- ¹⁰⁷Anderson, op.cit., p.125.
- ¹⁰⁸0.1. Stephen Kinuthia, 25/9/77, Kanunga Kiambu; Andrew Ngoiya, 29/8/77 Ndumberi, Kiambu; and Kang'ethe wa Huho, 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru.
- ¹⁰⁹Corfield, op.cit., p.188.
- ¹¹⁰Wanjiru wa Kamau, op.cit., p.213.
- ¹¹¹Farson, op.cit., p.127.
- ¹¹²Ibid., p.131. See also Koinange, op.cit., pp.38-48.
- ¹¹³Corfield, op.cit., p.182.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TRIUMPH OF THE KARING'A MOVEMENTAND THE RISE OF TERRITORIAL NATIONALISM IN KENYA

As already pointed out in the last chapter the Kenya Teachers College contributed a great deal to the triumph of the Karing'a movement particularly in the 1940's. Although the college was a joint venture between KISA and KKEA, it appears that the principles and ideals of the Karing'a triumphed in the end. The college, for example, refused any government or missionary control and support. It never sought and indeed refused any affiliation with missionary bodies, and openly encouraged a positive attitude towards African culture. This does not mean that KISA did not encourage this kind of attitude but it is the degree of political sophistication and militancy so characteristic of the Karing'a group, that was lacking in KISA's moderate wing led by Johanna Kunyiha. This has already been discussed in the last chapter. The political militancy of the Karing'a group has also been discussed by Corfield, Welbourn, and Kovar as we shall see later.

The Kenya Teachers College was, therefore, a symbol of the triumph of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement politically, culturally, and educationally. It was also a symbol of success psychologically due to the

fact that Africans could establish such a college without any government or missionary support. This in itself was a psychological boost to the Africans. The government and the missionaries had always doubted the ability of the Africans to run their own affairs. Now for them to run a college of such magnitude was something that the authorities could not ignore. The college was, therefore, a sign of pride that gave the Africans confidence in themselves and demonstrated their ability and determination to run bigger things, including their own government.

However, there were other factors that led to the triumph of the Karing'a movement besides the Kenya Teachers College. These factors can be seen within the wider context of the growth of nationalism in Kenya. Indeed, it would be an exaggeration to argue that the Karing'a movement alone led to the rise of territorial nationalism in Kenya. However, the other factors that led to the rise and the development of territorial nationalism in Kenya, did, in fact, contribute to the triumph of the Karing'a movement as a religio-political movement. In the present study four groups have been identified as

having contributed either directly or indirectly to the triumph of the Karing'a movement. These groups are: the Revival movement; the '40' Group; the Squatter Group; and the Workers Group. We shall discuss each of these groups briefly.

The Revival movement contributed to the triumph of the Karing'a movement in the sense that the movement reminded the Agikuyu Karing'a the events surrounding the female circumcision controversy in the 1920's and 1930's as we shall see later. According to Tate, the Revival movement "started in Kigezi and Ruanda-Urundi in the 1920's. It was the outgrowth of a re-evaluation of the Christian life of the people It was a return to the basic doctrine of the power of the word, the atoning blood of Christ, and the evangelical faith".¹ From Ruanda it spread to Uganda and then to Kenya.² As far back as 1937 it had begun to "influence the Anglican Church in Kenya, with teams of missionaries and African evangelists speaking at conventions arranged in different parts of the country."³ However, it was after World War II that the Revival movement became very popular. Murray has observed that,

in 1947 and thereafter very

large gatherings were arranged and held at fairly regular intervals, both within Central Province and in other parts of Kenya, some drawing participants on a local and some on a national level

In Central Province /members of the movement/ were mainly from the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches African Inland Mission and the Salvation Army ... were inclined to stand aloof."4

Macpherson has further observed that by 1948, the movement had already spread to Chogoria Mission, Meru and had reached North Kiambu in 1949 "where the annual Conference of Church members in the area was marked by unforgettable manifestation of renewal in the life of the church."5

The members of the Revival movement were notable for their excessive confession of sins, other-worldliness, and a total renouncement of any traditional rites, rituals and beliefs that were considered paganistic. However, although the movement did not preach against female circumcision - a very important rite for the Agikuyu - it preached

against "heathen customs" such as witchcraft, drinking, snuff-taking, consulting traditional doctors, and participating in traditional dances. But since female circumcision was considered a heathen custom as already discussed in this work, the members of the movement rejected it. The members were called Ahonoki (the saved ones). They greeted each other as brother and sister in Christ. Unlike the Watu wa Mungu movement, these people were not violent.

The extent to which this movement infiltrated the Agikuyu Karing'a movement is hard to say. Macpherson has argued without substantiating that "many of the KCA [followers] were directly affected by it, and, as a result were drawn into 'mission' churches."⁶ Similarly, Murray has observed that "many Christians who up to that point had accepted female circumcision were rejecting it, others to whom it had been a matter of indifference were advocating it."⁷ She has further pointed out that in 1948 a letter signed by twenty people (one was a woman) was received by the Rural Dean, Weithaga, Murang'a. The letter called for the abolition of the female circumcision. A meeting of all the clergy in the area was called. The clergy urged the Church Missionary

Society to abolish the custom. Although the CMS refused, the meeting was a reminiscence of the 1929 female circumcision controversy.⁸

As the Revival movement spread, the Agikuyu Karing'a began to see it as a revival of the 1929 female circumcision controversy. As a result "the propaganda against the churches, which had been familiar in the 'circumcision issue' of the early 1930's, was revived."⁹ For example, a grant that had been given to the Kambui Mission for teacher training college was seen as a "bribe given by [the] government in return for church help in promoting a revival of Christianity so that the morale of the Gikuyu people might be weakened and their land stolen."¹⁰

In order to intensify the propaganda against the churches, administration of oath was stepped up and a counter-revival campaign was started. Unlike the 1930's campaign which was centered on one song, Muthirigu, and was concerned primarily with the initiation rite, the 1940's campaign covered a cross-section of Agikuyu culture, beliefs, grievances, and nationalistic aspirations. Christian hymns were

adapted and new words were fitted in. Although some of the tunes of these songs were Christian, it is rather questionable whether they could be considered syncretic in nature. Yet they were not traditional songs in that they did not have traditional tunes and rhythm. These songs were used to unite the people against the forces of change that were threatening the basic values of the Agikuyu.¹¹ They sang, for example,

I do not know anything
 else other than to praise
 Gikuyu and Mumbi
 That is all I know
 To praise Gikuyu and
 Mumbi.¹²

The Christian version of this song was:

I do not know anything
 else other than to
 praise Jesus all the
 time. x 213

They sang of their land and how Ngai gave it to them:

Our people Waiyaki died
 And left a curse on us
 Never to sell this land of ours
 And now you are giving it free.

This land of ours Gikuyu
 God blessed it for us
 And declared we shall
 never depart from it.¹⁴

They declared that the white men are visitors and
must leave the land of the Agikuyu:

The white people, you are
visitors
You will have to depart
from this land
And you loyalists
Where will you go?
When the Gikuyu unite.?¹⁵

They castigated the missionaries for being liars:

If you Priest were asked
what would you say x 2
I would say I am a liar
And that lying brought me
here.¹⁶

They called on to the people not to be persuaded
to become abolitionists:

Do not be cheated on
the way
Neither accent to be
fingerprinted
Because the traditional
Gikuyu words became the
defence of the Agikuyu
wherever they are.¹⁷

They lamented their lost property:¹⁸

We were ordered out quickly
Gathering our belongings
which were ordered to pack
in hurry
And told don't worry
You had been longing for
these troubles.¹⁹

and they praised their leader, Jomo Kenyatta for having prevented the white man from carrying out his plans:

The words of Kenyatta
 helped to stop
 the strangers from what
 they had planned to do.²⁰

These songs reflect, among other things, the peak of cultural and territorial nationalism in the Agikuyu Karing'a and the "Independents" movement in the 1940's. The religio-political overtones of these songs were very strong. The strong religious consciousness that Ngai gave them the land the white man had taken from them and that Ngai will in the end help them regain that land pervaded all these songs. They prayed earnestly:

We are not the ones who
 will get rid of the
 white man.
 You, Ngai, are going to
 do so because he took the
 land you gave us. Ngai
 give us strength.
 Give us the weapons.
 If we are defeated,
 You have been defeated
 - not us. If we win,
 You have won - not us.
 We beseech thee earnestly,
Ngai.²¹

Another interesting observation about these "Unity Songs" is that unlike the Muthirigu which

attacked individuals and groups in the Agikuyu society, this feature is absent. Instead the attack is on the foreigners, Nyakeru (the white men). But as the movement entered the stage of armed struggle, songs with such attacks became increasingly popular.²²

In order to heighten territorial and cultural nationalism, a very interesting phenomenon happened during this period. People started wearing traditional attires, girls started piercing their earlobes and wore Ndugira (earrings made of maize cobs); circumcision ceremonies were stepped up, traditional chants like thaaai, thaithaiya Ngai thaaai were revived, and the white man's beer was rejected.²³ Consequently, the church attendance dropped dramatically.²⁴ A good number of Athomi left the church and joined the Agikuyu Karing'a movement. This was an indication that the Agikuyu Karing'a ideals and principles were becoming increasingly popular.

It was also during this time that there emerged a legendary group, the "40 group". The group was legendary in the sense that its origins and organization were mysterious. Informants differ on when

or how the group was organized. Some say it was first organized in Nairobi.²⁵ Others say it was not an organized group²⁶ and still others say it was an age-group which was circumcized in the 1940's.²⁷ Farson, on the other hand, describes this group as

an organization purporting to comprise men of the 1940 circumcision age-group Many of whom have been in the Army. And while the influence of the returned askaris /war veterans/ upon native life has not been so subversive, there is no doubt that this "forty" group contains a large number of young men who earn their living by a combination of politics, hooliganism, and burglary.²⁸

Kabutu agrees with Farson that this group consisted mainly of the war veterans and that they were disloyal to the government.²⁹

One of the interesting things about this group is that it associated everything with year 1940. They claimed amusingly:

Baba ni wa '40'
Akirua '40'
Akigurana '40'
Akinjiara '40'
Ngirua '40'
Ngigurana '40'
Nii ndi wa '40'

(My father belongs to the '40 Group')

He was circumcised in the 40's
 He married in the 40's
 He bore me in the 40's
 I was circumcised in the 40's
 I married in the 40's
 I belong to the '40 Group.')

Informants do not seem to know the symbolic meaning of the number '40'. They agree, however, that these young men were expressing the anger, the bitterness, and the existential despair that the war, the long famine (ng'aragu ya mianga) and the drought during the war had brought. There was also the problem of unemployment and landlessness. In other words, these young men seem to have been saying that they had been born during the difficult period of the 1940's but they were a hardened group, and like the warriors, they were ready to fight.

The problems that the "40 Group" faced had always been there but the "Group" was impatient and wanted injustice to end. The war veterans in the "40 Group" educated the masses about the "fallibility" of the white man. Although the people already knew that the white man was "fallible", the war veterans in the "Group" had witnessed the weaknesses of the white man in the war. They had seen him being defeated; they had seen him die, bleed, get sick, fail, and

challenged just like any other human being. There was, therefore, no need to fear him.³¹ Thus the "40 Group" brought new ideas, new knowledge, new experiences and new skills that hitherto were not there in the Karing'a movement. Some of the young men in the "40 Group" included "Fred Kubai, Charles Wambaa, Mwangi Macharia, Eliud Mutonyi, Isaac Gathanju, Stanley Mathenge, Domenico Gatu, [and Bildad Kaggia]." ³² Some of these men like Fred Kubai, Bildad Kaggia, Mwangi Macharia, and Charles Wambaa were staunch trade unionists and great supporters of the KCA and the Karing'a movement.

It would be proper at this juncture to discuss the relationship between the KCA and the Agikuyu Karing'a movement. This is important because all the information gathered in the field by this researcher points to the conclusion that the two groups were one and the same. For example, after the KCA was banned in 1940, it continued, however, to exist under the disguise of the Karing'a and the KISA schools and churches.³³ Informants speak boastfully of how the colonial government fooled itself by banning the KCA for Karing'a was the KCA in disguise.³⁴ When the informants give this equation

of the Karing'a and the KCA, they do not imply that the Kikuyu Karing'a Education Association was the same as the KCA. They imply that the Karing'a movement was the same as the KCA and the KCA was the Karing'a movement.³⁵ What these equations seem to imply is that the politically organized KCA had become associated with the Karing'a movement and the educationally and religiously organized KKEA had become the educational and religious arm of the Karing'a movement. It should also be emphasized that these equations only apply to the late 1940's and the early 1950's. KISA does not appear in this equation because by the late 1940's most of its schools and churches had become Karing'a as we shall see later in this chapter.

From the above information, it can, therefore, be argued that the "40 Group" was closely associated with the Karing'a movement. It is on this basis can we argue that the group contributed to the triumph of the Karing'a movement in the late 1940's. According to Gatabaki, this group used to organize big fund raising campaigns to raise funds for the Kenya Teachers College at Githunguri. They also worked closely with the Mariika (age-sets) Committees which

had been set up to raise funds.³⁶ This group has also been associated with the new oathing ceremonies that took place in the 1940's and included, for the first time, women and young men, contrary to the Agikuyu customs.

According to Macpherson, the "40 Group" took upon themselves the responsibility of unifying the Agikuyu by administering the oath of loyalty to the government of KCA.³⁷ One of the informants collaborates Macpherson's conclusions but refutes his claim that there was such a thing as the 'KCA government'. He relates an oathing incident at Kiandu village, Nyeri around 1947. The oath was administered by the ex-soldiers, the members of the "40 Group". According to him, this group had started organizing the people politically and had started administering a new kind of oath of unity as early as 1947. This oath was different not only from the traditional oath but also from the first KCA oath.³⁸

As already pointed out in Chapter Three of this work, the first KCA oath was administered around 1926. It was a syncretic oath in that it involved swearing on the Bible and a lump of earth. Nobody was forced to take this oath, hence, not too many

people took it since it was not intended for the masses.

On the other hand, the second oath which was initiated by the Karing'a-cum-KCA group was essentially traditional. However, it deviated from the traditional oath in at least four ways. First, unlike the traditional oath which was administered - by the elders, this oath was largely being administered by the young men of the "40 Group"; second, it was given to women; third, force was used in some cases; fourth, it was an oath for a war of liberation. Traditional oaths did not include any of these practices.³⁹

According to one of the informants, the second oath involved four symbolic elements, namely, a lump of earth to symbolize the land; a straw of grass, the symbol of grazing land for livestock; sweet potatoes to symbolize the food for the adults; and one raw banana to symbolize the traditional food used to rear the Agikuyu babies. An individual held these symbolic elements in his right hand and swore that he would never reveal Agikuyu secrets or betray his people or sell the land to the white men.⁴⁰ He also contributed a fee of one goat as part of the oath ceremony.⁴¹ The

individual swore:

Never to disclose any oath secrets to the white man or to those who had not taken the oath; not to deny that he belongs to the national party - the Kenya African Union - otherwise the oath would destroy him; to guard and fight for "our land"; and to kill the traitors.⁴²

This oath was not only given to the Agikuyu but it was also given to people from other ethnic communities particularly those who were politically active in the freedom struggle. According to Harrison Munyua and Muconde wa Kaggia, W.W.W. Awori, a Luhya; F.W. Odede, a Luo; and Achieng' Oneko, a Luo took this oath. However, according to the same informants not everybody took this oath and even some of the members of the then banned KCA refused to take it. They argued that the oath was too militant and it also involved blood.⁴³ Those who refused to take it were referred to as Tuthuki (stumps) and had to be eliminated.⁴⁴

This oath was more than an ordinary traditional oath. It had very deep political and religious meaning. For example, Petro Kagure has related an incident in

1953 in which he was accused of having administered the oath in Tigoni, Limuru area. He accepted that he had administered the oath not only to the living but to those yet to be born. And if the government had to arrest those he had given the oath, then the dead and the unborn should be arrested as well. Kagure was later detained. For him and others like him to administer an oath was a religious and political act. They had sworn in the presence of Ngai and the ancestors never to sell the land to the white man. As Kagure put it "the elders left a curse to me never to give up the land to the white man."⁴⁵ Another informant reiterated how important and sacred this curse was. He spoke of how those who revealed the secrets of the oath would be punished by Ngai, including their children's children.⁴⁶

In spite of the fact that it was a curse to reveal the secrets of the oath or even to reveal that there was some oath-taking taking place, somehow the secret got out. The women sang allegorically:

Nihingurirwo kwa Nyina
 wa Mumbi
 Ngote Mwaki
 Nyina wa Karega
 Arahingire hwai
 Turaire nja.

Tonya narua
 Wobici ya tiri itanahingwo
 Mbiyu akinya
 Wobici ya tiri
 Nikahingwo.⁴⁷

(I have been welcomed
 in the house of Mother of
 Mumbi
 To warm myself
 But the mother of Karega⁴⁸
 refused to let us in last
 night
 We slept outside.

Get in the land office⁴⁹
 quickly before it is closed
 When Mbiyu arrives
 The land office
 Will be closed).

According to Kagure this song gave a clue to the government that some oathing was taking place.

However, the government could not successfully prove that such ceremonies were taking place because most of them took place under the disguise of tea parties and sports gatherings.

It is interesting to note that just as the Karing'a had compromised some of the traditional religious practices so did the administrators of the second oath. The second oath was essentially a political oath with no syncretism. It was, therefore, resented in some circles. Some of the abolitionists who refused to take it argued that it was not

traditional enough and to take it would be contrary to the traditional practices of the Agikuyu.⁵⁰ Ironically the same abolitionists had rejected the traditional female initiation rite because it was incompatible with the Christian faith. Now they refused to take the oath because it was not traditional enough. This contradiction continued with the abolitionists throughout the 1940's and the 1950's. It would appear that for this group, to be modern meant to be syncretic, and to be traditional meant to be orthodox. The Agikuyu Karing'a took a different line of thinking. For them to be modern one did not have to be syncretic and to be traditional one did not have to practice every rite and ritual that pertains to the traditional culture if such rites and rituals are incompatible with forces of social change.

As we will see later in this chapter the "40 Group" did not introduce the most militant and modern oath in the Karing'a movement out of a vacuum. They were reacting to an oppressive situation that the Colonial Government had created. There were problems of landlessness, squatter and taxation system, unemployment, and gross violation of human rights.⁵¹

These forces of change were a threat to the basic values of the Agikuyu, and, indeed of the African population in general. They had to be dealt with. As one informant has put it the formula for the Agikuyu Karing'a was "to use the power of justice; if justice fails, to use force; if force fails, to leave it to Ngai."⁵² The informant went on to say that the appeal to justice had failed in the 1930's and the early 1940's. It was now the time to use force to prevent forced change which was threatening to destroy Agikuyu culture and values at the core level. The second oath became a medium to encourage the people to use force in their struggle for justice and freedom in both cultural and political realms.

The utilization of the Agikuyu traditional oath in its modern and militant form was not only sparked by the disgruntled youth of the "40 Group" but by the "Squatter Group" as well. The scarcity of land and the increase of population among the Agikuyu in the 1940's had forced thousands of Agikuyu to migrate to the European farms. According to Sorrenson "in 1902 Kikuyu population was estimated at over 451,500."⁵³ But by 1948 "the Kikuyu population was .. 1,026,341 of whom 733,924 were living

in the Kiambu, Fort Hall [now Murang'a] and Nyeri Districts."⁵⁴ The figures show that the population had more than doubled and that the majority of the Agikuyu lived in the "reserves" where land was very scarce. According to the 1948 census "there was less than one acre per head of population or about five acres per household, in the Kikuyu Land Unit."⁵⁵ This meant there were many landless and disgruntled people among the Agikuyu. The Colonial Government thought that the way to solve the problem was through agrarian reform - better farming and grazing methods to be introduced in every district. A terracing campaign was started. The objective of the campaign was to stop soil erosion. However, by 1947, the campaign had virtually come to an end and Jomo Kenyatta was accused of having been behind its failure.⁵⁶

While the forces of change had caused discontent in the reserves, similar forces had caused more tensions among the squatters in the European farms. Before the outbreak of the Mau Mau war of liberation, there were at least 250,000 squatters in the Rift Valley.⁵⁷ According to Kanogo the majority of these squatters were Agikuyu. She states

that "amongst all the Africans in the colony prior to the declaration of the State of Emergency, these Kikuyu squatters were the most dispossessed and insecure. They did not own land either in the reserves or in the settled areas."⁵⁸

During the pioneering days, the settlers had encouraged Africans to work on their farms. Even the settlers rented some of their land to the squatters as discussed in Chapter Three of this work.

The working days in the European farms was 180 days per year.⁵⁹ This meant that the rest of the time was spent on farming, grazing, and trading. For a period "the white highlands began to be looked upon by the Kikuyu as a place where one became 'rich' quickly [and] the alienation of land for European settlement in the Rift Valley came as an economic blessing to the Kikuyu squatters therein."⁶⁰ Consequently, a large number of the Agikuyu migrated to the European farms. For instance, by 1934,

it was estimated that 110,000 Kikuyu were living outside the reserve. By 1948, there were 294,146 Kikuyu or 28.65 per cent of their total population living outside the reserve.⁶¹

According to this census it was estimated that by 1945, there were at least 101,038 Agikuyu squatters and their families on the European farms. More than 60,000 of these squatters were in the Rift Valley and at least 21,000 or more were employed by the government mainly in the Department of Forestry.⁶²

The influx of the Africans into the European farms greatly alarmed the settlers so that "by the middle of the 1930's and throughout the 1940's, the settlers were engaged in what amounted to a crash programme to reduce the independence of the squatter both as a producer and a labourer in the White Highlands."⁶³ In 1937, the Resident Labourers Ordinance was passed but it was not operative until 1940. According to this Ordinance

squatters on a farm were no longer tenants, and had rights only so long as they were working for the farmer. [The Ordinance] gave the seven European-run District Councils ...⁶⁴ the power to limit the acreage permitted for cultivation, to eliminate squatter stock, and to increase the number of work days from 180 to 240 or 270 per year for all farms in their areas.⁶⁵

In 1942, for example, "the Nakuru D.C. ruled that each

resident labourer was to be restricted to fifteen sheep (no other stock were to be allowed) and to two acres of cultivation, with a further half acre for each additional wife."⁶⁶ By 1945, the land cultivated by the squatters was drastically reduced and the livestock was reduced to a mere five to ten per family.⁶⁷

The new regulations were not acceptable to most of the squatters. Some refused to sign the new contracts. Others trekked back to an already over-populated Gikuyu reserves while others settled for lower wages. In some cases, their livestock was confiscated by the Labour Personnel and no compensation was given. In other cases, the government butchered their livestock.⁶⁸ These injustices led to a widespread unrest of the squatters in Nakuru, Naivasha, and throughout the Rift Valley in 1947. The squatters demonstrated against the government and demanded justice. However, nothing was done to improve the situation. The P.C. for Rift Valley noted in his Annual Report for 1948 "cases of unrest on several farms" and went on to report of the "Mau Mau association thought to be affiliated with the

still prescribed Kikuyu Central Association."⁶⁹ According to Tamarkin "an intelligence report in 1948 records the oathing of squatters in Njoro and Elburgon areas in Nakuru District by the people of the three letters."⁷⁰ The members of the KCA were generally known as the people of the three letters.⁷¹

There was still yet another group of discontented Agikuyu squatters. These were the Agikuyu who had migrated outside Kenya. In 1941, for example, as a result of the alleged "complaints from the local people which were supported by the Tanganyika [now Tanzania] government, a start was made on the repatriation of over 500 Kikuyu from Moshi and Arusha."⁷² This was followed by repatriation of some Agikuyu from Meru in 1949 at the request of the local chiefs.⁷³

The eviction of the squatters from the settled areas caused a great deal of bitterness and agitation. Some could not go back to the reserves because they could not trace their Mbari (lineage); others especially the nyaparas (foremen), clerks, cooks, and petty traders who had already accumulated a substantial amount of property were very bitter and angry for

what they had lost,⁷⁴ and others moved into towns like Naivasha, Nakuru and Nairobi where the problems of housing and unemployment were already serious. In general, "the squatters felt that the colonial government and the settlers had betrayed them - having lured them to the White Highlands where for a period they had a lucrative socio-economic life style, only to be denied the bulk of this."⁷⁵ The "land tale" concerning the "monkeys" and the "people" that has already been discussed in Chapter Three started making sense to them. As a result the "majority of the evicted Kikuyu squatters joined the KCA, which by 1940 had penetrated to most corners of the Rift Valley. There was also a marked growth of Karing'a and KISA schools."⁷⁶ By then the KCA had started organizing the squatters under the cover of the Agikuyu Karing'a schools which were predominant in the Rift Valley.⁷⁷

But perhaps one of the most dramatic episodes that promoted the Karing'a movement into the highest peak of militancy was the Olenguruone settlement.⁷⁸ Initially this settlement scheme of 33,500 acres of land had been set aside to settle the Agikuyu who had been evicted from Limuru - Tigoni area in 1939. But

most of these people were settled at Lari and Kiriita. The government decided to use the settlement for the evicted squatters. By 1944, there were approximately 4,000 Kikuyu in the settlement.⁷⁹ The settlers were subjected to strict rules and regulations. They could not, for example, sublet the land allotted to them. Each settler had been allotted eight acres. They could not sell the land to anyone, or cut any timber on the land, and the number of livestock they could keep was limited. Failure to obey these regulations resulted in a fine of twenty shillings for the first offence, and subsequent offences resulted in expulsion from the settlement. The settlers were to sign an agreement before they could settle. But these agreements were published in 1942, two years after many settlers had already occupied the land. The settlers refused to sign the agreements. They claimed that they were being treated like Ahoi (landless or beggars). The government decided to evict them in 1948. In an unprecedented 'Operation Eviction',

all settlers who had
 refused to sign the
 agreements - in fact
 all the Kikuyu settlers
 - were served with notices
 to quit and, when these
 were ignored, a strong
 force of police was sent

in, the settlers' stock impounded, their crops confiscated, their huts burnt, and the settlers themselves were moved either to Kiambu or to a special detention camp in Yatta.⁸⁰

The Olenguruone operation led to widespread oath-taking in the settled areas and the Central Kenya.⁸¹ It has been suggested that the oath of unity, which, in this work, has been called the Second Oath, was, in fact first administered in Olenguruone.⁸² Whether this oath was first taken in Olenguruone or not it is abundantly clear that the Olenguruone Operation Eviction as it was called, was one of the most ruthless, brutal, and inhuman operations against the squatters, and could, indeed, trigger militant and violent actions. This "Operation" and the injustices at Olenguruone are vividly remembered in song by the Agikuyu. The settlers sang:

Kenyatta was praised
By the women and children
When they were taken to
Yatta, to be imprisoned
there.

Pray on, beseech truly
for Ngai is the same
one of old times.

We cried much
After three days
When we saw
All our children crying
together.⁸³

Olenguruone children were left
 There at the office
 Their fathers and mothers
 were taken to Yatta
 And imprisoned because of land.

I saw many things with
 my eyes
 And you witnessed the
 ability of the Agikuyu
 They refused to be persuaded
 So they did what they
 wished to do.⁸⁴

And lastly

We left Olenguruone at
 around nine o'clock
 And arrived in Yatta at
 around noon.

We shall be very pleased
 When the House of Mumbi
 Get back their land.⁸⁵

These songs became increasingly popular in the late 1940's and the 1950's. They are still sung today.

The major theme of these songs is land. It has been argued in this work that the Agikuyu attached a lot of value to the land. Land, that is, territory formed one of the basic values which could not be sacrificed. Land alienation by the settlers and the subsequent imposition of unjust laws in the European farms was a big threat to this fundamental value of territoriality. In order to protect and uphold this

value, the Squatter Group used not only the oath but the songs as a means to protect and defend any further move by the colonialists to interfere with the fundamental value of territoriality, and thereby prevent any penetration to the core level of culture change.

Another significant group that indirectly led to the triumph of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement was the Workers Group under the leadership of the Trade Union movement. This group is significant for at least two reasons. First, it consisted of various ethnic communities in Kenya. Hence, it injected in the Karing'a movement a national outlook. Second, the grievances the group had were very similar to those Agikuyu Karing'a had experienced since the 1920's particularly the grievances related to labour. But what is also very interesting is that majority of this group were Agikuyu particularly in such towns like Nairobi, Nakuru, and Naivasha. According to the East African Statistical Department "by 1948, there were 28,886 Kikuyu living within the municipality of Nairobi, 45% of the total African population in the city. Kikuyu were also predominant in Nakuru

and other highlands townships like Nanyuki, Thika, and Nyeri."⁸⁶

The Workers Group had many things in common: poor wages, poor living and working conditions, no venue to air their grievances, and racial discrimination. For example, "in 1939 the minimum wage in Nairobi was Shs.18/= per month; Shs.28/= in 1944; Shs.38/= in 1947 and Shs.56/50 in 1952."⁸⁷ By 1949, the average wage for an African was £27 a year; Asian £280; European £660.⁸⁸ These low wages created, among other things, an atmosphere of hostility and dissatisfaction among the workers - an atmosphere to that prevailing among the "40 Group" and the "Squatter Group". This group could, therefore, be easily persuaded to join the trade union movement "which by this period of the country's history was the most progressive, anti-imperialist force."⁸⁹

Before looking at the Trade Union movement, there is a need to stress one point. Up to this point, the Agikuyu Karing'a movement had utilized traditional methods such as songs, prophetic utterances, et cetera to censor the forces of change that attempted to penetrate into the core level of their culture. These traditional methods had been

used to protect and uphold such basic values as the belief in Ngai; the reverence of the ancestors; the belief in the sacredness of the land (territorial value); the nature and destiny of man as embodied in the marriage as a symbol of immortality, fertility and the survival of the Agikuyu community; and the values attached to private ownership of property and the right to explore one's environment as symbolically expressed in education. The traditional methods had so far worked - the success of which was manifested by the establishment of the Agikuyu Karing'a schools and churches and the Kenya Teachers College.

Instead of resorting to the "traditional methods", the "Workers Group" turned to "modern methods". One of the "modern methods" that they utilized is what is generally called "European liberalism". Liberalism is "a set of principles of constitutional liberty and representative government [It is] a recognition that men ... are free; that a man's acts are his own, spring from his own personality and cannot be coerced."²⁰ One of the core principles of liberalism is the idea of liberty. According to Ruggiero "liberty is consciousness of oneself, of one's own infinite spiritual value; and the same recognition of other people follows

naturally from this immediate revelation."⁹¹

The idea of 'liberty'⁹² though it existed in the indigenous societies was brought to Africa by the imperial powers in a variety of ways. According to Mazrui "Christianity itself was an important factor in transmitting certain related values and ideas [of European liberalism]."⁹³ Another method that was used to spread the ideas and values of liberalism and which is of particular importance to the present study was the introduction of monetary economy. Monetary economy was alien to the Agikuyu and to many Africans in general. The Agikuyu practiced barter as a means of exchange.

One of the most difficult problems that the Europeans faced in Kenya was how to induce the Africans to work for them for wages. After trial and error, the only alternatives left to them was to force the Africans to work and to introduce a taxation system. Through forced labour and taxation system, "a process of monetizing African economic habits"⁹⁴ was generated and developed even beyond white man's imagination.

In liberal terms, "the monetization of African economic habits began to lay the foundation of future African capitalism [and liberalism]."⁹⁵ However, the

introduction of colonialism was in itself 'a negation of liberalism'. The colonial system did not permit 'free market of ideas' and trade. It was a monopoly of trade and ideas by the colonialists. This meant the colonial system brought to Africa "values and ambitions which the imperial experience itself made impossible to realize."⁹⁶ These values and ambitions "came to favour not only individual freedom but also the whole principle of collective self-determination."⁹⁷

In Kenya the principle of collective self-determination was first expressed in the Trade Union movement.⁹⁸ As already pointed out in this chapter the Agikuyu were predominant both in the urban areas and the European farms, hence, they were the most monetized community in the country. They were, therefore, one of the first African communities to utilize the principle of collective self-determination inherent in European liberalism. They utilized it as an economic mechanism to censor any social change that threatened the basic values of human rights particularly in the field of labour.

Some of the great supporters and leaders of the Trade Union movement were also the leaders of KCA.⁹⁹ In the late 1940's the KCA changed its

constitution. In the new constitution, the Association "could also act as a trade union and a co-operative ... to negotiate and settle the differences that may arise between members of the Association and employers ... by means of collective bargaining or agreement or by other legal actions."¹⁰⁰ Although Makhan Singh does not say whether the constitution was accepted by the government, the point that is being stressed here is the KCA involvement in the Trade Union movement and the Association's ability to utilize the principle of collective self-determination. It is, however, interesting to note that in September 1947 workers at the Uplands Bacon Factory went on strike "when the management refused to dismiss a clerk who had failed to contribute to the funds for the Kenya Teachers Training College at Githunguri."¹⁰¹ By this time the college had come to be identified with the Karing'a.¹⁰²

Throughout the 1940's there was labour unrest in the country. In 1942 there were strikes in Mombasa, Nairobi, and other parts of Kenya.¹⁰³ In 1943 the Colonial Government finally recognized the right for Africans to be involved and be members of registered trade unions.¹⁰⁴ In 1944, the detained members of KCA, Ukamba Members Association and the Taita Hills Association

were released adding more leadership to the Trade Union movement.¹⁰⁵ In 1946 hundreds of squatters from the Kiambu area gathered in Nairobi to demonstrate against the squatter regulations.¹⁰⁶ This meant the principle of collective self-determination had penetrated into the squatter system and was being used to air the grievances of the squatters. In January 1947, there was a General Strike in Mombasa which paralysed work at the docks, hotels and the railways.¹⁰⁷ This was followed by another wave of strikes in Kisumu, Kisii, Maseno and Homa Bay in April 1947.¹⁰⁸ In June 1947, Jomo Kenyatta was elected the President of Kenya African Union (KAU) at a KAU national conference held in Nairobi. The conference resolved that "the political objective of the Africans in Kenya must be self-government by Africans for Africans and that in the new African state the rights of minorities would be safeguarded."¹⁰⁹ In June 1948 Muiguithania, a newsletter advocating the ideas of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement, was banned and George K. Ndegwa, a prominent KCA and KKEA member and leader was arrested.¹¹⁰

But one of the most remarkable successes of the Trade Union movement was the General Strike in May

1950 after the arrest of Fred Kubai and Makhan Singh. The two were arrested for being officials of "an unregistered trade union, the East African Trade Unions Congress."¹¹¹ By May 17 the general strike had spread throughout Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa and other parts of the country. A bonfire to symbolize the spirit of the people was lit "on the left bank of Nairobi [river] in the Valley of Pumwani and Shauri Moyo MOTO, MOTO (fire, fire) became the slogan everywhere."¹¹² The principle of collective self-determination had created such solidarity among the people that "food (maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes and sugar cane) began to be donated in the areas adjoining Nairobi and other towns for the strikers and their families."¹¹³ On May 25, 1950 the general strike was so successful that "the Strike Committee and other trade union leaders decided ... to call off the strike but to carry on the struggle by all possible means A great anti-imperialist demonstration had taken place."¹¹⁴

Following the successful general strike administration of the freedom oath was stepped up. According to Singh the oath was given to people "of any tribe" who swore to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of Kenya.¹¹⁵

In the meantime, the cultural nationalism that had been generated by the "40 Group"; the "Squatter Group"; and the "Counter-Revival Group" plus the territorial nationalism generated by the Trade Union movement and the Kenya African Union had greatly strengthened the Agikuyu Karing'a movement. The government aided and controlled schools were threatened to be closed down by the cultural nationalists. They argued that they had every right to close down those schools "since they were acting on behalf of the clans on whose land the schools had been built."¹¹⁶ Although the Karing'a cultural nationalists do not seem to have succeeded in closing down government aided schools, they nevertheless succeeded in discouraging parents from sending their children to such schools. They did this by stepping up the administration of the oath of unity. Those who took the oath swore that they would never send their children to such schools and would not become part of the mission churches.¹¹⁷

However, one of the most important developments that occurred in the 1940's within the Agikuyu Karing'a movement was a 'formal' split of the movement between the Agikuyu Karing'a moderates and the Agikuyu Karing'a militants cum cultural nationalists. The split had been in

the offering for a long time.

As already mentioned in this study since, the Independent and Karing'a schools were established, the government was suspicious of them and had attempted to control them. In 1936, for example, a meeting was held between government officials and the leaders of the KISA. After this meeting the KISA "agreed to accept government syllabuses and to open their schools to government inspection."¹¹⁸

The Karing'a Association rejected the 1936 KISA Government Agreement but continued to work closely with KISA. However, there developed more tension between the Karing'a Association and the government. A tendency to show preference to KISA schools by the government officials developed and in some cases Karing'a schools were threatened with closure.¹¹⁹ The Karing'a Association continued to be "directly connected with the KCA [while the moderate wing of the] KISA remained loyal to the government."¹²⁰

After KISA pledged loyalty to the government in 1936, attempts were made to limit the opening of new schools. The Local Native Council at Nyeri passed a resolution allowing continuation of Independent

schools. However, it discouraged the opening of new schools without the government's approval.¹²¹

The Nyeri resolution was challenged by the Karing'a Association in 1937. A Karing'a school was opened at Mukui near Kirangari, Kiambu District. The CMS missionaries urged the government to close the school because it was not approved and secondly because it was too near Kirangari and Karura CMS schools. In November, 1937, the headmaster, Parmenas Kangara was arrested for heading a school that was not approved by the government. Parmenas was fined 500/= and the school was closed. Soon after that he re-opened the school. He was again arrested and fined 1000/=.¹²² "This militant and contemptuous attitude towards the government on the part of the Karing'a Association [which] was not shared by KISA"¹²³ reflects among other things, the Karing'a's "hatred of autocratic rule"¹²⁴ which the British had imposed on the Africans.

It is quite evident, therefore, that since 1936 KISA had become increasingly moderate while at the same time working closely with the KKEA, the militant wing of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement. It is probably in the leadership of KISA that we can

deduce why KISA was moderate. Throughout the 1930's and 1940's, Johanna Kunyiha and Hezekiah Gachui, the prominent leaders of KISA, had become increasingly more interested in "religious and purely educational aspects of the [KISA] movement, and had begun to work more closely with the colonial authorities."¹²⁵ For example, Johanna Kunyiha who was the president of KISA since 1931 had been the president of the Tetu Divisional Tribunal Court in Nyeri since 1928. And in 1948 he was the president of the Native Court at Nyeri. The colonial government awarded him a certificate of honour for twenty years of outstanding work in the same year. In 1961, he was awarded M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire) by the Queen of England.¹²⁶ This dual role had alienated the moderate members of KISA from the mainstream of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement, and, indeed, from the emerging nationalist movement in the 1940's. However, this should not be taken to mean that there were no militant nationalists within KISA. Most of these nationalists were members of the KCA. They "not only provided some funds but also exercised considerable influence over some [KISA] school committees. But after KISA became increasingly closer to the government, the nationalists influence became less, ... [and] Johanna Kunyiha was able to

come to an understanding with the Education Department without fearing retribution of the KCA elements within his organization."¹²⁷ This was especially so in the late 1940's. It can, therefore, be argued that by the late 1940's the militant nationalist elements within KISA had become disillusioned by Kuniyha's leadership. As one of the informants put it: "by the middle of the 1940's, Karing'a had become the religion of the cultural nationalists."¹²⁸ In other words, the Karing'a ideals and principles were predominant.

Undoubtedly the KISA leadership was faced with a situation in which leaders had either to remain loyal to the government or join hands with the Agikuyu Karing'a leadership. Dissension was reported in 1948 and the pro-government leadership was ousted.¹²⁹ Kenyatta and Mbiyu Koinange toured KISA and KKEA schools in an attempt to unite the two groups. Perminus M. Githendu, a strong KCA member was appointed to supervise all the KISA and KKEA schools hoping to unite them. According to Corfield, Parmenus Githendu's appointment was not accepted by the KISA. This split the Murang'a KISA schools "those north of Maragua accepting the direction of Parmenus Githendu and those to the south declaring their continued allegiance to

... Johanna Kunyiha."¹³⁰ Welbourn has further observed that after the 1948 KISA split, Johanna Kunyiha formed Kenya African Church Society. The K.A.C.S. "handed over its schools to the District Education Board."¹³¹ It is, therefore, quite evident that by 1948 most of the KISA schools were under KKEA leadership.¹³²

However, the final split in KISA leadership occurred in 1950. At a general election meeting at Gikumbo School, Nyeri, in January 1950, Johanna Kunyiha and Hezekiah Gachui "were replaced by a more militant group led by Peter Gatabaki and Willy Jimmy Wambugu, who ... were prepared to work closely with the Karing'a leaders."¹³³ With this election, a united cultural nationalist front was formed that later spearheaded the Mau Mau Revolution in the 1950's. The ideals and the principles of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement that were once considered too radical by some of the Independents and much more so by the abolitionists had finally triumphed.

In concluding this chapter, it should be pointed out that the triumph of the Agikuyu Karing'a movement can only be seen within the wider context of the rise and development of territorial nationalism

in Kenya. Territorial nationalism was generated by such groups as the "40 Group"; the "Squatter Group;" the "Counter-Revival Group"; and the Trade Union movement to mention just a few. These groups created an atmosphere of non-conformity in the 1940's to such an extent that the radical opposition of these groups led not only to the rise of the territorial nationalism but to the sharpening of the contradictions within the Agikuyu Karing'a movement as already pointed out above. It is also interesting to note that the majority of the people who belonged to these opposition groups were Agikuyu. This was particularly true with the "40 Group" and the "Squatter Group". Lastly, these opposition groups increased the number of the Agikuyu advocating the politics, ideals, and principles of the Karing'a movement.¹³⁴ We can, therefore, argue that with the triumph of the Karing'a movement, Agikuyu cultural nationalism blended into the Kenya's territorial nationalism and became one of the catalysts in the rise and the development of the Mau Mau revolution.

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

- ¹Tate, "Kang'emi: The Impact of Rapid Culture Change on Community and Family: A Study of Change and Stability in a newly developing urban community", p.320.
- ²Welbourn, F.B., East African Christian, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp.138-147.
- ³Murray, "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy: with special reference to the Church Missionary Society "sphere of influence", p.309.
- ⁴Ibid., p.309.
- ⁵Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya, p.136.
- ⁶Ibid., p.136.
- ⁷Murray, op.cit., p.311.
- ⁸Ibid., pp.313-315.
- ⁹Macpherson, op.cit., p.136.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p.144.
- ¹¹For a detailed account on the use of songs in a changing society, see Merriam, Alan, P., The Anthropology of Music, Chicago,

Northwestern University Press, 1971
edition, Chapter XV and passim.

- ¹²The researcher heard this song sung in his village and in school at Ndumberi and Karuri, Kiambu in the late 1940's and the early 1950's.
- ¹³See Nyimbo cia Kuinira Ngai, p.119
- ¹⁴Githige, "The Religious Factor in Mau Mau with Particular Reference to Mau Mau Oaths", pp.281-282.
- ¹⁵Ibid., pp.281-282.
- ¹⁶Ibid., pp.283-284.
- ¹⁷Ibid., pp.306-307.
- ¹⁸This song refers to the suffering in Olenguruone, Yatta, and the eviction from the settled areas.
- ¹⁹Githige, op.cit., pp.308-309.
- ²⁰Ibid., pp.308-309.
- ²¹0.1. Petro Kagure, op.cit.
- ²²Githige, op.cit., pp.287-311.
- ²³0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit. The researcher witnessed this cultural revival in the late 1940's and the early 1950's.

- ²⁴Macpherson, op.cit., p.115.
- ²⁵0.1. Stephano Wacira, op.cit., and Ibrahim Njoroge op.cit.
- ²⁶0.1. Ephantus Nguya, op.cit., and Munyui wa Gichura, op.cit.
- ²⁷0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, 25/9/76, Githunguri, Kiambu, and Andrew Ngoiya, 29/8/77, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
- ²⁸Farson, Last Chance in Africa, p.115.
- ²⁹Kabutu, Mbaara ya Wiyathi wa Kenya, p.41.
- ³⁰0.1. Stephano Wacira, op.cit.
- ³¹0.1. Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.
- ³²Maina-wa-Kinyatti, "Mau Mau: The Peak of African Political Organization in Colonial Kenya" in Kenya Historical Review, Vol.5, No.2, 1977, Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kenya, p.292.
- ³³For details on the banning of the KCA see Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau, pp. 185-186.
- ³⁴0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit., Harrison Munyua, interviewed 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru; Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit., Johana Kamau, op.cit.; and Samuel Mathu, op.cit. to mention just a few.
- ³⁵Ibid.

- ³⁶0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.
- ³⁷Macpherson, op.cit., pp.136-137.
- ³⁸0.1. Stephano Wacira, op.cit.
- ³⁹0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.
- ⁴⁰Ibid.
- ⁴¹0.1. Harrison Munyua, op.cit.
- ⁴²0.1. Ephantus Nguya, op.cit.
- ⁴³0.1. Harrison Munyua, op.cit., and Muconde wa Kaggia, interviewed 8/9/77, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi.
- ⁴⁴0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit.
- ⁴⁵Ibid.
- ⁴⁶0.1. Kuria wa Runo, op.cit.
- ⁴⁷0.1. Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit.
- ⁴⁸See Glossary.
- ⁴⁹See Glossary.
- ⁵⁰0.1. Stephen Wacira, op.cit.; Peter Kahuho Gachomba (Rev.), op.cit., and Girishoni

Kirangi, op.cit.

- ⁵¹For details on the mistreatment of the African veterans of the First and the Second World Wars by the Colonial Government and their reaction to the Colonial Government see Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., pp.30-33 and p.191ff. See also Kabutu, op.cit., pp.39-45 and Kaggia, Bildad, Roots of Freedom 1921-1963: The Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1975, passim.
- ⁵²0.1. Kuria wa Runo, op.cit.
- ⁵³Sorrenson, Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country, p.34 quoting Report of the Kenya Land Commission Cmd.4556, 1934, p.26.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., p.35 quoting East African Statistical Department 'Geographical and Tribal Studies' (1950), pp.6, 11-13.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., p.77 quoting East Africa Economic and Statistical Bulletin No.12, June 1951, p.8.
- ⁵⁶Farson, op.cit., passim.
- ⁵⁷Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.223.
- ⁵⁸Kanogo, M.J. Tabitha, "Rift Valley Squatters and Mau Mau" in the Kenya Historical Review, Vol.5, No.2, 1977, op.cit., p.244.
- ⁵⁹Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.252.

- ⁶⁰Kanogo, op.cit., p.244.
- ⁶¹Sorrenson, op.cit., p.80 quoting the Labour Department: Special Labour Census, 1945, Table 16.
- ⁶²Ibid., p.181.
- ⁶³Kanogo, op.cit., p.244.
- ⁶⁴According to Rosberg and Nottingham this Council consisted of representatives from Nairobi, Naivasha, Nakuru, the Aberdares, Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia, and Nyanza districts, p.251.
- ⁶⁵Ibid., pp.251-252.
- ⁶⁶Sorrenson, op.cit., p.81.
- ⁶⁷Kanogo, op.cit., p.244.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p.245 and footnotes 9 and 10.
- ⁶⁹Sorrenson, op.cit., p.82.
- ⁷⁰Tarmakin, M., "Mau Mau in Nakuru" in the Kenya Historical Review Vol.5 No.2, 1977, op.cit., p.228 quoting Corfield, The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau, op.cit., p.77.
- ⁷¹0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.
- ⁷²Sorrenson; op.cit., p.82.

- ⁷³Ibid., p.82 quoting Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1949, p.32.
- ⁷⁴Kanogo has discussed in detail about this "propertied class" of the squatters, see pp.245-248.
- ⁷⁵Ibid., p.245.
- ⁷⁶Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.251 quoting Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1938, p.89.
- ⁷⁷For a detailed account of the activities of KCA "under cover" in the Rift Valley, see Tamarkin's article, op.cit., pp.225-239.
- ⁷⁸For a detailed account of this settlement, see Sorrenson, op.cit., pp.82-85.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., p.83 quoting minutes of meeting in Chief Native Commissioner's Office, 24 October, 1944.
- ⁸⁰Ibid., p.84 quoting Rift Valley Province Annual Report, 1949.
- ⁸¹Kanogo, op.cit., p.245.
- ⁸²0.1. Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit.; Renson Muchiri Githige, 19/8/78, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi.
- ⁸³Githige, op.cit., pp.301-303.
- ⁸⁴Ibid., pp.306-307.

- ⁸⁵Ibid., pp.308-309.
- ⁸⁶Sorrenson, op.cit., p.85 quoting East African Statistical Department, 'Geographical and Tribal Studies,' n.d., passim.
- ⁸⁷Ibid., p.85.
- ⁸⁸Brockway, African Journeys, p.292.
- ⁸⁹Maina-wa-Kinyatti, op.cit., p.292.
- ⁹⁰Ruggiero, de Guido, The History of European Liberalism, translated by R.G. Collingwood, Boston, Beacon Press, 1966 edition, p.vii.
- ⁹¹Ibid., pp.13-14.
- ⁹²For a detailed account on the history of European liberalism, see Ruggiero's classic work quoted above, passim.
- ⁹³Mazrui, Ali A., Africa's International Relations: The Diplomacy of Dependency and Change, Nairobi, Heinemann, 1977, p.22. For a detailed account on relationship between Christianity and capitalism, see Marx Weber, Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism, London, 1976 edition.
- ⁹⁴Ibid., p.24.
- ⁹⁵Ibid., p.24.
- ⁹⁶Ibid., p.24.

- ⁹⁷Ibid., p.25.
- ⁹⁸For a detailed account of the history of Trade Union Movement in Kenya see Makhan Singh, History of Kenya's Trade Union Movement to 1952, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1969.
- ⁹⁹Ibid., p.165.
- ¹⁰⁰Ibid., see plate No.4 for a full text of the new constitution.
- ¹⁰¹Sorrenson, op.cit., p.86.
- ¹⁰²Ibid., p.87.
- ¹⁰³Singh, op.cit., pp.113-114.
- ¹⁰⁴Ibid., p.119.
- ¹⁰⁵Ibid., p.120.
- ¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp.139-140.
- ¹⁰⁷Ibid., p.141.
- ¹⁰⁸Ibid., p.146-147.
- ¹⁰⁹Ibid., p.151. For further detail on KAU see Kaggia, op.cit., passim; and Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.235f.
- ¹¹⁰Ibid., p.173.
- ¹¹¹Ibid., p.268.

- 112 Ibid., p.272.
- 113 Ibid., p.272.
- 114 Ibid., p.277.
- 115 Ibid., p.288.
- 116 Macpherson, op.cit., p.136.
- 117 Roberts, Granville, (forward), The Mau Mau in Kenya, London, Hutchinson and company, 1954, p.15.
- 118 Furley, "Education and the Chiefs in East Africa in the Inter-war Period" in Transafrica Journal of History Vol. No.1, p.81.
- 119 Anderson, op.cit., p.127.
- 120 Roberts, op.cit., pp.41-42. This view has also been expressed by Corfield, op.cit., p.176 and Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit. (0.1.)
- 121 Kovar, "The Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement: Interaction of Politics and Education, 1923-1953", p.199.
- 122 Ibid., pp.199-203. The informants have also expressed their bitterness about the "Mukui Case." They include Njenga-wa-Kahira, op.cit., Petro Kagure Kariuki, op.cit., Johanna Kamau, op.cit.; and Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- 123 Ibid., p.202.

- ¹²⁴Kenya, My People of Kikuyu, p.25.
- ¹²⁵Anderson, The Struggle for the School, p.122.
- ¹²⁶O.1. Johanna Kuniya, op.cit.
- ¹²⁷Kovar, op.cit., p.204.
- ¹²⁸O.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit.
- ¹²⁹Roberts, op.cit., p.42.
- ¹³⁰Corfield, op.cit., pp.175-178.
- ¹³¹Welbourn, East African Rebels, p.156.
- ¹³²Corfield, op.cit., p.189.
- ¹³³Anderson, op.cit., p.122. This information was also given to the researcher by Peter Gatabaki Mundati on 29/1/79 at Githunguri, Kiambu.
- ¹³⁴For a detailed account on the study on social and culture change due to the increase in scale, see Wilson, Monica, Religion and the Transformation of Society: A Study in Social Change in Africa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971 and Wilson Godfrey and Monica, The Analysis of Social Change based on Observations in Central Africa, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

CONCLUSION

The present study has sought to determine the role of the Agikuyu culture and religion in the development of the Karing'a movement. In order to achieve this objective certain appropriate features of the Agikuyu culture and religion were studied together with the historical factors that acted as catalysts in the development of the Karing'a movement. The historical factors were divided into two categories, namely, those directly related to the colonial administrators and the settlers and those directly associated with the missionaries. The factors related to the colonial administrators and the settlers were divided into three major areas: the land alienation, forced labour, and taxation; those associated with missionaries were also divided into three major areas: education, religion, and indoctrination against the Agikuyu culture and religion.

By using the above methodological approach which has been described in detail in the introduction, the researcher has arrived at several major findings and conclusions.

The major findings can be divided into two

categories, namely, those related to the Agikuyu culture and those related to the problems of social change.

First, the researcher was able to identify nine Agikuyu cultural and religious beliefs and practices that were utilized in the development of the Karing'a movement. These are: the concept of democracy, the sacredness of land, the social spirit of cooperation and communalism, the songs, the concept of God, oathing, the initiation rite, the use of folk tales, and the prophetic tradition.

The researcher found that the interference with the Agikuyu democratic form of government and society by the colonialists set in motion feelings of antagonism and resistance to the white rule. But this resistance never amounted to any organized mass movement until in 1933 when the Karing'a and Independent Schools and churches were organized. The Agikuyu seized this opportunity to utilize their democratic principles and practices. For example, the Karing'a schools were run by committees and the churches by the elders. The schools had freedom to employ their own teachers while the churches appointed their own deacons. Although a co-ordinating committee existed, it did not exercise

absolute authority on the school committees.¹ The deacons in the churches preached and gave Bible lessons. Bishop Arthur Gatung'u, the head of the African Orthodox Church, would then come to baptize and administer other sacraments in every church. Sometimes several churches gathered in one place to make the job for him easier.² This was indeed democracy at work in a non-traditional situation.

Another finding in this study is the role the belief in the sacredness of land played in the development of the Karing'a movement. The researcher found that in order to uphold this belief, the Agikuyu turned to their traditional usage of folk tales and songs.³ They dramatized their territorial plight by inventing "land tales" which have been discussed in this work. These tales were spread through the word of mouth in villages, towns, coffee and tea plantations, market places, schools and churches. They also used oaths and songs to strengthen this belief. Starting from the first KCA oath of 1926 to the Mau Mau oaths of the 1950's, the individual swore holding a lump of earth, that he would never sell the Agikuyu land to the white man. The researcher further found that the belief in the sacredness of land was held by all the

Agikuyu including the abolitionists.

The songs not only strengthened the belief in the sacredness of the land but they were also used to educate and politicize the Agikuyu about the colonialists, their sufferings, and the history of the Agikuyu. Traditionally, "the social education was imparted to [the individual] by imagery and ritual, the rhythm of the dance and the words of the ceremonial song".⁴ The researcher found that the Karing'a movement seized this traditional usage of the songs to dramatize their cause. This was especially so during the height of the female circumcision controversy in 1929. They used the Muthirigu dance-song to dramatize their grievances and to re-affirm their faith in Ngai, the land that Ngai gave them, and the religion and culture that they inherited from their ancestors. The use of the songs continued in the 1940's during the Olenguruone incident which has been discussed in this work. In the late 1940's and early 1950's different songs were composed to unite the Agikuyu against the colonialists and the Christian revivalists.⁵

The researcher has further found that the Agikuyu utilized the traditional concept of Ngai rather than the

Christian concept of God in the development of the Karing'a movement, and that the belief in the traditional Ngai was very pervasive in every aspect of the Karing'a movement. This belief was expressed in their daily prayers:

Hoyai ma
Thaithai ma
Ni amu Ngai no
uria wa tene.

(Pray on, beseech truly
For Ngai is the same
One of old times)⁶

It was further expressed in the defence of the Agikuyu customs⁷ and land⁸ and during the time of suffering and hunger.⁹

Another major finding in this study is the ability of the Agikuyu Karing'a to utilize the spirit of co-operation and communalism inherent in the Agikuyu society. For example, the Karing'a churches and schools were built on the self-help basis. People provided building materials, labour, money, and time. Others provided their land. The school fees were used to pay teachers. And the priests were paid from the Sunday collections. Although the salaries were not high and not always forthcoming, the teachers and the priests were co-operative because they believed that they were working for their country and people.¹⁰

Another example of how the Karing'a utilized the spirit of co-operation and communalism was through the traditional riika (age-grade) system. When the Kenya Teachers College was established at Githunguri, a need arose to raise funds to build and develop the college. Each riika was requested to raise about twelve thousand shillings. Through the co-operative effort of each riika, the college was built. It became a monument of pride for the Agikuyu, and indeed a symbol of the self-help spirit which has continued in the post-independent Kenya through Harambee!!

Lastly, another major finding in this study is the utilization of the traditional prophetic tradition inherent in the Agikuyu society.¹² Thus before the coming of the missionaries and the colonialists, the Agikuyu had a prophetic tradition which went many generations back. It is not a surprise, therefore, that the Old Testament prophets appealed to them greatly.

Although the Karing'a never considered themselves as the prophets like the Watu wa Mungu group, they, nevertheless utilized the Agikuyu prophetic tradition particularly the prophecies of Chege wa Kibiru which have been discussed in Chapter Two. The

Karing'a movement utilized Chege's prophecies to assure the people that their struggle was just and in the end they would win. They also used it to unite the people. For example, the building of Kenya Teachers College at Githunguri and the subsequent admission of African students from all parts of Kenya in the College was a religious as well as a political reminder of Chege wa Kibiru's prophecy.¹³ Second, the prophecy helped the Agikuyu to respond to change positively and progressively. For example and as already pointed out in Chapter Two, Chege had prophesied about the coming of the white man, how people should react to these "strangers", the coming of Christianity and how people should respond to it. He had assured them that in spite of technological superiority of the white men, the Agikuyu would win in the end. All these gave the Agikuyu the religious and psychological strength to face any hardships and to build a strong resistance nationalist movement.

These findings, supported by empirical data, have proved the basic hypothesis of this study to be true, that, indeed, the Agikuyu religion and culture played a major role in the development of the Karing'a movement.

Accordingly, the second hypothesis in this study that the Agikuyu culture was an integrated whole and interfering with one aspect of their culture meant interfering with the whole culture, thereby, causing the disintegration of the society was not supported by the empirical data. The researcher found that though the Agikuyu culture was an integrated whole, interfering with one aspect of their culture did not lead to the disintegration of the whole society. This was especially so in the political realm. When the colonialists imposed an autocratic political system on the Agikuyu and went as far as replacing the traditional leaders with their own leaders, the Agikuyu society did not disintegrate. For example, when the Local Native Councils were introduced in 1925, the Agikuyu saw the role of these councils as almost similar to the traditional councils of elders. Moreover, the traditional councils continued to function though they did not have as much power as before. The evidence is also lacking to show that the formation of the various Agikuyu political associations in the 1920's was indicative of resistance to social change. On the contrary, these associations did not resist social change. They simply advocated for a fair and just deal from the colonial administration.

However, while the second hypothesis of this study was not supported by the empirical data, the third hypothesis was supported by the data collected in the field and in the archives. The researcher had hypothesized that the interference with the core beliefs and practices of a people's culture inevitably leads to the rise of a resistance movement such as the one being dealt with in this study.

The researcher found that the core beliefs and practices of the Agikuyu were centered on the initiation rite. The initiation rite was conditio sine qua non of the teaching of facts of ultimate concerns such as marriage, the nature and destiny of man, the concepts of immortality, ancestral reverence, the accepted morals and ethics, and the role and responsibility of the individual in the community. These teachings were backed by very powerful sanctions and taboos. To interfere with the initiation rite would, therefore, mean interfering with the ground of being of a Mugikuyu.¹⁴ It would also lead to the disintegration of the society.

As this study has clearly shown the interference with the initiation rite, hence, with the centre of the Agikuyu core beliefs and practices, led to an

instant reaction, a revulsion, and a strong resistance to social change on that level of their culture. The researcher found that when the interference with the core beliefs and practices reached its climax in 1929 every cultural expression was utilized and dramatized to censor any change from taking place on the core level. The most notable cultural expressions and practices that were utilized included songs, land tales, belief in Ngai, sacredness of land, and the teachings of the ancestors. The dramatization of these cultural expressions, together with the events that followed, eventually led to the split of the Agikuyu into two antagonistic groups: the Agikuyu "Karing'a" and the Agikuyu "Kirore". The former formed the Agikuyu Karing'a movement, while the latter remained within the missionary churches and schools.

The major findings in this study as explained above have led to several conclusions. First, cultural borrowing takes place in a culture when a new innovation is demonstrably rewarding. However, whatever is borrowed is often times the external form of a custom, an idea, et cetera but not its meaning. The meaning is provided internally by the borrower. This study has demonstrated that the Karing'a movement freely

borrowed the western form of education and worship because both were rewarding to the movement. The western form of education was rewarding economically, socially and politically. It was perceived as a tool to politicize and educate the masses about the evils of colonialism and the need for self-determination. Equally it was a tool to help the masses survive economically in a hostile colonial situation. On the other hand, the western form of worship was perceived as a tool to maintain the continuity of worshipping the Agikuyu's Ngai of old, thereby promoting the Agikuyu cultural and religious heritage. It was also used as a tool to attract the Agikuyu a Kirore (the abolitionists) who had become disillusioned by the missionary churches and schools.

The second conclusion reached in this study is that two or more religious resistance movements can occur in a group during the time of rapid social change. Initially the movements might be religious in nature but the direction that each movement takes depends on the degree it utilizes the cultural and religious beliefs and practices inherent in the culture. In this study an attempt has been made to compare the Watu wa Mungu group¹⁵ and the Karing'a group. As the evidence shows Watu wa Mungu greatly utilized the

prophetic tradition inherent in the Agikuyu society while the Karing'a utilized various traditional beliefs and practices as discussed above. This researcher has concluded that when a religious resistance movement utilizes a very limited number of cultural and religious beliefs and practices inherent in the culture like the Watu wa Mungu did, the chances are that, that movement will resist change on all levels of culture and social change including the most flexible level - the peripheral level. Second, that movement will be essentially religious. But if a religious resistance movement utilizes as many cultural and religious beliefs and practices inherent in the culture like the Karing'a movement did, that movement will resist change only at the core level of culture and social change. Third, that movement will be essentially nationalistic in its attempt to safeguard what the group has achieved externally and internally on the peripheral and rationalization levels of culture and social and political change. The researcher has, therefore, concluded that the Karing'a movement was essentially a nationalist movement and not a christian movement per se.

The third conclusion in this study is that in

spite of the decline of the militant politics of the Karing'a movement the cultural significance of female circumcision is still a strongly held belief among the Agikuyu. Of all the informants interviewed for this study, only the abolitionist informants did not circumcize their daughters. The non-abolitionists still believe that to be a Mugikuyu one must be circumcized. A similar conclusion has been reached by Jocelyn Murray in her study on the female circumcision controversy among the Agikuyu in 1929. Out of the 385 girls she interviewed in Central Province and Embu District "forty one per cent ...described themselves as circumcized as against 59% uncircumcized ... [and that today] even those who are uncircumcized ... still recognize that in a certain sense the circumcized Kikuyu woman is the "real" adult woman."¹⁶

Fourthly, the development of the Karing'a movement can also be attributed to the traditional nature of the Agikuyu society. The Agikuyu had a decentralized social organization in which the freedom of the individual was encouraged and leadership was based on the age, the charisma, experience and the wisdom of the individual. This flexible social organization helped the Agikuyu to respond to change

positively. The social organization of the Karing'a movement was equally flexible as this study has demonstrated.

Lastly, the researcher has concluded that the Karing'a movement never advocated a return to "orthodox traditionalism" rather it advocated "progressive traditionalism." "Orthodox traditionalism" can be defined as those elements in a culture that resist change on all levels of culture change in the midst of inevitable forces of change. "Orthodox traditionalism" glorifies the past at the risk of destroying that past by the forces of change at work. The glorified past is often seen as a "Golden Past." This study has demonstrated that the Karing'a movement advocated "progressive traditionalism". "Progressive traditionalism" constitutes those elements in a culture that accept the inevitability of change on all levels of culture change including the core level and by so doing preserves the basic values of a people. The preservation of the basic values becomes a determining factor for controlling change. This makes "progressive traditionalism" flexible to change. By effectively utilizing "progressive traditionalism" inherent in the Agikuyu religion and culture and,

indeed, in the Agikuyu social organization, the Karing'a movement furthered modernity amongst the Agikuyu without making modernity look foreign and alienating.¹⁷ It also became one of the movements that ushered Kenya into a new era of modernity and nationhood.

In conclusion, then, the researcher would like to point out some of the major contributions of this study and some of the questions that this study has raised. First, the study of a movement like Karing'a which emerged out of a crisis situation can help us to substantiate the core basic values of a people's culture. This study provides rich resource for ascertaining the various cultural elements that people can utilize in a crisis situation in their attempt to protect and defend their basic values. Although this study has barely touched this important area of a people's core value system, it is hoped that other researchers interested in the study of African resistance and religious movements would take up this challenge. As this study has demonstrated, it is on the core level that a people will make very vital decisions including defying the authorities regardless of the consequences that might follow. Could the core values help us to explain the nature and dynamics of decision

making? If they could, won't the study of core values in African social and cultural systems help the African administrators and planners to make the right decisions in planning for development projects? This is one of the basic questions that this study raises. The researcher hopes that scholars in social sciences and other related areas will take up this question seriously.¹⁸

Second, this study no doubt has increased our understanding of some of the cultural, religious, and political dynamics of African resistance-cum-religious movements. These movements are not essentially religious as past studies have shown. Definitely this was not the case with the Karing'a movement. A comparative study of these movements would yield interesting data in understanding how each movement utilizes cultural and religious elements, what elements are utilized, why some are utilized while others are not, and how one can predict the direction that such a movement will take.

Third, it is hoped that this study will have a very practical value in offering a historical - anthropological dimension to religio-political resistance movements in Africa. This study has shown that there has been to-date much generalization about

the Karing'a movement. Similar movements should be studied to validate their true historical and anthropological nature.

Lastly, this study has raised several questions which require further research. First, could the modern African independent religious groups be considered as playing the role of maintaining nationalist or traditional cultural sentiments? For example, the African Orthodox Church has up-to-date maintained a very strong nationalist outlook. In fact, presently, this church is split between the moderates, that is, those who want to maintain their affiliation with the Greek Orthodox Church in Greece, and those who want to maintain their African 'independency'. Second, could the religio-political resistance movements in Africa be advocating what Apter calls "political religion?"¹⁹ Could what informants have called in this work "Karing'a religion" be, in fact, a manifestation of a political religion where religious, political and moral aims are considered as one and the same? Further research in this important area needs to be carried out.

Another area that could be investigated is the role of songs in the development of African Independency"

and African nationalism. This study has demonstrated that songs played a big role in the development of the Karing'a movement. However, a thorough study on traditional and modern African songs can yield a rich resource in understanding African value systems. Songs can also help us understand processes of social and culture change in Africa. A look at the Muthirigu dance-song and Olunguruone songs indicate, among other things, that Africans do not only sing for enjoyment. Their songs express historical events, basic values, myths and legends. They also turn to songs during a crisis situation. Collection of African traditional, modern and nationalist songs is not enough. What is needed is a thorough analysis of these songs. The researcher hopes that this study will help other researchers to carry out further research in this important area.

Finally, the researcher hopes that this study has made some contribution to our knowledge of the significance of the African heritage in modernizing African societies.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

¹0.1. Harrison Munyua, op.cit., James Beautah, op.cit.; Johanna Kunyiha, op.cit.; Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit.; and Joshua Muceru, op.cit.

²0.1. Bishop Arthur Gatung'u Gathuna, op.cit.

³For a detailed account on the Agikuyu folktales see Mwangi, Rose, Kikuyu Folktales: their nature and value; Routledge, Scoresby and Katherine, With A Prehistoric People, pp. 283-328 and Cagnolo, The Akikuyu: Their customs, traditions and folklore.

⁴Kenyatta, Facing Mt. Kenya, p.302.

⁵For details on the Christian Revival Movement see F.B. Welbourn, East African Christian, pp.141-151 and George K. Mambo "The Revival Fellowship (Brethren) in Kenya" in Kenya Churches Handbook, Barret, B. David (Eds) et al, pp.110-117.

⁶See Appendix III, song 1B.

⁷See Appendix II, part III, Stanza 7.

⁸See Appendix III, song 2B.

⁹Ibid., song 3B.

¹⁰0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit. and Stephano Wacira, op.cit.

¹¹0.1. Waira wa Kamau, op.cit.

¹²For a discussion on the Agikuyu prophetic tradition see Kenyatta, op.cit., p.xx and pp.232-233.

¹³0.1. Peter Gatabaki Mundati, op.cit., Njenga wa Kahira, op.cit., and Joshua Muceru, op.cit.

¹⁴For a detailed exposition on the concept of "ground of being" see the following works by Paul Tulich, Systematic Theology, Vols. I and II, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1951 and 1957 respectively; Dynamics of Faith, New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958, and Love, Power, and Justice, New York, Oxford University Press, 1960.

¹⁵For original information on the Watu wa Mungu see Kinyanjui, Elijah, "The Rise and Persecution of the Aroti Prophets, 1927-1948" in Kenya Churches Handbook, op.cit., pp.124-127.

¹⁶Murray, M. Jocelyn, "The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy, with Special reference to the Church Missionary Society, "Sphere of Influence", pp.335-356. See also Viva Magazine, Trend Publishers Ltd., Nairobi, August, 1978.

¹⁷For a detailed account on the role of traditionalism in social change see David E. Apter's article "The Role of Traditionalism in the Political Modernization of Ghana and Uganda" in Political Development and Social Change, (Eds) Finkle, and Gable, Richard W., New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966, pp. 65-82. See also Apter, David E., The Politics of Modernization, Chicago, The

University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 81-123 and Mair, Lucy, Anthropology and Social Change, London, The Athlone Press, 1969, passim.

¹⁸For a detailed treatment of core or primary values as tools in decision making see Pugh, George E., The Biological Origin of Human Values, New York, Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977.

¹⁹Apter, 1965, op.cit., pp.266-312.

APPENDIX ICEREMONIAL GOATS IN THEWARRIORS' AGE GROUP

<u>Name of the ceremonial goat</u>	<u>The purpose of the goat</u>
1. Mburi ya ndaka (the ochre's goat)	To allow the new warrior to decorate himself with red ochre during dances.
2. Mburi ya ucuru (the gruel goat)	To allow the warrior to eat with other warriors.
3. Mburi ya ithako (amusement goat)	To allow the warrior to join other warriors in amusements
4. Mburi ya rwimbo (the dance goat)	The warrior was allowed to dance with other warriors.
5. Mburi ya urogi wa airitu (the goat for love charms)	To receive special instructions in the art of casting love spells to girls especially those who had refused his advances.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6. Mburi ya kwirorera
(the spectator's goat) | To allow the warrior to watch the older warriors dancing before he could join them. |
| 7. Mburi ya njaga
(the nudity goat) | To permit the warrior to dance naked with bare-breasted girls. |
| 8. Mburi ya nda
(the entrails goat) | To allow the warrior to eat the entrails of cattle, sheep, and goats. |
| 9. Mburi ya mutwe/maitho
(the eyes' goat) | To permit the warrior to receive instructions on how to take eyes of slaughtered goat without bursting them. |
| 10. Mburi ya ita
(the war goat) | To welcome the warrior in the War Council. |

NB: The payments of the above goats depended on how wealthy the warrior's family was. Moreover, the warrior could take his time paying for these goats because the warriors remained in this group between 15-20 years.

APPENDIX IIMUTHIRIGU DANCE-SONGSECTION ONEPART ITHE ATTACK ON THE CHRISTIAN
CHURCH AND MISSION SCHOOLS¹Stanza 1

Tuhiu tunini njora- ini
 Nigetha tuhure Kanitha
 Hindi ni nginyu

(Little knives in their sheaths
 That we may fight the Church
 The time has come).

Stanza 2

Ndireciragia Jesu ni Ngai
 Kana Muru wa Ngai
 Riu ni nyonete
 Ni Muhindi kana mbica
 Kana Mahamedi.

(I thought Jesus was God
 or the Son of God
 I have now found

He was an Indian or
 a picture or (the prophet)
 Mohammed.

Stanza 3

Tukuina na marinda
 Na tukinye mwembe
 Kanitha gakiandika
 Gecunage miromo

(We shall dance in skirts
 And walk majestically
 When Athomi (readers) see us
 They will envy us).

Stanza 4

Mumenye kuri ugoro
 Naitibu ya Gikuyu
 Cukuru iri mucomba
 Irigutuika mbirira

(Listen the shocking news
 The youth of the Agikuyu
 Any school run by a whiteman
 Becomes like a graveyard).

PART II²ATTACK AGAINST THE MISSIONARIES
AND THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORSStanza 1

Rev. Calderwood³ nimubatithania
 Niathii akabatithie
 Nugu githaka-ini.

(Rev. Calderwood is missionary
 Let him go baptize
 Monkeys in the forest).

Stanza 2

Dagita Arthur ni muchiaru
 Na muka ni muchiaru
 Ndakora makiurania
 Mekuhiuhirio nuu?

(Dr. Arthur has given birth
 And his wife has given birth too
 I found them asking each other
 who will cater for us).

Stanza 3

Murebie turebie
 Toria turarebirie
 Murangoini kwa D.C.

Sing Muthirigu with pride
 Like we did

At D.C.'s office).

Stanza 4

Na D.C. nimuhake
 Nimuhake na irigu
 Niguo githaka githii

(The D.C. has been bribed
 He has been bribed
 with uncircumcised girls
 So that we may lose land).

Stanza 5

Baru ni muciaru
 Na muka ni muciaru
 Na mwari ni muciaru
 Nguria mukurorwo nuu?

(Rev. Barlow has given birth
 His wife has given birth
 And his daughter has given birth too
 Who, may I ask, will cater for them).

PART IIICOLONIAL OPPRESSION LAMENTED⁴Stanza 1

Ndaiguire ngitwo ta thaa
 kenda cia utuku
 Ngiuma nja na ruhiu rwa njora
 Ngira ndari yakwa
 Nengereria ngita.

(I heard being called at
 three o'clock in the night
 I came out with a sheathed sword
 I told my darling
 Give me my guitar).

Stanza 2

Ndoirwo ndoretio ya Nairobi⁵
 Andu aitu a nyumba
 Niki kiuru ta uguo?

(I was taken to Nairobi
 People of my household
 What is worse than this?)

Stanza 3

Wiritwo urute nguo mbere ya ciana
 Wikiritwo bingu
 Mbere ya mutumia
 Uroretio Nairobi

Uthii ukanyarirwo
 Njamba cia Gikuyu
 Uyu muthungu
 Tutikaiguana nake.

(You are asked to undress
 in the presence of children
 You are handcuffed
 In the presence of your wife
 You are taken to Nairobi
 There to be tortured
 Agikuyu warriors
 We shall never get along
 with the whiteman).

Stanza 4

Turerwo twathii kuohwo x 2
 Twathii gwacuhia mahiga

(We are told that we are going to jail
 Alas! So we are going to chop stones)

Stanza 5

Turerwo ni tukuohwo x 2
 Twathii tugakora
 Thingira wa aanake.

(We are threatened that
 we will be jailed
 But when we get there
 We find (it is) like the
 warriors house).

SECTION TWOPART ITHE ATTACK AGAINST THE ABOLITIONISTS⁷Stanza 1

Ndagitari ni muthungu
 D.C. ni muthungu
 Nawe ruriyo ngwaci⁸
 Uri wa kabira iriku?

(The doctor is a whiteman
 The D.C. is a whiteman
 Now, you "ruriyo ngwaci"
 What race are you?)

Chorus

Kwendwo, kwendwo
 Kwendwo, niukwendwo
 Gitanda nguruta ku?

(Loved, loved
 Loved, shall be
 But where will I get a bed?)

Stanza 2

Na Leakey ni muthungu
 Na Arthur ni muthungu
 Nawe Musa Kingethu⁹
 Wiwa kabira iriku?

(Leakey is a whiteman
 And Arthur is a whiteman
 Now you, Musa King'ethu
 What race are you?)

Stanza 3

Rigitari ni muthungu
 Ndithii no muthungu
 Nawe bunda King'ethu
 Uri wa kabira iriku?)

(The doctor is a whiteman
 D.C. is a whiteman
 Now you donkey, King'ethu
 What race are you?)

Stanza 4

Ungiona akuanitie mabuku
 Ndungiuga ena maheni

(If you see him (the abolitionist)
 carrying the holy books
 You cannot say he is a liar).

Stanza 5

Andu a kiroro ni mathecire kiroro
 Naumenye nimathecire
 Ngarau wa Kaigwa
 Athecire na itina

(The fingerprinters have
 been too conscientious
 In order you may know
 They have really fingerprinted
 Ngarau wa Kaigwa
 Fingerprinted with his buttocks).

Stanza 6

Gathoga ti muruu
 Na muka ti muruu
 Makagurana ku?

(Gathoga is not circumcised
 And his wife is not circumcised
 Where shall they marry?)

Stanza 7

Hondi! Karibu
 Nuu waria nja?
 Ta nyina wa kirigu
 Nierwo niahituke
 Tutiri uthoni nake

(Hondi! Welcome!
 Who talked outside?
 Sounds like the
 mother of kirigu
 Tell her to go away
 We have no marriage
 relationship with her).

Stanza 8

Na Jusufu ari na igiri
 Muthoni na Raeli x 2
 Nuu ukwamba kurua?

(Joseph has two uncircumcised girls
 Muthoni and Rachel x 2
 Who will be circumcised first?)

Stanza 9

Njiguite kinene
 Wangui¹⁰ wa Mwenda andu
 Aciarite magui

(I have heard great news
 Wangui daughter of
 lover of people
 Has given birth to puppies).

Stanza 10

Ndikanyua iria ria mikebe
 Tondu njiritwo
 Ni iria rigata
 Riumite nyondo cia Raheli¹¹

(I will never take tinned milk
 Because I was told
 It is the sour milk
 From Rachel's breasts).

Stanza 11

Raeli niacirite
 No Jusufu ndari na iria
 Era muka
 Ningugukama

(Rachel has given birth
 But Joseph has no milk
 So he says to his wife
 I will milk you).

Stanza 12

Kimui ena ihu
 Na muka ena ihu
 Magaciaranira hamwe
 Nuukahihiria
 Kimui na Wangeci?¹²

(Kimui is pregnant
 And his wife is pregnant
 They will give birth together
 Who will take care of
 Kimui and Wangeci).

PART IIATTACK ON THE AGIKUYU COLONIAL
CHIEFS AND CLERGY¹³Stanza 1

Knapp ni muthungu
Wanyoike ni wa muhiriga uriku?

(Rev. Knapp is a whiteman
What race is Rev. Wanyoike?)

Stanza 2

Andu othe moima coci
Bunda King'ethu iri batithia u?
Iri batithagia
nugu cia mutitu-ini.

(When everyone quit the church
Whom will the toothless donkey
baptise?
He will baptise the monkeys
of the forest).

Stanza 3

Waigua nugu githaka-ini
Ni Musa cieteraire
Athii agacibatithie

(When you hear the monkeys
in the forest barking
They are waiting for Musa
That he may go and baptise them).

Stanza 4

Twa thii na Kiambaa
Koinange¹⁴ ni muciaru
Mariamu ni muciaru
Tukwamba kuhiuriria uriku?

(We go to Kiambaa
Koinange has given birth
His wife, Mariam has
given birth too
Who shall we nurse first?)

Stanza 5

Waruhiu¹⁵ kumanyoko
Mbiyu kumanina
Ni ciana cia Mumbi
Woragithia Ngeretha!

(Chief Waruhiu!
You are a big fool!
Chief (Koinange) Mbiyu!
You are a big fool too!
For you have let the
British to kill the
children of Mumbi).

Stanza 6

Ingiri cira x 2
 Koinange na Waruhiu
 Mathikwo makiaragia

(If I had authority to judge x 2
 Koinange and Waruhiu
 would be buried alive).

Stanza 7

Mbiyu ari Ruraya
 Ni ciana cia Gikuyu
 Waingiria igoti-ini.

(Mbiyu (the son of Koinange)
 is in England
 And you, (Chief Koinange)
 take the children of
 Gikuyu to court).

Stanza 8

Muhoya¹⁶ na muka ni aciaru
 Marorania atiri
 Tukurugirwo nuu?

(Muhoya and his wife
 have given birth
 They are asking one another
 Who will cook for us?)

Stanza 9

Waruhiu na Wagathage
 Nimaciarite

Ndamatiga makiurania
Nu ukuonga?

(Chief Waruhiu and his wife,
Wagathage
Have given birth
I left them
Asking one another
Who will suck the milk?)

Stanza 10

Wanjau¹⁷ ni muciaru
Gatiti ni muciaru
Na Wanyoike ni muciaru
Nu ukumahiuhiria.

(Wanjau has given birth
His wife, Gatiti has given
birth too
Rev. Wanyoike has also given
birth
Who will care for them?)

Stanza 11

Koinange na Waruhiu
Riria Jomo Kenyatta agoka
Mukanengerwo muthuru
Mumurugire irio

(Koinange and Waruhiu

When Jomo Kenyatta comes home
You will be given women's skirts
And you will cook for him).

Stanza 12

Koinange na Biribo
Kenyatta wa Muigai oka
Mukehumba muthuru

(Koinange and Philip.¹⁸
When Kenyatta wa Muigai
Returns from England
You shall wear women's skirts).

SECTION THREEPART ITHE CONTEMPT FOR THE UNCIRCUMCISEDGIRLS AS A DEFENCE FORFEMALE CIRCUMCISION¹⁹Stanza 1

Ngwirwo ngure kirigu
 Na maitu ni muruu
 Riria mari riko-ini
 Kiriraga maitu atia

Chorus

Ukai, ukai x 3
 Nyumba ya Mumbi
 Uguo ithui nitwarega

(I am asked to marry
 uncircumcised girl
 My mother is circumcised
 When both of them are in
 the kitchen
 What will she be telling my mother?)

Chorus

(Come, come x 3
 The house of Mumbi
 This we reject).

Stanza 2

Ngwirwo ngure kirigu
 Na maitu na baba niaruu
 Kiritaga maitu atia?

(I am asked to marry
 an uncircumcised girl
 My mother and father
 are circumcised
 How will she address
 my mother).

Stanza 3

Kirigu ni kiaganu x 2
 Mwana wa mieri iri
 Gigatanukira thanu

(The uncircumcised girl
 is wicked
 She feeds a two month
 old baby with hard maize).

Stanza 4

Ngwirwo ngure kirigu
 Ti itheru na tinguthi
 Mburi itari ngirime
 Ndirutaga mambura

(I am asked to marry
 an uncircumcised girl
 I am neither joking nor
 being proud

But who has ever
heard of uninitiated goat
Being used for divine services?)

Stanza 5

Ningwigurira kimwe x 2
Mirani ya Naitibu²⁰
Thiguku ya kinya
Ngakenia ihii na kio

(I will marry an uncircumcised girl
My native warriors
When Christmas comes
I shall give her to the
uncircumcised boys to
enjoy her).

Stanza 6

Kirigu, kirigu ti kiuru
Tiga ni mitugo miuru kinayo

(There is nothing wrong with
an uncircumcised girl
Except she has bad behaviour).

Stanza 7

No menye ni kirimu
Kiimwo ni iri na iriri
Mwana eguitwo ni marigu
Gikagwa na mitheko

(Note how extremely stupid she is,
the uncircumcised girl
A baby chokes with banana
And she rolls with laughter).

Stanza 8

No menye ni gikigu
Kiimwo ni iri na iriri
Ati giguthii mugunda
Gikahaica miariki

(Note how extremely stupid she is,
the uncircumcised girl
She goes to the garden
There she climbs on
castor oil trees).

Stanza 9

Ningwigurira kimwe x 2
Kiaremwo ni kurima
Kihaicage miariki

(I am going to marry one x 2
If she is unable to work
in the garden
She will be climbing
on castor oil trees).

Stanza 10

Kirigu ni gikiguu
Ndiragitirie tai

Kirandehera mukwa

(An uncircumcised girl is
really stupid
I asked her for a tie
She gave me a strap).

Stanza 11

Buu, muruki
Muruki x 3
Muingi wa irigu ikihituka

(Buu! The terrible odour
Of the uncircumcised
girls passing).

Stanza 12

Nduire njururaga ta ngui yanjangiri
Na riria ndoka mucii
Ngerwo ngure kirigu

(I have been wondering
like a homeless dog
And when I come home
I am told to marry
an uncircumcised girl).

Stanza 13

Nguthii kuria baba
Nguthii kuria maitu

Kana kirigu
Nikionaga mweri

(I will go ask my father
I will go ask my mother
Whether an uncircumcised
girl can menstruate).

Stanza 14

Nikworirio kana
Irua riithie na mbere
Kenyatta wa Muigai
Akioya guoko na iguru
Akiuga tutigatiga kuruithia

(It was queried whether
Circumcision should go on
Kenyatta wa Muigai
Raised his hand
And said
We shall never stop circumcising).

PART IIIN DEFENCE OF MUTHIRIGU²¹Stanza 1

Kworirio nuu na uu
 Maraina Muthirigu
 Musa Kabuteini
 Akioya guoko na iguru

(They are asking
 Who and who are dance-singing Muthirigu
 Musa Kabuteini raised his hand).

Stanza 2

Kurorio nuu na uu
 Wahuraga ngengere
 Timothy Wainaina
 Akianirira ni nii

(They are asking
 Who and who are
 playing (Muthirigu) music
 Timothy Wainaina loudly said
 I am the one).

Stanza 3

Mwendi kunjuraga
 Nierwo anjurage
 Nike niakoragwo

Ni ruhiu rwa Jehova.

(Whoever wants to kill me
Let him kill me
But let him know
He will be killed
With the sword of "Jehovah").

Stanza 4

Turerwo ni ruhinge
Na ringi ni ruhinge
Nuu urathomire
Ngathiti ya kuruhinga

(We are told it (Muthirigu)
has been banned
And again it has been banned
Who read in the newspapers
That it is banned).

Stanza 5

Ii rukwirwo ni rwa umbi
Ruru ti rwa umbi
Nirwa muiguithania ithui Agikuyu

(They say it (Muthirigu) is
a seductive song
But it is not
Rather it is a song to
unite all Agikuyu).

Stanza 6

Ndoririo nuu na uu
 Cuthu wa Gatherere
 Akioya guoko na iguru

(They asked who is (the
 leader of Muthirigu)
 Cuthu wa Gatherere
 Raised his hand).

Stanza 7

Ndoririo nuu na uu
 Wainaga Muthirigu
 Mirani ya naitibu
 Ikioya moko na iguru

(They asked who and who
 Were singing Muthirigu
 The Agikuyu youth
 Raised their hands).

Stanza 8

Naitibu ndikoherwo x 2
 Tondu niyo yoimburire
 Hitho hithe!

(The Agikuyu youth
 will never be forgiven
 Because they let out
 the hidden secret)²²

PART IIIIN DEFENCE OF THE AGIKUYU
RELIGION AND CULTURE²³Stanza 1

Baba ni muruu
 Maitu ni muruu
 Ndigacenjia ndini
 Tonde ndi Mugikuyu Karing'a

Chorus

Kirima x 3
 Kirima giki x 2
 Twitaga Kirinyaga

or

Kirima giki gia Kenya
 Twitaga Kirinyaga

(My father is circumcised
 My mother is circumcised
 I will never change my
 (traditional) religion
 Because I am a Mugikuyu
 Karing'a)

(The mountain x 3
This our mountain x 2
We call Mt. Kirinyaga

or

This mountain x 3
This our mountain of Kenya
We call Mt. Kirinyaga).

Stanza 2

Ino ni ndini ya Mugikuyu
Twaheirwo niwe Mwene Nyaga
Tutigatiga onari

(This religion of the Agikuyu
Was given to us by Mwene Nyaga
We shall never give it up!)

Stanza 3

Gikua kihare
Nikio mboburu ya Gikuyu
Na mwere wa mukombi
Nimucere wa Gikuyu

(A well roasted yam
Is the bread for the Gikuyu
And the millet
Is the rice for the Gikuyu²⁴).

Stanza 4

Kaba ngure kanini

Ka rika ria Ndege
 Tondū nikarute
 Mitugo ni nyina

(I would rather marry a
 young circumcised girl
 Of the Ndege age-group²⁵
 For she has been taught
 the traditions and the
 customs (of the Agikuyu)
 By the mother).

Stanza 5

Ndikinyaga na mwembe
 Ta mirani ya Gikuyu
 Cai wa thaa thita
 Nyuaga gwitu mucii

(I will walk with pride
 Like Agikuyu warriors
 The twelve o'clock tea
 I drink at home).

Stanza 6

Ni ngutigana na urata wothe
 Urata uria ngutigia
 No wakwa na Jehova.

(I am going to break
 all friendships

The only friendship
I shall retain
Is between me and Jehovah).

Stanza 7

Mwathani tuohere
Tiwe turarega
Ni kirore twarega.

Lord, Ngai forgive us
We are not rejecting you
Rather we are rejecting
Those who tell us to reject
Our religion and culture).

PART IVIN DEFENCE OF GIKUYULAND²⁶Stanza 1

Tutiri uthu na mundu
 Muthuri na munyendi
 Mundu ndi uthu nake
 No mwendia wa githaka

Chorus

Githaka x 3
 Githaka giki x 2
 Twatigiirwo ni Iregi

(I have no enmity against anybody
 Those who hate or love me
 The only person I have enmity against
 Is the one who sells our land).

(This land x 3
 This land x 2
 Was left to us by
 our ancestors).

Stanza 2

Ngurio nduire ku
 Na ringi nduire ku

Nduire Gikuyu
Magiri makionaga

(They ask me
Where I was circumcised
I was circumcised in Gikuyuland
Huge crowds watching).

Stanza 3

Nitwendirio mbia
Ti itheru na tinguthi
Hamwe na githaka
Ni Thoroko wa Njahi

(We have been sold
This is not a joke or arrogance
Our land has also been sold
By the collaborators).²⁷

PART VIN PRAISE OF JOMO KENYATTA
AND THE KCA LEADERSHIP²⁸Stanza 1

Tukuina na ngengere²⁹ x 2
 Jomo agigoka
 Oka,
 Tukaina na Kinanda

(We will use bells
 Before Jomo comes home
 When he comes back
 We shall use accordion).

Stanza 2

Agikuyu kenai
 Tondu Jomo Kenyatta
 Ni muthure ni munene
 wa Ruraya
 Atuike Baruthi wa Agikuyu

(Agikuyu be happy
 Because Jomo Kenyatta
 Has been chosen by
 the King of England
 To be the Governor
 of the Agikuyu).

Gathaai athuri a KCA
Tondu wa gutuma Jomo Ruraya
Ni Munene kuri Baruthi wa Kenya
Tondu niamucindite

(Praise the elders of KCA
for sending Jomo to Britain
He is greater than the
Governor of Kenya
Because he has defeated him).

NOTES TO APPENDIX II

¹Sources for these stanzas are as follows:-

- Stanza 1 - Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit.
- Stanza 2 - Kuria J. Mungai, "The African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa" in The Story of My Church, edited by David Shenk, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi, December, 1973, p.44.
- Stanza 3 - Wanjau, Agikuyu, Mau Mau, na Wiyathi, p.54.
- Stanza 4 - Ibid., p.54.

²Sources for these stanzas are:-

- Stanza 1 - Paul Mathenge, op.cit. (0.1)
- Stanza 2 - Kagia Ringu wa Githiri, op.cit. (0.1)
- Stanza 3 - Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit. (0.1)
- Stanza 4 - Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit. (0.1)
- Stanza 5 - Waruiru, "Female Initiation Controversy at CSM Tumutumu," p.25.

³Rev. Calderwood was a missionary at Tumutumu, Nyeri.

⁴Sources for these stanzas are:-

- Stanzas 1-3 Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit., (0.1)

⁵This refers to Nairobi jail.

⁶This stanza seem to indicate that when the young men were jailed for apparently singing Muthirigu they rejoiced when they got there because they found their comrades there - so, the struggle continued.

⁷Sources:

Stanzas 1-4 and 7-8

- Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, op.cit.
(0.1)

Stanzas 5 and 10

- Hannah Nyakarura Kang'ethe,
op.cit., (0.1)

Stanza 6 - Paul Mathenge, op.cit., (0.1)

Stanza 11 - Wanyoike, An African Pastor,
p.102.

Stanza 12 - Kuria, J. Mungai in The Story
of my Church, op.cit., p.44.

⁸Ruriyo ngwaci - This is a creeping vine that produces sweet potatoes. Here it is used metaphotically to refer to the abolitionists as parasites.

⁹Musa Gitau nicknamed King'ethu was a Church minister at Thogoto Mission. He was a very strong supporter of the missionaries. He had also been nicknamed a donkey. See Stanza 2, Part I.

¹⁰According to Ephastus Nguya, Wangui was an uncircumcised prostitute.

¹¹According to Hannah Nyakarura, Kang'ethe, Rachel and Joseph were abolitionists at Kambui, Kiambu. See Stanza 11.

¹²According to Ephastus Nguya, Kimui and Wangeci were abolitionists at Tumutumu, Nyeri.

¹³Sources:

Stanza 1, 2 and 10

- Wanyoike, op.cit., p.103

Stanza 3 and 11

- Kuria, J. Mungai, op.cit.
p.44.

Stanza 4 - Njenga Kahira, op.cit. (0.1)

Stanza 5 - Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit.
(0.1)

Stanza 6, 7 and 8

- Paul Mathenge, op.cit., (0.1)

Stanza 9 - Hannah N. Kang'ethe op.cit.
(0.1)

Stanza 12 - Johanna Kamau, op.cit. (0.1)
Samuel Mathu, op.cit. (0.1)

¹⁴According to Joshua Muceru (0.1), Chief Koinange was an abolitionist but his son, Mbiyu influenced him in becoming a Karing'a around 1939. Chief Koinange was arrested and detained during Mau Mau War. He died shortly after he returned from detention in 1961.

¹⁵Chief Waruhiu was a very strong supporter of the

abolitionists. He was assassinated by the Mau Mau freedom fighters in October, 1952. Immediately after his assassination, a state of emergency was declared in Kenya.

¹⁶Muhoya was a Chief and a strong supporter of the abolitionists in Nyeri District.

¹⁷Wanjau, and his wife, Gatiti were abolitionists at Kambui, Kiambu. See Wanyoike, op.cit., p.103.

¹⁸Philip James Karanja was the Secretary of Kikuyu Association. See Rosberg and Nottingham, The Myth of Mau Mau, p.31.

¹⁹Sources:

Stanzas 1, 2 and 12

- Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit.
(0.1)

Stanza 3-11 Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, op.cit.,
(0.1)

Stanza 13 - Hannah N. Kang'ethe, op.cit.,
(0.1)

Stanza 14 - Wanyoike, op.cit., p.102
and also from informants.

²⁰"Naitibu" - The usage of this term in this song means the "Native people" or the Agikuyu youth. Note, for example, that it is used with a qualifying noun, Mirani. Mirani is a corruption of the Masaai word, Moran, the warriors.

- ²¹Stanzas 1-8 - Nancy Wanjiru, op.cit., (0.1)
 Ephantus Nguya, op.cit., (0.1)
 Ibrahim Njoroge, op.cit., (0.1)

²²The "hidden secret" that is being referred to here is what the Agikuyu believed was the colonialists' and the missionaries' plan to abolish female circumcision in order they could exterminate the Agikuyu Karing'a, and thereby, take over their land. See the "land and cultural" tales in Chapter Five.

²³Sources:

- Stanzas 1 and 4
 - Hannah N. Kang'ethe, op.cit., (0.1)
- Stanza 2 - Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit., (0.1)
- Stanza 3 - Ephantus Nguya, op.cit., (0.1)
- Stanza 5 - Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, op.cit., (0.1)
- Stanza 6 - Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p.122.
- Stanza 7 - Peter Gatabaki Mundati, 21/1/79, op.cit., (0.1)

²⁴This stanza attempts to mock the European culture vis-a-vis the Agikuyu culture. The stanza praises the Agikuyu traditional food as opposed to European food.

²⁵Ndege age-group was circumcised in and around 1927/28. The idea here is the youthfulness

of the girl.

²⁶Sources:

Stanzas 1-3 Nancy Wanjiru Tiara, op.cit., (0.1)

²⁷Thoroko wa Njahi is an euphemism for collaborators.

²⁸Sources:

Stanzas 1 - Rutha wa Muthoni, op.cit., (0.1)
 Joshua Muceru, op.cit., (0.1)
 Johanna Kamau, op.cit., (0.1)

Stanzas 2 and 3
 - Kuria, op.cit., p.44.

²⁹"Ngengere" - This refers to the traditional musical instrument used in Muthirigu.

APPENDIX IIIUNITY SONGS

1A

HOYAI MA, THAITHAI MA.

Kenyatta ni agathiruo
 Ni ciana ona autumia
 Riria maathire kwoheruo Yatta.

Hoyai ma
 Thaithai ma
 Ni amu Ngai no uria wa tene.

Kenyatta mwendwo ni iri
 Mutangiri ruriri
 Ngai witu aromurathima.

Muiritu umwe ni akuire
 Ni undu wa kuhuhita
 Ni undu wa kuria nyama cia mbogo.

Wendani uria ndonire
 Wa ciana na atumia
 Riria maathire kwoheruo Yatta.

Wendani uria ndonire
 Wa ciana na atumia
 Mboco yagwa thi makenyurana.

Thimu ni yahurirwo
 Yuumite Githunguri
 Ya kuuria kana ni twakinyire.

Na ithui ni twacokirie
 Kieha kiria twi nakio
 Kia Josephine riria athikagwo.

Maithori maitiikire
 Hindi iria tweyoneire
 Nguo ikineo mwari wa nyina.

Muthungu umwe ni okire
 Na andu ake na icakuri
 Twona agithikwo no ta itaruru.

Mbiyu muuhigia ciana
 Tumuhocere muno
 Nginya akona mumuteithiriria.

Maithori maitikire
 Twanina thiku ithatu
 Twona ciana ikiriranira.

1B

PRAY OH, BESEECH TRULY

Kenyatta was praised
 By the women and children
 When they were taken to Yatta,
 to be imprisoned there.

Pray on, beseech truly,
 For Ngai is the same one of
 old times.

Kenyatta who is loved by all
 The protector of our nation
 May Ngai bless him.

One lady died because of bloating
 Due to eating buffalo meat.

Much love and unity I witnessed
 Of those women and children
 Who shared every beanseed that
 dropped down.

A telegram was delivered
 From Githunguri
 Requesting whether we had
 arrived safely.

And we replied that our only sorrow
 Was with the burial of Josephine.

Much tears dropped from our eyes

When we witnessed
Her clothes being given to her sister.

One European came with his servants
and shovels
And we saw her burried like bags.

Mbiyu, the sharpener of our children
Let us pray for him
Till he finds a maintainer.

We cried much after three days
When we saw all our children
crying together.

2A

TWARIRAGIRA KENYATTA

Gikuyu ungiurio ungiuga atia?

Gikuyu ungiurio ungiuga atia?

No njuge Kenya ni iitu

Twatigiirwo ni Mwenenyaga.

Twariragira Kenyatta

Twariragira Kenyatta

Atongorie bururi uyu

Nigetha tuume ukombo-ini.

Muthungu ungiurio ungiuga atia?

Muthungu ungiurio ungiuga atia?

No njuge ndi mutunyani

Ndarehiruo ni utunyani.

Mubia ungiurio ungiuga atia?

Mubia ungiurio ungiuga atia?

No njuge ndi muhenania

Ndarehirwo ni uhenania.

Muhindi ungiurio ungiuga atia?

Muhindi ungiurio ungiuga atia?

No njugire ndi mubiashara

Ndarehirwo ni biashara.

Nyakinyua mutiuge ngemi

Nyakinyua mutiuge ngemi

Tukunguire wiyathi

Ni getha tuume ukombo-ini.

2B

WE WEPT FOR KENYATTA

Gikuyu if you were asked what would you say?
 Gikuyu if you were asked what would you say?
 I would say that Kenya is ours
 Bequeathed to us by Mwenenyaga.

We wept for Kenyatta
 We wept for Kenyatta
 to lead this country
 Out from slavery.

If you European were asked what would you say?
 If you European were asked what would you say?
 I would say I am a robber
 And I was brought by robbery.

If you Priest were asked what would you say?
 If you Priest were asked what would you say?
 I would say I am a liar
 And that lying brought me here.

If you Asian were asked what would you say?
 If you Asian were asked what would you say?
 I would say I am a businessman
 And I cam here for buisness.

Honourable old women sing the joy trill
 Honourable old women sing the joy trill
 To celebrate freedom
 That will lead us from slavery.

3A

TUGAKENA MUNO

Twoimire Olenguruone ta thaa ithatu
Tugikinya Yatta ta thaa thita.

Tugakena muno
Nyumba ya Mumbi
igicokerio ithaka.

Tweragwo narua na narua na ihenya
Kai mutekumenya mwi mabuthu.

Muthungu ni okire na akirugama
Mbere-ini ya muingi amahure mbica.

Ciugo cia Kenyatta ni ciagiririe
Undu uria wendaga gwikwo ni ageni.

Twoimire Nakuru ta thaa ithatu
Tugikinya Thika ta thaa thita
Tukiheo maai marebe atatu
Ucio niguo cai twegagurire.

Mitheko ndonire turi Gicuka
Tugithekereruo ni ciana njeru
Tonde cieciragia twathii guthira
Tutigacoka kwonuo Kenya ringi.

Tweragwo haruka narua na ihenya
Tugicokereria indo igiteagwo
Tweragwo haraka narua na ihenya
Mutigetigire mworagia ni ri.

3B

WE SHALL BE VERY PLEASED

We left Olenguruone at around nine o'clock
And arrived in Yatta at around noon

We shall be very pleased
When the House of Mumbi get
their land back.

We were hurried out by order and told
Don't you know that you are criminals?

A white man came and stood in front
of the people
In an attempt to photograph them.

The words of Kenyatta helped to stop
The strangers from what they wanted to do.

We left Nakuru at around nine
And got to Thika at around noon
We were supplied with three tinfuls of water
Which acted as our tea for breakfast.

I saw much laughter when we arrived at Nairobi
White children laughing at us
For they thought we were on our way to death
So that we'd never be seen again in Kenya.

We were ordered out quickly

Recollecting our belongings which
were being dispersed
We were ordered to pack in a hurry
And told don't worry you had been
longing for these troubles.

APPENDIX FOURTABLE ONEHYMNS WITH THE THEME OF HEAVENAS A PERMANENT TERRITORY

<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>	<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>
12	2	49	all
13	all	50	3,4
16	all	51	6,7
19	all	52	3,4,5,6
20	1	53	4
22	all	54	4
24	4	57	1
26	all	58	2
27	all	59	all
29	all	60	all
30	all	61	all
33	all	62	4
31	5	64	3
37	all	69	2,7,8
38	1 and 8	70	4,5
39	5 and 6	71	4
40	3,4,5	72	5
41	3	73	3
43	3	77	all
44	4	78	1,3
47	4,6	80	2
48	all	81	3,4

<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>	<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>
82	5	129	2, 3, 4
86	3	132	3, 4
87	3	134	4
89	4	135	4
92	all	138	5, 6
93	all	139	4
95	1	140	4
98	all	141	all
104	1, 2	146	3
105	2, 3, 4	147	all
106	all	148	2, 3, 5
109	3	150	4
111	all	151	6
112	all	152	3
113	all	153	2
114	all	154	3
115	all	155	all
116	all	156	1
117	all	158	3, 4
118	1, 4	160	1
119	all	161	4
122	all	162	all
123	4	164	all
124	4	165	all
125	all	166	4
126	1, 3	167	3, 4
127	all	168	4
128	1, 4	169	4

<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>	<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>
170	all	184	1
171	6	185	2,5
173	2,3	186	2,3
174	all	187	3
175	2,6	191	all
177	1,2	196	1,2
178	3	197	1,4
179	5	198	1,2,3,4
182	4,5	200	7
183	1,22	201	4
		202	2,3,4

TABLE TWO

SUPPLEMENTARY HYMNS AND

CHORUSES ADDED IN 1956

WITH A THEME OF HEAVENLY STATE

<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>	<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>
1	5	16	1,3
3	3,4,5,6	17	5
5	2,3	20	4
6	2,4	23	4
7	2,3,4	26	3
8	5	28	3
9	2	29	all
12	4	30	4
13	5	32	4
14	2	33	3

<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>	<u>Hymn No.</u>	<u>Stanza</u>
34	5	52	all
36	all	55	6
37	3,4	56	3
38	all	59	4
45	all	60	1
46	5	C2	all
50	all	C20	all
51	all	C25	all

G L O S S A R Y

- gi - the ancestors.
- gi na aagu - from the time immemorial.
Cf. Ndemi na Mathathi.
- gkari (sing.);
gkaris (pl.) - a constable; a retainer;
an African constable during
the colonial era.
- gkete (sing.);
gkete (pl.) - a gourd used to put sour
milk.
- gkthambio - Medicine used to protect
the initiates from evil
spirits, fear, and sexual
temptations during one of
the Mambura rituals.
- gkthaka (sing.);
gkthaka (pl.) - A piece of land.
- gkthuku - Measles.
- gkugwo - to be hospitable; to kindly
welcome somebody in one's
home.
- gkuru - The heavens; above the sky;
beyond the clouds.
- Ira - Magic powder. See Leakey,
Southern Kikuyu before
1903, Vol.III, p.XXXIV.
Hobley in his Bantu Beliefs
and Magic calls it "white
diatomaceous earth," p.83.
- Ithemba - This was a feast given to a
man after one of his children

- was circumcised. The feast was given by his friend. It consisted of beer, traditional gruel and foods. A similar feast called Itega was given by women to their women friends
- Itimu (sing.); - the spear.
Matimu (pl.)
- Itwanda - A hyponotising magic to chase evil spirits away.
- Ituika - A secret ceremony that was performed when one moiety was taking over the leadership from the other moiety; that which cuts into two; gutuika - to get cut.
- Kabete - The traditional name for Southern Kiambu.
- Karega - The one who refuses. This word is used here figuratively to refer to those who refused to take the oath.
- Kiara (sing.); - A place where manure and
Ciara (pl.) rubbish from the homestead were dumped; a manure heap near a homestead; a finger.
- Kiama (sing.); - A traditional council where
Ciama (pl.) elders met to discuss community affairs.
- Kibiru or Mubiru - Vangueria acutiloba.
tree
- Kihii (sing.); - an uncircumcised boy.
Ihii (pl.)
- Kigamba (sing.); - A bell with rattles. The
Ciigamba (pl.) rattles are put inside a tin. The bell is worn around the leg by the dancer. As he moves the leg, the bell makes a rattling sound.

- Kihingo (sing.);
Ihingo (pl.) - A large homestead where several people from different lineages and clans could live together. Such homesteads were common in Southern Kiambu during the period of migration in 18th and 19th centuries; a gate at the entrance of a homestead.
- Kinandu (sing.);
Inandu (pl.) - A gourd containing castor oil or lamb's oil. This oil was used to smear on the body to make it look shiny.
- Kipande (Swahili) - This was an identification document that was introduced by the colonial government in 1919. The document contained such information as the person's ethnic community, the clan, the circumcision age set, the district, the name of the employer, and the nature of employment. The document was put in a metal box. The Africans were forced to carry this document on their necks.
- Kirigu (sing.);
Irigu (pl.) - an uncircumcised girl.
- Kiumiri (sing.);
Ciumiri (pl.) - A boy or a girl who has just been circumcised and is undergoing treatment on his genital organs where he was cut.
- Kirore - This is a corruption of the Swahili word "Kidole" which means a finger.
- Kumanina (Swahili) - An abusive word which literally means the genital organs of

one's mother. Sometimes it means a fool.

- Kumanyoko (Swahili) - It means the same as "Kumanina."
- Mambere - The first readers (Athomi) to go to the mission schools. It comes from the verb "mbere" (the first). It also means the confused lot whose language and manners of behavior are not understandable. One of my informants, Kahuho told me that it was coined from the biblical story of the house of Babel, hence, the 'confused lot'.
- Mambura - Divine services and rituals.
- Maturanguru - The leaves from a woody looking herb up to 6ft. high called Maturanguru tree (Vernonia holstii). The elders of the council of Old Age used to carry Maturanguru leaves for ceremonial purposes. See Leakey, The Southern Kikuyu before 1903, op.cit., p.1313.
- Mahinga (pl.); Kihinga (sing.) - Low-growing shrubs. The roots from these shrubs were used to make medicine to prevent a woman from having menstrual period. See Leakey, op.cit., p.1325.
- Maina - One of the two moieties in the Agikuyu political structure. According to Kenyatta, this moiety was responsible for building the traditions of democracy in the Agikuyu nation.

- Mbari - a lineage or lineages.
- Mburi - a goat or goats.
- Menjo - The ritual performed after the neophytes had been circumcised and were about to go back to their respective homesteads.
- Mubiru - *Vangueria acutiloba*. The wood of this tree was used to construct a cattle enclosure of a homestead. See Leakey, op.cit., p.1338.
- Mucii (sing.);
Micii (pl.) - a homestead
- Muciiri (sing.);
Aciiri (pl.) - a judge
- Muciarwo (sing.);
Aciarwo (pl.) - One who has been ceremoniously born with a goat; the one who is born; a blood brother.
- Mugiro (sing.);
Migiro (pl.) - A moral code; a prohibition cf. thahu (taboo)
- Mugunda (sing.);
Migunda (pl.) - a plot of land; a farm.
- Mugumo (sing.);
Migumo (pl.) - *Ficus natalensis*; a fig tree. This was a sacred tree of the Agikuyu. It was literally used as a public shrine. For further details see Leakey, op.cit., p.1329.
- Muguri (sing.);
Aguri (pl.) - One who buys; the buyer.

- Yuhingo - A period in which no boys could get circumcised. During this period a boy of about ten years old was used to ceremoniously prohibit any further circumcision until he was of circumcision age. During the Muhingo period, girls were allowed to get circumcised without the boys.
- Muhiriga (sing.); - a clan.
Mihiriga (pl.)
- Muhoi (sing.); - a landless person; a beggar; a
Ahoi (pl.) tenant on someone else's land.
- Muhonoki (sing.); - The saved one who claims
Ahonoki (pl.) Jesus Christ is his "personal" Saviour.
- Muiritu (sing.); - An circumcised girl; a
Airitu (pl.) young unmarried girl.
- Mukurwe (sing.); - Albizia gummifera. The wood
Mikurwe (pl.) from this tree was used for firewood and for making beehives and troughs for cattle. See Leakey, op.cit., p.1329.
- Muramati (sing.); - One who inherents his father;
Aramati (pl.) the inheritor. A trustee of family holdings, consulted by all members of the family in matters related to family land and other holdings.
- Murathi (sing.); - a prophet; a seer; one who
Arathi (pl.) prophecies.
- Murerema - Basella alba. A cree-
ping herb. It was used to make medicine to cure sterility in women. For further details see Leakey, op.cit., p. 1305.

- Mithia (sing.);
 Mithia (pl.) - One who circumcises; the circumciser.
- Mataathi - Clansena anisata.
- Mataathi - leaves from the shrubs of Clansena anisata. The leaves from this shrub were ceremoniously carried by the elders of the Council of Two Goats or, Kiama kia Mburi Igiri also known as Kiama kia Mataathi.
- Mamaiyu - Olea Africana; African Olive tree.
- Mthamaki (sing.);
 Mthamaki (pl.) - A wise leader; a leader who has a lot of wisdom; traditional Agikuyu leaders.
- Mthoni (sing.);
 Mthoni (pl.) - a marriage-in-law; one who is related to you by marriage.
- Mthuri (sing.);
 Mthuri (pl.) - A married man; one who selects wisely.
- Mtiri (sing.);
 Mtiri (pl.) - One who sponsors a neophyte for circumcision; an adviser to the neophyte; a god parent in modern usage; a supporter.
- Mutunguru - Mitra gyna rubrostipulata.
- Mutumia (sing.);
 Mutumia (pl.) - A married woman; one who keeps secrets.
- Muuma (sing.);
 Muuma (pl.) - the traditional oath; any oath.

- Muma andu - a philanthropist;
a generous giver;
a humanitarian.
- Mwanake (sing.);
Aanake (pl.) - A circumcised man; a young
unmarried man; unmarried
man of any age.
- Mwangi - One of the two moieties of
the Agikuyu political system.
This moiety is alleged to have
overthrown the despotic
leadership of Gikuyu, the
"King" of the Agikuyu.
- Mwendia (sing.);
Endia (pl.) - The one who sells; a seller.
- Mwendia Ruhiu - One who sells his big knife;
a panga; (figuratively) a
playboy or a lover. A man who
was generally kept by a lover
to take care of her homestead
and other social and sexual
needs.
- Mwere - Bulrush millet; pennisetum
typhoides; a traditional
food for the Agikuyu.
- Ndemi na Mathathi - From the time immemorial; cf.
Aagu na Aagu.
- Ndugira - Traditional ear-rings made of
the maize stock.
- Ndundu - a committee; an inner group;
a caucus.
- Ndungata - a servant; servants.
- Ndurume - a lamb; lambs.
- Ndorothi - A spear made of stick. This
spear was used to thrw over
the fig tree by the neophytes.

- Ngoma - a spirit; spirits of the dead. Today this term has become associated with the Christian Devil.
- Nguru - the would-be neophytes; sometimes it means the songs that were sung by would-be neophytes; cf. Irugu.
- Njahi - Bonavist beans; lablab niger.
- Njama - warriors.
- Njohi - traditional beer; any beer.
- Njugu - *Cajanus cajan*, Kikuyu peas.
- Nyakeru - white people; the colonialists.
- Nyumba - a house; a sub-lineage.
- Riika (sing.);
Mariika (pl.) - an age group.
- Rugongo (sing.);
Ng'ongo (pl.) - a ridge.
- Ruhiu (sing.);
Hiu (pl.) - a big knife; a panga.
- Ruthuku - magical medicine used to bless the ground on which Matuumo songs were sung.
- Shamba (sing.);
Mashamba (pl.) - A Swahili word for a big garden; a farm; a plot of land.
- Thahu (sing.);
Mathahu (pl.) - a taboo.

- Thumu - manure; poison.
- Tiri - the soil; figuratively it means the land.
- Ugimbi/Mugimbi - Finger millet; eleusine cora cana.
- Uuki - honey.
- Njohi ya uuki - honey beer.
- Wobici - the office.
- Wobici ya Tiri - "The land office." This phrase is used here to mean those who had taken the oath.

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Since there are no primary sources on the Karing'a movement, the following bibliography has been divided into four sections. The first section lists works on the Agikuyu; the second section lists works on Kenya; the third section lists works on religion, church and theology; and the last section lists general sources. In addition, there is a section on newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, archival materials and the informants.

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ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

One of the weaknesses underlying the archival sources in this thesis is that a lot of material related to the female circumcision controversy of 1929-1930 was not available from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) archives. At the time the researcher was carrying out the research, PCEA archives were closed to researchers. The PCEA authorities were in the process of microfilming the archival materials. Second, while the Kenya National Archives contain interesting materials, most of it is official in content. However, the researcher was able to utilize some of that material as indicated here below.

SOURCES FROM THE KENYA NATIONAL
ARCHIVES, NAIROBI

FILE NUMBERS

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KNA/Legco Debates/1928

KNA/Legco Debates/1934

KNA/DC/KBU/1/193/1926

KNA/PC/CP/8/1/1 n.d.

SOURCES FROM THE AFRICANA SECTION,

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

1. The Barlow Papers
2. The Joint Missionary Archives,
Boxes 3-5.

ON INFORMANTS

The following are brief biographical notes on informants who were interviewed for this research. Some of the notes were collected during the initial period of this research and others were collected after the thesis had been submitted to the University of Nairobi and after the oral examination had been conducted. The reader will, therefore, find some of the dates differ from the date of the submission of the thesis. He will also find that some of the informants died either after the research had been completed or thereafter.

1. Andrew Ngoiya: Ngoiya is about 56 years old; of Mwangi age grade (1943); a former student at Kenya African Teachers College, Githunguri; was not active in the Karing'a movement, and, would, therefore, be considered a neutralist. He is a member of the Anglican church. Ngoiya was interviewed on 29/8/77, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
2. Arthur Gatung'u Gathuna (Rev.): Gathuna is about 75 years old; of Githigu age grade (1924); was educated at Alliance High School, Kikuyu and later became a teacher at Gituamba Independent School, Murang'a; was one of the

5. Ephantus Nguya: Nguya is about 98 years old; of Ndumia ya Murichu age grade (1906); was a staunch member of KISA and AIPCA, an active member of K.C.A.; was detained during Mau Mau War. He is still a member of AIPCA. Nguya was interviewed on 25/8/76, Mahiga, Othaya, Nyeri.

6. Gerishoni Kirangi: Kirangi is about 85 years old; of Rumemo age grade (1916); and a staunch abolitionist. He is a church elder at Kabuku Anglican Church. Kirangi was interviewed on 3/12/75, Kabuku, Kiambu.

7. Hannah Nyakarura Kang'ethe: Hannah is about 65 years old; of Ndege age grade (1927); very well versed in Agikuyu traditional religion and culture; an abolitionist and a member of PCEA. Hannah was interviewed on 27/7/76 and 29/7/76, Kambui, Kiambu.

8. Harrison Munyua: Munyua died in 1979 at the age of about 75 years; of Ngige age grade (1929); a staunch supporter and member of both Karing'a and Mau Mau movements; an active member of K.C.A.; an oath administrator in Kiriita area; a strong member of Riika

Committees which were set up in the 1940's to raise funds for K.A.T.C., was detained during the Mau Mau War. Munyua was interviewed on 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru.

9. Ibrahim Njoroge: Njoroge died in September, 1982 at the age of about 90 years; of Nyarigi age grade (1919); a staunch member of the Karing'a movement; served in several Karing'a Church and Schools Committees; was detained during the Mau Mau War; and was a member of African Orthodox Church at the time of his death. Njoroge was interviewed on 17/10/74, 24/10/74, 29/10/74, 12/11/74, 25/10/75, 2/11/75, and 9/5/79, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

10. James Beuttah: Beuttah is about 100 years old; of Kamande age grade (1902); was one of the founders of K.C.A.; was a strong supporter and member of KISA and AIPC; was instrumental in introducing Archbishop Alexander to KISA while he was working in Mombasa as a postal clerk in 1935; presently a member of AIPC and a staunch nationalist. Beuttah was interviewed on 22/8/76, Maragwa Murang'a.

11. Johanna Kunyiha: Kunyiha died in November, 1982 at the age of about 96 years; of Ndumia ya Murichu age grade (1914); was one of the founders of KISA and AIPCA; a strong member of K.C.A.; was the President of the African Tribunal Court, Nyeri in 1928; was awarded MBE (Member of British Empire) by the British Government in 1961; and was ordained a priest of AIPC at Ngongarithi shortly before his death. Kunyiha was interviewed on 18/8/76, Ngongarithi, North Tetu, Nyeri.
12. Johanna Kamau: Kamau is about 88 years old; of Kimiri age grade (1918); has been a member of Anglican Church since the 1920's; never joined Karing'a Church but has always supported its teachings and principles, for example, he never joined the abolitionists in the 1930's. Kamau was interviewed on 27/5/76, 3/6/76, and 31/8/82, Kabuku, Kiambu.
13. John Wandimi Wang'ombe (Rev.): Wang'ombe is about 46 years old; of Gotoru age grade (1954); very well versed in the Agikuyu traditional religion and culture, and an abolitionist. Wang'ombe is a clergyman of the PCEA. He was interviewed on 20/7/76 and 25/7/76, Kambui, Kiambu.

- Joseph Kagiri Kiondoro: Kiondoro is about 94 years old; of Njaramba age grade (1910/11); a staunch member of K.C.A., KISA, and AIPCA, was detained during the Mau Mau War. He is still a member of AIPC. Kiondoro was interviewed on 27/8/76, Cinga, Othaya, Nyeri.
15. Joshua Muceru: Muceru died in 1980 at the age of about 89; of Kihiu Mwiri age grade (1914); a traditionalist and a staunch member of K.C.A., KKEA, and African Orthodox Church; was instrumental in setting up Karing'a Schools in Kiambu district; was an oath administrator in Karura area and a freedom fighter; and was detained during the Mau Mau War. Muceru was interviewed on 24/12/74; 2/1/75, and 9/1/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
16. Kabui wa Ndura: Kabui is about 65 years old; of Munae age grade (1925); a traditionalist and a Karing'a supporter; a former member of African Orthodox Church but after AOC was banned in the early 1950's she joined the Anglican Church after the Mau Mau War. Kabui was interviewed on 20/11/75, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

17. Kagia Rungu wa Githiri: Githiri is about 65 years old; of Ndururu age grade (1934); a former student at KATC; was secretary of the Karing'a Students Association in Kiambu district; an oath administrator in Nairobi from 1948; and a member of the African Orthodox Church. Githiri was interviewed on 2/2/75, 3/12/75, and 31/8/82, Kabuku, Kiambu.

18. Kamande Huho: Huho is about 60 years old; of Njane Kanini age grade (1933); a former student at K.A.T.C., a member of K.C.A. and Karing'a movement; was detained during the Mau Mau War; and is a member of African Orthodox Church. Huho was interviewed on 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru.

19. Kamunge Karemi: Karemi is about 58 years old; of Mwanga age grade (1943); a former student at K.A.T.C.; a very strong supporter and member of Karing'a movement; a former teacher at Rironi Karing'a school; was detained during the Mau Mau War; and is a member of African Orthodox Church. Karemi was interviewed on 20/1/79 and 31/8/82, Ngeca, Kiambu.

20. Kang'ethe Huho: Huho is about 56 years old; of Mwomboko age grade (1944); a former student

at K.A.T.C.; was detained during the Mau Mau War; and is a member of African Orthodox Church.

Huho was interviewed on 7/6/77, Kiriita, Limuru.

21. Karimu wa Kibiru: Karimu died late 1981 at the age of about 95 years; of Njege age grade (1904); a staunch traditionalist and a strong supporter of the Karing'a movement; a former member of African Orthodox Church but later joined Anglican Church shortly before her death. Karimu was interviewed on 20/11/75, 29/11/75, 23/9/78, and 6/5/79, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

22. Kuria was Runo: Runo is about 65 years old; of Njane Kanini age grade (1933); a former student at K.A.T.C.; a Second World War Veteran; an activist in Karing'a movement; a freedom fighter; was detained during the Mau Mau War; a former member of the African Orthodox Church; now does not belong to any church. Runo was interviewed on 3/2/77, 8/2/77, 10/2/77, and 15/3/77, Rironi, Kiambu.

23. Leah Wanjiku: Leah is about 50 years old of no any age grade; a former student at K.A.T.C.; very well versed in the Agikuyu

traditional religion and culture; a neutralist; and is a member of the Anglican Church. Leah was interviewed on 20/7/78, Ndumberi, Kiambu.

24. Mucone wa Kibiru: Kibiru is about 70 years old; of Ndereche age grade (1929); a staunch traditionalist; a former treasurer of Riika Committee in Kiambaa area in the late 1940's; and is a member of the African Orthodox Church. Kibiru was interviewed on 20/11/75, 29/11/75, 23/9/78, and 10/9/82, Ndenderu, Kiambu.

25. Muconde wa Kaggia: Kaggia is about 65 years old; of Njane Kanini age grade (1933), a traditionalist; a strong supporter of Karing'a movement; a member of the African Orthodox Church before and after the Mau Mau War; and now does not belong to any church. He would be considered a neutralist. Kaggia was interviewed on 8/9/77, Kenyatta College, Nairobi.

26. Munyua wa Gichura: Munyua is about 53 years old; of Muhehenjeko age grade (1950); very well versed in the Agikuyu traditional religion and culture; a neutralist; and is a member of the Anglican Church. Munyua was interviewed on 23/9/79, Ndenderu, Kiambu. He also accompanied the researcher in several field trips.

27. Nancy Wanjiru Tiara: Nancy is about 43 years old; of no any age grade; very well versed in the Agikuyu traditional songs and Muthirigu dance-song; a neutralist and is a member of PCEA. Nancy was interviewed on 20/7/76, Tumutumu, Nyeri.
28. Ndubiru wa Mbete: Ndubiru is about 80 years old; of Munanda age grade (1921); a staunch supporter and member of the Karing'a movement; and activist during the Mau Mau War; and is a member of the African Orthodox Church. Ndubiru was interviewed on 20/11/75 and 10/9/82, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
29. Ngua wa Kiarrii: Kiarrii is about 55 years old; of Mwanga age grade (1943); a former student at K.A.T.C.; a strong supporter of Karing'a and Mau Mau movements but remained a neutralist. Kiarrii was interviewed on 8/12/78, Kahawa, Nairobi.
30. Njenga wa Kahira: Kahira is about 90 years old, of Kihiu Mwiri age grade (1914); was a strong member of K.C.A, KKEA, and Mau Mau War; was instrumental in building Karing'a School at Kahuho; and is a very strong member of African Orthodox Church. Kahira was interviewed on 3/3/77 and 10/3/77, Karura, Kiambu.

31. Nyamu Kamau: Kamau is about 75 years old; of Ndereche age grade (1929); an active member of several Karing'a church and school committees; an activist during the Mau Mau War; and is still an active member of the African Orthodox Church. Kamau was interviewed on 14/2/74, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
32. Nyawira wa Mucone: Nyawira is about 63 years old; of Jabani age grade (1937); a traditionalist; an activist in the Karing'a and Mau Mau movements; and is a member of the African Orthodox Church. Nyawira was interviewed on 20/11/75 and 10/9/82, Ndenderu, Kiambu.
33. Paul Kahuho Gachomba (Rev.): Gachomba is about 90 years old; of Njaramba age grade (1910); a staunch member of Church of Scotland Mission (now PCEA); was ordained in late 1920's and has remained a strong abolitionist. Gachomba was interviewed on 18/2/77, Tumutumu, Nyeri.
34. Paul Mathenge: Mathenge is about 100 years old; of Ndumia ya Murichu age grade (1906); a strong member of PCEA; an abolitionist; and a member of Mathakwaini African Court;

Nyeri until 1961. Mathenge was interviewed on 9/7/76, Mathakwaini, Thegenge, North Tetu, Nyeri.

35. Peter Gatabaki Mundati: Gatabaki is about 84 years old; of Kimiri age grade (1919); a strong member of K.C.A.; one of the founding members of KISA; led the break-away KISA group which later joined with KKEA in 1948; and a former teacher at K.A.T.C. Gatabaki was interviewed on 27/6/76, 25/7/76, 29/7/76, and 21/1/76, Githunguri, Kiambu.
36. Petro Kagure wa Kariuki: Kagure died in 1981 at the age of about 100 years; of Nyarigi age grade (1906); a staunch traditionalist, an active member of K.A.C., a strong member of both Karing'a and Mau Mau movements; was instrumental in setting up Karing'a Schools in Rironi, Kahuhu, and Mukui; an oath administrator in the late 1940's; and was detained during the Mau Mau War. Kagure was interviewed on 30/1/77, 3/2/77, and 10/2/77, Rironi Kiambu.

37. Rechel Nyamwathi: Rachel is about 48 years old; belongs to no any age grade; a staunch abolitionist; educated at Kabete Girls Secondary School now Mary Leakey High School; and is a member of the Anglican Church. Rachel was interviewed on 5/9/77, Dagoretti, Nairobi.
38. Renison Muchiri Githige(Ph.D): Githige is about 30 years old; of Metiriki age grade (1969); a former student at Kenyatta University College and now a Lecturer in the same institution; and a strong supporter and defender of Kenya's political and cultural nationalism. Dr. Githige wrote an excellent M.A. thesis on "The Religious Factor in Mau Mau with particular reference to Mau Mau Oaths" in 1978 from which this researcher gained immensely. He is an African Christian. Dr. Githige was interviewed on 19/8/78, Kenyatta University College, Nairobi.
39. Rutha was Muthoni: Rutha is about 70 years old; of Ciringi age grade (1923); a traditionalist and a very strong supporter of the Independents; was one of the composers of Muthirigu dance-song in

Murang'a district. Rutha was interviewed on 2/7/76 and 10/7/76, Gathuki-ini, Murang'a.

40. Samuel Mathu: Mathu is about 74 years old; of Ciringi age grade (1923); a member of K.C.A and Riika Committee in Ndumberi and Ting'ang'a areas; a staunch Karing'a and Mau Mau supporter; and is a member of African Orthodox Church. Mathu was interviewed on 20/10/75, Ndumberi, Kiambu.
41. Stephano Waciira: Waciira died in 1980 at the age of about 85 years; of Njaramba age grade (1922); was initially a member of CSM until mid 1920's when he joined K.C.A.; was one of the students at Gituamba Seminary, Murang'a; was ordained a minister of AIPC in 1937, was detained during the Mau Mau War; converted back to CSM (now PCEA) while in detention and later served as a PCEA minister before his death. Waciira was interviewed on 17/7/76 and 20/7/76 at Mahiga, Othaya, Nyeri.

42. Stephen Kinuthia: Kinuthia is about 52 years old; of Ngoma Kibiriti age grade (1947); a staunch abolitionist; a member and a lay leader of the Anglican Church, Kanunga. Kinuthia was interviewed on 25/9/77, Kanunga, Kiambu.
43. Waira wa Kamau: Waira is about 65 years old; of Njane Kanini age grade (1933) a former student at K.A.T.C.; General Secretary of the Riika Committees in the Central Province; an active member of K.C.A. and KKEA; a one time member of Local Native Council, Kiambu; a former member of KAU; a former member of Parliament for Githunguri, and is now a member of the Anglican church but would rather consider himself as simply an African Christian. Waira was interviewed on 20/2/77, 3/3/77, and 9/10/82, Ruiru, Kiambu.
44. Wangui wa Karanu: Wangui died in 1979 at the age of about 100; of Kienjeku age grade (1898); a staunch traditionalist and a strong supporter of Karing'a and Mau Mau movements. She was a member of the African Orthodox Church before she died. Wangui was interviewed on 3/8/76 and 5/8/76, Kambui, Kiambu.