

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERACTION  
BETWEEN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE  
AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH MARRIAGE:  
THE CASE OF TUTHU PARISH IN MURANG'A  
DISTRICT ))

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED FOR  
THE DEGREE OF M.A. 1998  
AND A COPY MAY BE PLACED IN THE  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

BY

JAMES MWANGI KARANJA

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NAIROBI

1998



## DECLARATION

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

James Mwangi Karanja 22nd August 1998  
James Mwangi Karanja

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Professor E.E.M. Ogutu  
Professor E.E.M. Ogutu

Mr. A. W. Wambua 30/9/98  
Mr. A. W. Wambua

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Charles and Julia, who have sacrificed a great deal to meet my education needs.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATIONS .....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF MAPS .....	ix
ABSTRACT .....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	xii
ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiii
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS .....	xiv

### CHAPTER ONE

<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION:</b> .....	1
1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	1
1.2 THE STUDY OBJECTIVES .....	2
1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY .....	2
1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	21
1.6 HYPOTHESES .....	23
1.7 SCOPE AND AREA OF STUDY .....	23
1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	25
1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	28

### CHAPTER TWO

<b>2.0 KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SETTING</b> .....	30
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	30
2.2 MYTHS OF ORIGIN OF THE KIKUYU PEOPLE .....	30
2.3 HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF KIKUYU PEOPLE .....	32
2.4 THE KIKUYU SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM .....	33
2.5 THE KIKUYU KINSHIP SYSTEMS .....	35
2.6 THE CUSTOMARY KIKUYU SYSTEM OF EDUCATION .....	42
2.7 SEX-LIFE AMONG THE YOUTH IN KIKUYU TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY.....	45

2.8 THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE KIKUYU PEOPLE .....	46
2.9 THE TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE KIKUYU .....	48

### CHAPTER THREE

3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	54
3.2 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR MARRIAGE IN KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY .....	54
3.2.1 The main stages involved in contracting a valid Kikuyu Customary Marriage.....	57
3.2.2 <i>Njoohi ya Njurio</i> (Proposal beer) .....	59
3.2.3 The <i>Ngurario</i> (Pouring the Blood of Unity) ceremony .....	60
3.2.4 <i>Ruracio</i> (Bride-wealth) .....	61
3.2.5 The Role of <i>Gutinia Kiande</i> (cutting of shoulder blade-meat of a goat) in Kikuyu customary marriage .....	65
3.2.6 The Kikuyu Customary Wedding .....	66
3.3 THE KIKUYU SYSTEM OF POLYGAMY .....	68
3.4 CHILDLESS COUPLE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE.....	72
3.5 ADULTERY AND FORNICATION IN KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.....	74
3.6 SEPARATION AND DIVORCE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE .....	75
3.7 FAMILY PLANNING IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE .....	79
3.8 THE STATE OF WIDOWHOOD IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE.....	81
3.9 STATUS OF WOMEN IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE .....	83

### CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 AGENTS OF CHANGE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE .....	87
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	87
4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN KIKUYU LAND (1902-1960) .....	87

4.2.1	First Period: The First Contact with the Kikuyu Community.....	90
4.2.2	Second Period: The Evangelisation of the Mass.....	92
4.2.2.1	Training of Local Catechists.....	92
4.2.2.2	Visits to the Villages.....	93
4.2.2.3	Opening of Schools and Dispensaries.....	94
4.2.3	Third Period: The Formation of Christian Communities.....	96
4.2.4	Fourth Period: Activity after World War II.....	98
4.3	CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES ON KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE.....	100
4.4	OTHER EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE.....	110
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>		
5.0	INTERACTION BETWEEN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS TODAY.....	121
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	121
5.2	A GENERAL SURVEY OF SEX-RELATED ISSUES AMONG THE COMMUNITY UNDER STUDY.....	122
5.2.1	Pre-marital Sex.....	126
5.2.2	Family Life Education.....	130
5.3	PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE.....	132
5.3.1	Choice of a Marriage Partner.....	136
5.3.2	The Engagement Process.....	139
5.3.3	Bride-wealth.....	142
5.3.3	Bnde-wealth and Marriage Stability.....	145
5.3.4	Church Wedding.....	150
	5.3.4.1 Why People do not Marry in Church Today.....	153

## CHAPTER SIX

6.0 POST-MARITAL RELATED ISSUES AS A CONCERN TO KIKUYU ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY .....	161
6.0 INTRODUCTION .....	161
6.1 CHILDLESS MARRIAGES .....	162
6.2.1 Social Problems Faced by Childless Couple .....	164
6.3 SINGLE PARENTHOOD .....	167
6.3.1 Problems Faced by Children of Single Parents .....	169
6.3.2 Problems Faced by Single Parents .....	170
6.3.3 How the church could help single parents and their children .....	172
6.4 SINGLE STATE .....	174
6.5 POLYGAMY .....	175
6.6 STATE OF WIDOWHOOD TODAY .....	179
6.7 SEPARATION AND DIVORCE .....	182
6.7.1 The place of the church in extra-marital relationships .....	186
6.8 STATUS OF WOMEN TODAY .....	189
6.9 FAMILY PLANNING .....	192

## CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 CONCLUSION .....	196
7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	203
7.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	211
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	212
LIST OF INFORMANTS .....	224
APPENDICES .....	229
LOCATION OF THE AREA OF STUDY .....	239

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Main sources of Family life education as given by Young Informants - Tuthu Parish, October/ November, 1997 .....	123
Table 2: Whether the Catholic Church is Relaxed or Strict on Matters of Sex - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	124
Table 3: Whether or not youths are adequately acquainted with members of the opposite sex in their church today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	128
Table 4: Should Bridewealth be abolished or not, Or should it be left open? - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	143
Table 5: Has Bridewealth Promoted Stability or Instability in Marriages Today? - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997 .....	146
Table 6: Youths Preferences to Customary or Church Wedding - Tuthu Parish, October/ November, 1997 .....	151
Table 7: Priests should or should not be married - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997 .....	156
Table 8: Has the Church Promoted or Undermined the role of Extended Family in Church Marriages Today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	158
Table 9: How one would react if one's spouse turns out to be infertile - Tuthu Parish, October/ November, 1997. ....	163
Table 10: Should Polygamy be Abolished or Not - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997 .....	177
Table 11: Has the Church failed to contain the Problem of Separation and Divorce - Tuthu Parish,	



	October/November, 1997.....	184
Table 12:	Has the Church Promoted or Checked cases of Fornication and Adultery Today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	187
Table 13:	An Investigation of the Status of women and children of broken families in the church as compared to that of Kikuyu Traditional Society - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.....	191

## LIST OF MAPS

MAP A:	Location of Murang'a District in Kenya.....	239
MAP B:	Murang'a District Administrative Boundaries.....	240
MAP C:	A Sketch of Tuthu Parish showing Local Churches .....	243

## ABSTRACT

Although the church has been growing numerically, the adherence to its teaching on marriage is lacking and this is shown by the decline in the number of people who marry in church today. Even those already married in church, it appears that they find difficulty in channelling their marriages on church teachings on certain issues. Notwithstanding, some marriages today have remained quite unstable even among the faithfuls.

This study is about the interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic Church marriage today. The study investigated whether there exists conflict of values between the two forms of marriage by exploring how courtship, bridewealth, wedding, polygamy, infertility, divorce among others are handled or viewed by Kikuyu catholics today.

Tuthu Parish was selected because it had the earliest influence of Roman Catholic church in Murang'a Diocese. Besides, funds availability, familiarity of the place and the community by the author and the fact that the entire parishioners are Kikuyus were other factors considered.

The thesis is as a result of both the secondary and primary data. The secondary data was collected from major libraries in Nairobi as well as from Diocesan records. The primary data was collected mainly through administration of questionnaires, direct personal interviews as well as group discussions. Informants comprised the aged, catechists, the youth and other informed parishioners.

The research findings showed that before the coming of catholic christian missionaries in Kikuyuland, there existed a stable marriage system. This stability

was guaranteed by the kinship system, community interest, bridewealth and practice of polygamy among others. The research findings confirmed that the church played a significant role in the disintegration of this marriage by condemning such customary aspects as initiation rites, polygamy, widow inheritance and to some extent bridewealth payment. It also introduced the idea of indissolubility, individual consent and equality of spouses in marriage.

The study also found out that some variables other than the church such as urbanisation, money economy and modern education have also contributed to this disintegration.

The study has highlighted that there is conflict of values among the adherents when it comes to finding solutions to some marital problems. The main areas the two marriages differ include the place of relatives of spouses in church marriages, state of childlessness and dissolubility of marriage. Other socio-economic factors were found to have contributed to the dissatisfaction in marriages.

The study concludes that the church marriage has not been very popular. It suggests that some relatively harmless customary values such as involvement of extended family and bridewealth payment could be incorporated into church marriage. In this way many Kikuyu catholics are likely to be attracted to church marriage for it would appear relevant and meaningful to their lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to register my deep gratitude to people who have helped me in different ways in the preparation of this thesis. To the University of Nairobi which gave me a full time scholarship which enabled me to complete this without disruption I am most thankful.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisors Professor Gilbert Edwin Meshack Ogotu and Mr. Abraham Waila Wambua for their patience and guidance without which the study would have been near impossible. Special gratitude goes to the Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies Dr. Waruta for the useful advice and encouragement he accorded me during the choice of the topic of study.

I express my gratitude to all my informants who generously gave me invaluable information during the field research. I particularly thank Fr. Peter Geruline and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kihungi for their encouragement, assistance and hospitality they accorded me throughout my field research.

I am also grateful to the Librarians of various libraries I had visited for their assistance and guidance in tracing relevant literature.

I am further indebted to my parents for having sacrificed so much for my education and their continued support and encouragement.

Finally, I express my appreciation to all my lecturers and classmates for their co-operation and encouragement throughout the course. To Mr. Fredrick Mwangi who processed, typeset and printed this thesis, I say thank you very much.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- IBEA Co. - Imperial British East African Company  
AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome  
CA - Catholic Action  
CWA - Catholic Women Association

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- Age-Group** - Used in this text to refer to those men and women who were circumcised in the same year.
- Aged- Members** - Are those catholics in the community under study who are over 60 years and hence are likely to have experienced a bit of Kikuyu traditional way of life and who at the same time were converted to christianity while missionaries were still very active in the propagation of the new faith.
- Bridewealth** - This refers to the transfer of wealth/property from the groom or his family to the bride's family.
- Ceremony** - This refers to the formal way of conducting a socio-regious observances.
- Church** - As used in this context implies Roman catholic church and/or its views.
- Church Marriage** - In this text it means a marriage that is recognised by Roman Catholic church as a valid one by meeting its (church's) requirements.
- Elopement** - Refer to the act of a man and a woman deciding to stay together as a husband and wife without having undergone a formally recognised marriage.
- Extended Family** - This refers to a family structure which consists of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and parents who co-exist as close relatives who has an obligation to help and support each other.
- Initiation** - This refers to the whole process of circumcision/clitodectomy and teachings that one traditionally had to go through

in order to "graduate" from childhood to adulthood.

**Interaction** - Is the reaction - positive or negative that emerges when customary and Church marriage system values encounter one another through the lives of Kikuyu Roman Catholic faithfuls.

**Kikuyu Customary Marriage** - Is an authentic Kikuyu marriage before it was contaminated or destroyed by external factors such as the coming of Europeans and hence the introduction of new beliefs, values, attitudes and practices.

**Marriage Stability** - Is that state in which a given marriage continues to function in a harmonious way that brings contentment to the party concerned and the society at large.

**Single state** - In this text it refers to act of deciding not to raise a family of ones own through marriage or otherwise though one is fit in all respects to do so.

**Young Adults** - These are the general adherents of Roman Catholic faith whose age range from 35-50 years and have been enrolled as church members for well over 5 years or so.

**Youth** - Are those young men and women well over 18 years and not exceeding 35 years who have never been married and are adherents of Roman Catholic church.

**Values** - In this context they refer to those aspects in the institution of marriage that are highly regarded as cardinal.



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

#### 1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the advent of Roman Catholic Christian Missionaries in Kikuyu land in 1902 many people among the Kikuyu community have come to embrace Christian faith. However, despite the numerical growth that the church has witnessed over the years the popularity of church marriage, has remained questionable.<sup>1</sup> Again marital crisis among church adherents has continued to remain a major concern to the church. Given that a century is about to elapse since the Kikuyu people were exposed to the ideals of christian marriage, one wonders why this could be the case. On this regard one is prompted to question the willingness of Kikuyu adherents to adopt the dictates of the church on an ideal marriage from a number of perspectives: Are christian marriage values and ethics incompatible with Kikuyu customary marriage? Are there traces of western cultural values in church marriage? Or are there other external forces apart from christianity that have contributed to the problem? One is also left wondering about what kind of guiding principles the Kikuyu Roman Catholic adherents appeal to in their present day marital practices.

Our concern in this study will be to discuss the extent to

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the records in Tuthu Parish headquarters, by the end of 1997 the number of Catholic adherents who had undergone church marriage were 897 and those who had not yet solemnised their marriage in church were 2,003. This shows that it is only about a third of those already married who have undergone church marriage.

which the interplay of Roman Catholic marriage values and the Kikuyu customary ones have affected the present day marital practices among the Kikuyu Catholics. It is hoped that this study will shed more light on the repercussions of imposing a foreign marriage system on a customary one.

## **1.2 THE STUDY OBJECTIVES**

- (1) To investigate the salient features of Kikuyu customary marriage before the coming of christian missionaries.
- (2) To identify the main agents of change in Kikuyu customary marriage with special reference to Roman Catholic Church.
- (3) To ascertain how and to what extent the interaction of Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage has led to the stability or instability of marriages among the Kikuyu community.
- (4) To identify the main areas in which the Roman Catholic church marriage and Kikuyu customary marriage have conflicted and suggest how the two can be reconciled.

## **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The undertaking of this study was stimulated by the fact that in the realm of marital practices, there is very little in the literature which has adequately analysed

systematically the socio-cultural changes that have taken place as a result of the interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and imposed christian marriage. This justifies an in-depth study to identify what has been the outcome of such an interaction.

The Second Vatican Council advocated for deeper theological research in each culture in order to enable the church to better achieve its identity and make its contribution to the universal church. The present study sets out to investigate some of the deeply held values in Kikuyu customary marriage which in case they do not conflict with christian teachings may be incorporated into church marriage so as to make it more attractive and relevant to the Kikuyu adherents.

In our society today cases of marital crisis have become rampant. Unlike in the former days, cases of divorce, separations, illegitimate children, concubinage and adultery have become the rule rather than the exception. This remains a great challenge in the realm of evangelisation. Though in most cases this phenomena is attributed to socio-economic changes, we cannot, however, rule out the possibility of the existence of conflict, for instance, in the Kikuyu customary values and western christian values in the institution of marriage. It becomes imperative, therefore, to investigate the degree of this interaction and the impact of this on the present day Kikuyu marital practices. It is also important to examine

how the church has been responding to marital crisis and to what extent it has adopted or rejected the customary practices that used to have a stabilising effect on marriage in the past.

Further, in the contemporary society there are such pressing issues as illegitimate children, single parenthood, childless couples, family planning, professionalism versus marriage among others that pose the most serious and difficult problems in the christian ethics. We feel that in order for the church to address itself effectively to such issues it must not ignore the African customary marriage setting. Consequently, church's education and counselling on such issues ought to have a distinct mark of African customs wherever such customs are not contrary to christian faith. This, then, necessitates a thorough investigation on the extent to which the church can utilise the Kikuyu customary values in order to make its education and counselling on ethical issues on marriage more appealing to the Kikuyu adherents.

#### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In his M.A. thesis on "The Impact of Christianity on the Luo Traditional Marriage System", L.O. Obudho shows that Luo community continue to cherish marriage

practices of courtship, bride-wealth payment, ceremonies, rituals, polygamy and levirate marriage. He observes that Luos are only forced to change their attitude towards some of the marriage beliefs and practices because of the changes forced upon them by christianity and other socio-economic pressures. He writes:

Christianity has not much changed the attitude of the Luos towards polygamy nor the church responsible for its decrease ....<sup>2</sup>

In her M.A. thesis "Penetration of Christianity into Akamba Family Life", J. Mbula emphasises the centrality of marriage among Akamba people. She notes that some Akamba beliefs formed a formidable barrier for christian penetration. She pinpoints polygamy as a key factor in hindering christianity from winning Akamba family. She wonders whether christianity can be decolonised and indigenised.

These two studies indicate that there is a need for further research on conflict which may have resulted due to the interaction of the new values with the already existing ones in the institution of marriage.

A. Shorter in African Culture and Christian Church indicates that Africans and Europeans differ a lot in how they conceive the institution of marriage. He wonders:

How far is the ideal christian marriage as revealed by God separable from the western form, and how far can it be expressed in and

---

<sup>2</sup> L.O. Obudho, "The Impact of Christianity on the Luo Traditional marriage system". M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1985: 246.

through the African form?<sup>3</sup>

He contends that marriages in church are not keeping pace proportionately with baptisms and adds that marriage preparation has not hitherto taken African social facts and institutions sufficiently into account. He further points out that attempts both by the church and the government to abolish bride-wealth and polygamy have met with no success.<sup>4</sup>

Writing on a Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family Life in Africa, Theological Advisory Group underscores the need to understand African customary marriages in order to understand christian marriage in the African context and extends to elaborate marriage laws regulating the marriage of christians in the Kenyan context. Besides, the essentials of a christian marriage from a theological point of view have also been discussed. This study, however, is broad on its focus and also lacks details on the impact of christianity on African traditional marriages.

Writing on "The Sacrament of Matrimony and Customary Marriage", B.J. Ekeya reckons that marriage, while it is receiving much rethinking and study world over, remains a grave problem in Africa. She maintains that a conflict that arose when christianity condemned the ways of the old has not yet been resolved. She states that missionaries considered themselves and their

---

<sup>3</sup> A. Shorter, African Culture and Christian Church. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973: 156.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: 171 .

understanding of how to live a christian life superior to that of the people and the manner of life they found in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Thus they condemned some of the African beliefs and practices on the ground that they were harmful both socially and morally.

She highlights major values of bride-wealth to the effect that it ensured marriage stability. She notes that condemnation of polygamy by missionaries led to the break-up of the extended family and that this has tended to encourage individualism. Her work, however, has not attempted to show how an authentic African christian marriage can be a reality.

J. Okullu in Church and Marriage in East Africa points out that the problem of polygamy is created by the church that demands that a polygamist send away all his wives except one who is baptised. He hastens to caution that monogamy does not guarantee an ideal and happy life for a monogamist can lead a worse moral life than a polygamist.<sup>6</sup>

Writing on "African Family Values" Maurice Otunga asserts that African family values are indispensable for the incarnation of christianity in Africa today. He states that Pope's visit to Africa was timely in this regard. He

---

<sup>5</sup> B.J. Ekeya, "The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Customary African Marriage". A Paper submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies at St. John's University Collegille, Minnesota, M A in Theology, 1973: 21.

<sup>6</sup> J.Okullu, Church and Marriage in East Africa. Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1976: 62-73.

writes:

Pope John II reminded us on the importance of our traditional values and of the need of culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel to bring forth "from its own tradition original expressions of christian life, celebration and thought."<sup>7</sup>

He observes that with the attainment of independence people have become aware of the value and dignity of their culture and traditions. He feels that the church should not be left behind on this. This study shows the need to incorporate African traditional values into christianity.

P. Pokem in his article "Christian and Customary Marriage" observes that the transformation of African traditional marriage to church marriage has not been successful. He notes:

.... The ceremony in church is seen not as a celebration of marriage, but rather a condition for the reception of Sacrament - a rule of clergy, a simple blessing, a foreign importation.<sup>8</sup>

He feels that theologians should take an in-depth study into the true nature of the traditional marriage with the aim of coming up with some theologically sound solutions to counteract this trend.

\* "Family spirituality in Africa" by B. Walele compares

---

<sup>7</sup> M. Otunga, "African Family Values" in African Ecclesial Review, AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), Volume 23 Numbers 1 and 2, February-April, 1981: 33.

<sup>8</sup> P. Pokem, "Christian and customary marriage in Ghana" in African Ecclesial Review, AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), Volume 23 Nos. 1 and 2, February - April, 1981: 38



traditional and present day preparation for marriage. He maintains that prolonged delay before marriage as it happens today because of schooling implies that preparation for a christian marriage is more urgent than was the case for the traditional marriage. According to him this calls for a different approach as well as learning from the past.<sup>9</sup>

Christian Ethics in African Context, a book by H. Barth identifies culture from west, the impact of new religions and the process of social change as factors that contribute to new understanding of sex, marriage and family in Africa. He maintains that there is need for the church to address itself to the status of women and their emancipation. He further points out that unmarried state is a problem in Africa in the light of cultural heritage. He adds that though in the former days bride-wealth was a means to solemnise marriage, nowadays it has been commercialised. He further observes that church marriage have remained unpopular to Africans even christian couples. He observes:

Unfortunately to many it (church marriage) has come to mean a show in imitation of western customs, including bride-gown, hairdo, flowers, expensive rings .... All this is extremely expensive and appears foreign.<sup>10</sup>

His work, however, is lacking in details and hence does not give an accurate picture

---

<sup>9</sup> B. Walele, Family Spirituality in Africa. Spearhead Number 70, February, 1982, AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba): 34-39.

<sup>10</sup> H. Barth, Christian Ethics in African Context, Nairobi: Act Publishing House, 1976: 86.

of the present state of African Christian Marriages.

In their book African Christian Marriage, B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter have dealt with many aspects concerned with the institution of marriage.

They have touched on polygamy, care of widows, husband-wife relationships, inter-church and other mixed marriages. The book is a final report of a five year programme of the research into sociology and theology of marriage with special reference to East, Central and Southern Africa and general reference to the whole African continent. The present study focuses specifically on the present state of Kikuyu marriages as a product of Kikuyu Customary Marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage among other intervening variables.

In his book African Religion and Philosophy, J. Mbiti describes African customary marriage as a focus for existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. He notes that marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Failure to marry implies that one has rejected the society and the society in turn rejects him. He further observes that marriage and life were seen as one and that is why lack of children was looked upon as a shame and disgrace to the married couple.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> J.S Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy, London: Heinemann Education Books

Our kind of polygamy, a book by David Maillu points out that though Whites in Africa had done a great deal to wipe out polygamy, this traditional custom has nevertheless survived. He wonders whether polygamy is really a primitive and unchristian practice and in extension, whether it has any positive and moral part to play in our lives. He cites infertility and inheritance of widows as major reasons behind this practice traditionally. He also addresses himself to the subject of love and unfaithfulness in marriage. His work is, however, found wanting in the sense that it discusses in general terms only one aspect of African customary marriage.

\*Writing on "remarriage of divorced persons" S.P. Kakokota notes that today, many young men and women do not want interference of their parents in choosing their future spouses.<sup>12</sup> He observes that the church expects one to marry according to its rites governing marriage while ones own community expects him or her to observe traditional customs on marriage. He feels that this state of the matter brings about confusion that affects the future stability of marriage. He highlights lack of preparation and unfaithfulness as the major causes of divorce today.<sup>13</sup> He however, does not tell us how we can establish a more stable

---

Limited, 1969: 133.

<sup>12</sup> S.P. Kakokota, "Remarriage of divorced persons" in church and marriage in East—Africa (Ed by A. Shorter, Eldoret, AMFCEA, 1975: 62

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 63-66.

marriage.

V. Amadi in "Marital Instability in modern Marriage"

observes that:

.... Marriage deprived of the older generation who can serve as reconciliatory agents may stand to be more precarious than one where this is present.<sup>14</sup>

He concurs with S.P. Kakokota in noting that one of the major causes of instability of marriages today is freedom of choice of a partner and hurried marriages. He also adds that bride-wealth has been commercialised to an extent of losing its traditional significance. His work is found wanting because it does not show the place of christianity in the instability of marriage.

In his article "Family Planning" J.L. Kanyikwa observes that polygamy as a traditional method for family planning is not workable in the contemporary setting.<sup>15</sup> He contends that some few months after the child is born the mother needs her sexual desires satisfied and that this contributes to the smooth running of the relationship of both husband and wife. He maintains that polygamy might not only lead to more children who might not be well provided for materially and emotionally but it might also result to family being torn into pieces by quarrels.

---

<sup>14</sup> V. Amadi, "Marital Instability in Modern Marriage" (LLB) Nairobi, July, 1980: 35.

<sup>15</sup> J.L. Kanyikwa, "Family Planning" in Church and Marriage in East Africa (Ed by A. Shorter, Eldoret, AMECEA, 1975: 252.

He states that western family planning methods can be of some help in our problems which our traditional planning methods are not able to solve.<sup>16</sup>

Writing on "Customary African Marriage", J. Njenga makes the following observations:

I was disappointed to meet many couples living together without following canonical form (of marriage) as stipulated by the church. It was not rare that I met good living couples who considered themselves married properly even though they never went through a canonical form.<sup>17</sup>

He further argues that many African Catholic have a different concept of marriage from the one prescribed in the Code of Canon Law. He maintains that the obligation of christian instruction of children by parents is imperfectly understood and practiced.

B. Akiiki in his article "Aspects of Bantu Marriage" points out that the church has failed to be actively involved in all the real preparations and celebrations of Bantu Marriages and that people get around this church indifference by doing their own things.<sup>18</sup> He further observes that the actual marriage celebration is carried out in a way foreign to local people. He mentions wedding dress, cakes,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid: 253

<sup>17</sup> J. Njenga, "Customary African Marriage" in African Ecclesial Review, Vol.16 Nos. 1-4, 1974: 115.

<sup>18</sup> B. Akiiki, "Aspects of Bantu Marriage" in African Ecclesial Review, Vol.20, No.6, December, 1978: 371.

contract being between two people, honeymoon and there being no more marriage instructions after church ceremony as examples.<sup>19</sup> He notes that many Bantu today do not tolerate a marriage where there are no children and that such victims revert back to traditional solutions. He contends that the christian new values about marriage have yet to be presented to the Bantu in understandable language so that they might get persuaded to accept them freely.<sup>20</sup> He, however, does not elaborate how this can be achieved.

In her book Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity, S. Bottignole has examined tensions and problems of different Catholic communities in Nyeri Diocese according to the priorities set by them in their endeavour to become self-supporting, self-ministering and self-propagating. On the issues of christian families she notes that catholics of Nyeri are alarmed by two facts namely that more than fifty per cent of the catholic families have not solemnised their marriages in the church and the number of unmarried mothers is notably increasing.<sup>21</sup> She cites bride-wealth, polygamy and family planning as major issues promoting tensions in family life. How these and other related tensions can be contained forms the corner stone of the present study.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid 370.

<sup>21</sup> S. Bottignole, Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity. Nairobi: Heinemann Education Books (E.A.) Ltd (C) 1984 p. 123.

In his article, "Family Life", V.G. Simiyu describes the family life among the Kikuyu of Murang'a District. He observes that single motherhood is a new development arising from the dictates of modern life with its ingredients of money economy, European type of education, christian religion among others. He asserts that in the traditional society sexual urge was a test of personality both for boys and girls. He however, notes that in the district it is only a few individuals who pay attention to such values as virginity.<sup>22</sup> He maintains that family life in Murang'a District combines both the framework and the inputs of modernity and christianity. He recommends some traditional aspects to be retained and perpetuated to enhance a better living.<sup>23</sup>

Two authors namely; Father Cagnolo in his book The Kikuyu and L.S.B. Leakey in his book The Southern Kikuyu before 1903 have discussed in detail the Kikuyu customary marriage. Some of the aspects highlighted include courtship, wedding ceremony, polygamous marriage, divorce, re-marriage among others. They have not, however, shown whether the customary marriage was undergoing change since the advent of christianity or not.

In his paper "Impact of Christianity in Kikuyu District: Analysis of its cultural processes on the church mission society". G. Mathu observes

---

<sup>22</sup> V.G. Simiyu, "Family Life" in Republic of Kenya: Murang'a District: Socio-cultural Profile Draft Report (ed. by S. Were (C) 1986): 45.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 52.

that the missionaries erred in trying to separate social and religious aspect of marriage when both were inseparable and interwoven. In this connection, Mathu notes that a missionary thought that a traditional marriage ceremony had no religious significance and hence he viewed it as a social get together in exchange of bride and livestock.<sup>24</sup> He wonders how a Kikuyu could embrace christianity and at the same time remain a wholesome Kikuyu. This necessitates a further research.

In his M.A. thesis "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities between Kikuyu Traditional Communal Rites and seven Sacraments in Catholic Church". P.I. Njoroge asserts that while sex morality was very high in Kikuyu country, it is actually very low in the church today. For him, this is the case because the missionaries condemned some of the values in the Kikuyu culture and customs like education of children by parents.<sup>25</sup> He further contends that family planning is nothing new in the Kikuyu country. He maintains that its success was due to the co-operation and understanding of the spouses.

Writing on Facing Mount Kenya, J. Kenyatta maintains that initiation of both sexes was the most important custom among the Kikuyu for it was looked upon as the deciding factor in giving a boy or a girl the status of manhood or

---

<sup>24</sup> G. Mathu, "Impact of Christianity in Kikuyu District. An Analysis of its Cultural Process on the Church Missionary Society", University of Nairobi, 1978: 21.

<sup>25</sup> P.I. Njoroge, "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities between Kikuyu Traditional Communal rites and seven sacraments in catholic church" M.A. Thesis. University of Nairobi, 1980/81: 69.



womanhood. He reckons that prior to initiation the initiates were taught matters relating to rules and regulations governing sexual indulgence. He adds that there was an intimate contact between the young people which was the very foundation stone upon which to build a race morally and physically sound. He explains that marriage was a communal affair. He particularly underscores the place that children occupied in marriage. He writes:

The desire to have children is deep rooted in the hearts of both man and woman and in entering matrimonial union they regard the procreation of children their first and most sacred duty.<sup>26</sup>

He notes that a childless marriage according to Kikuyu people was a failure. He points out that there was council of elders that dealt with marital problems. He, however, mentions that cases of divorce were rare. Kenyatta's work is found wanting in that it does not show presence of any changes that have taken place in Kikuyu customary marriage.

↓

In his article "African and Conjoint Family Therapy", R. Wanjohi observes that since 1900 when christian churches began evangelisation among the Kikuyu the Christian Pastor started counselling Kikuyu families using a procedure which was a direct product of his western society. He further notes that there are prohibitive impediments to contracting a valid christian marriage which are

---

<sup>26</sup> J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya. London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd. 1964: 164.

mainly products of western culture. He identifies a kind of double standards among the faithfuls. He observes:

.... They live two lives-the traditional-partially christianised while they are on their own; and, also under the "persona" of a western christian style of life while in the presence of the pastor or counsellor.<sup>27</sup>

To him, these conflicting values makes counselling ineffective. He, however, offers no solution to this problem.

Writing on "Aspects of Gikuyu Traditional Morality", H.W. Kinoti outlines five virtues that form the backbone of Kikuyu traditional morality. These are; honesty, generosity, justice, temperance and courage. She contends that christian missionaries undermined the cultural basis of morality through their direct teaching against certain aspects of Kikuyu culture. She notes:

In their double mission of evangelisation and civilising the Gikuyus, the missionaries believed to some extent or other that some of their function is to overhaul the existing Gikuyu culture.<sup>28</sup>

She maintains that sexual intercourse belonged properly to the married state. She adds that a very large majority of unmarried people succeeded in abstaining from sexual intercourse because they were taught to regard sexual intercourse between

---

<sup>27</sup> R. Wanjoki, "African and Conjoint Family Therapy", in *African Christian Studies*, Nairobi: Vol.5 no.1 March 1989: 76

<sup>28</sup> H.W. Kinoti, "Aspects of Gikuyu Traditional Morality" Ph.D Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983: 111.

two unmarried people as taboo. Her work is going to enable us to identify those traditional virtues that are being eroded in the institution of marriage among Kikuyu community.

P.G. Reriani in "Interaction of western christian marriage and Kikuyu customary practices" observes that the older generation was suspicious of the new religion especially because the missionaries condemned some of the Kikuyu customs such as female circumcision and polygamy which they had always considered as worthy customs.<sup>29</sup> He states that church marriages are relatively few and that this might be a reflection that a number of people still practice Kikuyu customary marriage.<sup>30</sup> He notes that socio-economic factors have had an impact on various aspects of marriage such as bride-wealth and polygamy. His work, however, does not indicate any existence of conflict and it is quite general in its focus for it deals with christianity in general terms.

In his book Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society,

E. Cavicchi underscores the importance of initiation and kinship system in Kikuyu traditional system in determining the responsibilities, status and rights of individuals

---

<sup>29</sup> P.G. Reriani, "Interaction of Western Christian Marriage with Kikuyu Customary Practices. A Case of Mathura Division". Diploma in Cultural Studies, University of Nairobi, 1987: 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid: 76.

in the community.<sup>31</sup> He argues that marriage contracted directly by the partners without payment of bride-wealth would not last and become permanent. He observes:

.... A husband would afford not to have any consideration for his wife, when he had not parted with anything economically valuable in order to have her; for the same reason it would be easier for him to dismiss her, the more that there would be no economic hindrance to his procuring a new wife for himself.<sup>32</sup>

He feels that if the bride-wealth is abolished there is the danger for the wife to take the attitude of complete independence in regard to her husband.

In her M.A. thesis "The Integration of Religious Preparation of Traditional Marriage to Christian Marriage", J. Mukuha observes that the difference between Kikuyu customary marriage preparations and Catholic christian marriage preparations may be very profound as they are two cultures occurring at different times. Catholic christian marriage had the influence of early missionaries who brought christianity wrapped with their culture. According to her it may be difficult to establish a total distinction over what is and what was christian and what was people's culture. She further adds that the whole notion of polygamy and divorce and the question of procreation were the areas that the two differed a great

---

<sup>31</sup> E. Cavicchi, Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society. Turin: Novastampa di Verona (C) 1977: 14-16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid: 76

deal.<sup>33</sup> She does not, however, show how the above differences can be harmonised.

In summary the above literature review shows that many aspects of African customary marriage have resisted change despite the campaign of christian missionaries to have them abandoned. It also indicates that there are some western cultural values that have found their way into church marriages today. The review further shows that many of the studies carried out in Africa on marriage in the context of christianity are mainly historical or theological in their perspective and are highly generalised. As a result a research gap has been identified in the realm of trying to find out what has been the outcome of the interaction between imposed marriage systems and the customary ones with special reference to one particular denomination and community.

## 1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the above literature review it has been established that there have been external influences that have affected change in African customary marriages. This has led to instability of marriages in the sense that certain incompatible new values have been imposed on the already existing ones necessitating a displacement of re-interpretation of the later.

It has been shown that christian missionaries who came to

---

<sup>33</sup> J. Mukuha, "The Integration of Religious Preparation of Traditional Marriage to Christian marriage with special reference to Kikuyu community of Kiambu District" M A Thesis, Catholic University of East Africa: 92-100

Africa in the 19th century did all they could to establish a replica of their own marriage system on African soil. They not only introduced foreign values and ethics into African customary marriage but they also openly attacked some of the deeply held traditions and customs surrounding it such as bride-wealth, polygamy among others which they labelled as unchristian. As a result an average African christian while entering a christian marriage is torn between adhering to basic traditional aspects surrounding this institution and the implanted foreign ones. In this regard adjustment and hence adaptation has always been a very hard task. This state of the matter has tended to favour a double standard while dealing with such pressing marital issues as infertility, death of a spouse, single parenthood and this scenario has not augured well for marriage stability.

The present study endeavours to adopt conflict theory in its assessment of the interaction between Roman Catholic Church marriage and Kikuyu customary marriage. The assumption being that there are certain alien values and ethics in Roman Catholic christian marriage which are imposed on the Kikuyu catholic adherents intending to marry in church and that this has tended to generate value-conflict. This study also takes into account other variables such as socio-economic forces which may in one way or the other have intensified this conflict. Thus, value-conflict theoretical framework is going to be employed while interpreting the data.

## 1.6 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of this study.

- (1) That before the intervention of christian missionaries in the Kikuyu land, there existed a stable marriage system that was ideal under the existing conditions.
- (2) That Roman Catholic Church has been one of the major agents of change that has led to the disintegration of Kikuyu customary marriage.
- (3) That the interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic Church marriage has led to value-conflict in responding to marital issues leading to the instability of marriages.

## 1.7 SCOPE AND AREA OF STUDY

The scope of this study is narrowed down to Tuthu Parish which is located in Murang'a Catholic Diocese. Administratively this parish encompasses three locations namely; Rwathia, Kanyenyaini and Kiruri all of which are in Kangema Division in Murang'a District. The parish territory is one hundred square kilometres and its altitude ranges from six thousands and five hundred feet to seven thousands and five hundred feet above sea level.<sup>31</sup> The parish comprises of ten local churches

---

<sup>31</sup> See, S. Bottignole, Christian Communities in Central Kenya Nyeri Diocese Pastoral

namely; Tuthu, Karurumo, Kanyenyaini, Kiruri, Wanjerere, Nyagatugu, Kihoya, Kiawambogo, Rwathia and Ichichi. The current number of those enrolled as church members in the parish is twelve thousands five hundred and forty seven people.<sup>35</sup>

Tuthu Parish was selected because it had the earliest influence of Roman Catholic Church in Murang'a Diocese. It is from Tuthu Parish that Roman Catholic Missionaries opened up other mission stations much later in other parts of Murang'a Diocese. Hence, people of Tuthu Parish have experienced intensive catholic influence for a long time (since 1902).

Again, Roman Catholic church in this locality preceded all the other denominations with a good number of years and in most parts of the parish this church is still dominant up-to-date. Further, this parish was selected because since its founding it has been evangelised predominantly by Consolata Missionaries whose influence continue to be felt through the Fathers, who up-to-date, continue to serve as the priests in-charge of the parish.

Tuthu parish was also selected because it is at the heart of Kikuyu community right from its very beginning and up to the present day all its members are Kikuyu who occupy their ancestral land. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of them are peasant farmers who lead almost the same pattern of life and

---

Conference, Nyeri, January 1976, Subsection 5.5.1.

<sup>35</sup> This is per Tuthu Parish record which has all the names of all those who have been baptised and enrolled in all the local churches.



thus their experience of and response to Roman Catholic Christian faith is more or less similar.

Finally, both time and finances were put into consideration while selecting Tuthu parish as a unit of study. We felt that a larger area than the parish needed more time and finances to safeguard getting overgeneralised and unfocused findings. It is, however, hoped that what is learnt from this study at micro-level is representative enough to warrant some generalisation.

## 1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In carrying out this research the author decided to use library research, administration of a questionnaire, participant observation and personal interviews.

Three months were spent in the following libraries: Kenyatta University, Tangaza College, Daystar University, Kenya National Library, Kenya National Archives, Institute of African Studies and Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library consulting literature relevant to the study. Besides, records on marriage, baptism and confirmation and other related information were scrutinised at Tuthu parish and Murang'a Diocese headquarters.

The library research which forms the secondary data, provided information on Kikuyu traditional society and the larger part of the origin and spread of Catholic church in Kikuyu land. These sources were useful in

assessing both the approach and the attitude of missionaries towards the Kikuyu. the relevant documents form part of our bibliography.

The sample of informants who were used for the study to collect primary data was divided into four major groups namely; the youth, the aged, the catechists including the clergy and the young adults.<sup>36</sup> These grouping was deemed necessary as there were certain issues that concerned each of the following categories. Four questionnaires for each of the above categories were designed to elicit a wide range of views from as many of them as possible.<sup>37</sup> Initially the author targeted two hundred informants from the parish. To arrive at this sample stratified random sampling was utilised. As a result, one hundred young adults, forty aged members, forty-five youths and fifteen Catechists, Clergy inclusive had questionnaires taken personally to them in their local churches, homes, places of work or in the seven secondary schools in the parish. An explanation was given to them on the purpose of research. Apart from students who were only given the weekend, the others were given two weeks to fill in the questionnaire.

Participant observation on the other hand required the author to incorporate himself in the lives of those being studied so as to have first hand experience of marital practices of the community under study. The author had

---

<sup>36</sup> See the preface for the operational definitions for each of these groups.

<sup>37</sup> See the Appendix for the content of each of the four questionnaires.

an opportunity of spending time with four catholic families, attending church services, attending one youth seminar and also attending two wedding ceremonies. During this time the author watched, listened, enquired and even recorded what he witnessed.

Finally, the author decided to administer personal interviews to some key informants drawn from the above four groups. To identify them, the author consulted the filled questionnaires as well as church leaders and from the possible informants got he drew a purposive sample of thirty. This consisted of three elderly people, three catechist and one clergy, two single mothers, two widows and two widowers; four divorcees; six youths drawn from both monogamous and polygamous families, two ladies and a gentleman in single state and two men and two women from polygamous marriages. Those who were interviewed were selected because of their views on the institution of marriage as catholics, their personal experience in marriage or the role they play in marital issues.

There were also group interviews conducted in all the seven secondary schools in the parish. This involved Catholic Action Students drawn from Tuthu Parish whereby random sampling method was used to select fifteen students per school. Again ten single mothers were interviewed as a group at Kanyenyaini local church. Also interviewed as a group were eight old men and women at Nyagatugu local church compound.

## 1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following then is what was experienced in the field. Firstly, the questionnaire method consumed less time to administer and was given to a wider sample as we have shown above. However, there was lack of close personal supervision and limitations imposed by illiteracy. For instance, the author had to translate almost two thirds of the questions from English to Kikuyu mother tongue. This was a difficult process as words loose meaning in the process. For instance, it was difficult to translate such English words as conflict and value. Key informants were, however, utilised to fill in gaps left out by the administration of the questionnaires.

Out of the two hundred questionnaires administered only one hundred and fifty nine were returned in time. Amongst this, twenty three were vaguely answered, left blank while others had not been adequately answered. Thus, it was only one hundred and thirty six questionnaires which were found useful for analysis. This necessitated soliciting further information from key informants.

Secondly, personal interview afforded the informants room for clarification where they did not quite understand the questions. Some of them gave additional relevant information related to the study. Personal interviews also enabled the author to reformulate his questions in order to elicit the information he felt was not adequately answered in the questionnaire. Group interviews also

proved useful in catering for inconsistencies in answers given by individual informants. Through them the author was able to get the correct information.

Too much time was, however, spent in collecting of data from each respondent. Most people, particularly of the older generation diverted from the questions put to them and discussed topics of their interest. The author had to use extra effort to bring them back to the relevant topic.

Finally, there were some informants who, after realising that the author was not a catholic adherent became suspicious of the motive behind the research and demanded to know why he did not carry out the research in his own denomination. However, the author was able to give them convincing reasons such as the numerical significance of the target group, the historical background of the church among others which satisfied them.

With the above methods the author feels that he was able to get the information he required for this study. The data collected was analysed and the result was used in the subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SETTING

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Before a concrete discussion of Kikuyu customary marriage can be of value to the present study it is worthwhile for us to survey briefly the traditional setting of the Kikuyu community. This is so because the nature and structure of the latter greatly determined the kind of marriage system that existed among the Kikuyu society. Moreover, a survey of Kikuyu traditional setting would enable us to assess, the impact that other external forces have had on it and in turn the consequence of this scenario on Kikuyu customary marriage.

This chapter, then attempts to unravel the whole idea of Kikuyu traditional identity; that is: their myth of origin; their historical and geographical location; their territory system; their education, economic and belief systems among others.

#### 2.2 MYTHS OF ORIGIN OF THE KIKUYU PEOPLE

The word Kikuyu is the Swahili rendering of what in Kikuyu is *Gikuyu*. Gikuyu is also the name of the founder of the tribe in the tradition.<sup>1</sup> According to the myth of origin of the Kikuyu ethnic group *Ngai* (God) carried Gikuyu on top of Mount

---

<sup>1</sup> E. Cavicchi, Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society. Turin: Novastampa di Verona

Kenya where no man had ever been before that time. He showed him the beautiful landscape spread for miles and miles at the foot of the mountain and told him that that land was his. Then God ordered *Gikuyu* to go down the mountain and build a hut under the fig tree. Finally, he gave him a wife called Mumbi - a name which means "a moulder of earthen ware". She bore him nine daughters whose names are Wachera, Wanjiku, Wairimu, Wangare, Wanjiru, Mwethaga, Waithera, Wambui and Wangui.<sup>2</sup>

The tradition, further relates that *Gikuyu* beseeched God to give him nine young males to marry his nine daughters. One day nine men who came from God's providence visited the nine daughters. They were so pleased with them that they stayed and married them. The principal clans into which Kikuyu tribe is subdivided, have as ancestors the nine daughters of *Gikuyu* and Mumbi - hence a matrilineal system in the Kikuyu social organisation. The informants among the old age had it that there was a tenth daughter by the name Wamuyu who was not mentioned for Kikuyu customarily feared that counting people would result to a bad omen. It is believed that this daughter did not marry but she nevertheless got herself a family out of which the clan of Ica Kamuyu originated. According to the tradition this system was overthrown later by revolt of men, who, however, threatened by

---

(c) 1977: 14

<sup>2</sup> J. Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya. London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd. 1961: 8.

their wives kept the female names of the clans in remembrance of their origin from Gikuyu daughters. A strictly patrilineal system was, thus, set up.<sup>3</sup>

The nine daughters' offspring were thus offsprings of Gikuyu and Mumbi and all Kikuyu regard themselves as children of Gikuyu and Mumbi with mythical rights within the ancestral territory.

### 2.3 HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF KIKUYU PEOPLE

The present day Kikuyu ethnic group initially occupied a place called *Mukurwe-wa-Gathanga* (today in Murang'a District). Due to their population increase, the Kikuyu people could not get land to settle. Thus, various clan members found land for settlement northwards in *Gaki* (Nyeri District) or southwards in *Kabete* (Kiambu District).<sup>4</sup>

Kikuyu land was reckoned by Kikuyu themselves to be the whole of the territory enclosed within the perimeter obtained by drawing the lines by top to top of four mountains: Mount Kenya at the north east corner, the Aberdare ranges at the north-west corner, the Ngong Hills at the south-west corner and the Oldonyo Sapuk at the south-east corner. On this hilly plateau, lying between 5,000 and 7,000 feet above sea level, the climate is everywhere healthy: warm sunny days and cool

---

S. Bottignole, *Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity*. Nairobi: Heinemann Education Books (E.A.) Ltd (C) 1984: 31.

G. Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974): 25.



nights, almost the whole year around, though the weather is hotter and cooler with heavy falling mists between July and September. The two periods of rain allowed for two yearly crops and harvests.<sup>5</sup>

#### 2.4 THE KIKUYU SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM

The smallest grouping was the elementary or polygamous domestic family living in the homestead (*mucii*). A group of homesteads formed a village (*ituura*). A village might be inhabited by one family group, a part of it or several of them. A group of villages formed a *Mwaki*, a unit in which people would assist each other with hot embers to re-light a fire which had gone out. *Mwaki* in turn would be part of a ridge (*rugongo*). Several ridges formed *bururi* a word usually referring to the three large territorial divisions of the whole Kikuyu land namely; Kabete (Kiambu), Metuni (Murang'a) and Gaki (Nyeri).<sup>6</sup>

Territory integrity was maintained by a system of units starting with the village. Reriani makes the following observations on village:

The village was the most important social and administrative unit; it was the focus of the social and political interaction of everyday life and indeed formed a

---

<sup>5</sup> E. Cavicchi, *Op. cit.*:12-14.

<sup>6</sup> L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*. Vol. III, Ed. by G.S.B. Beecher and J. Ensminger (Academic Press INC London: (C) 1977): 7-8

closely knit community.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth noting that all members of a village regardless of their clan origin, shared in the common life of village. Each member participated in all measures connected with the safety or defence of the village. They were also obliged to each other in bush clearing, cultivation and hut building. Moreover, settling of quarrels and regulation of local affairs was carried out at village level.<sup>8</sup>

It was at ridge level that the warriors of regiment in power exercised their executive power as noted here below. There was also a ridge council of elders which performed Legislative, Judicial and Religious functions for the ridge as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

The *bururi* (Kikuyu country) was united in matters of; Law, custom and religion. Two national Committees were responsible for this unity. One of these committees consisted of elders selected from the ruling generation. These elders were involved in making new laws, repealing of old ones and of making peace treaties with Maasai among other responsibilities. The other committee consisted of warriors selected from the regiment in power to represent different ridges. Their

---

<sup>7</sup> P.G. Reiani, "Interaction of Western Christian Marriage with Kikuyu Customary Practices: A Case of Mathira Division. Diploma in Cultural Studies, University of Nairobi, 1987: 4.

<sup>8</sup> L.S.B. Leakey *Op. cit*

<sup>9</sup> H.W. Kinoti, "Aspects of Gikuyu Traditional Morality", (Ph.D. thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983): 63.

function was to ensure that the decisions of the ruling elders were communicated to the people.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.5 THE KIKUYU KINSHIP SYSTEMS

The family group was the smallest unit of the kinship system. It (family group) brought together all those who were related by blood namely; a man, his wife or wives and children and also grand and great-grand children, who lived on a piece of land.

It is worth noting that Kikuyu society was and still is organised under the patrilineal system. Traditionally, the father or grand-father was the supreme ruler of the homestead and he was the custodian of the family property.<sup>11</sup>

The woman, after the wedding contract, became part of the family of the husband, made her home in the residence of his family and cultivated part of the land allotted to her. The sons born of such a union, carried on working on that land and maintained in such a way the link between it and the ancestors, after whom they were named, while the daughters were settled in the new homes on their husbands' land.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid: 64.

<sup>11</sup> I.M.C. Cagnolo, *The Kikuyu*, (Catholic Printing Press, Nyeri, 1933): 1

<sup>12</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.*: 31.

If a man died without a male child his family group came to an end. This was one thing that the Kikuyu people feared dreadfully and it was one of the factors behind polygamous system of marriage. Perpetuation of kinship group was therefore the main goal of every Kikuyu marriage for its extinction meant cutting off the ancestral spirits from visiting the earth, because there would be no one left to communicate with them.<sup>13</sup>

Each member of the family was expected to respect each of the other members of the family. The young members were supposed to emulate the old and to respect them as their elders, a thing that was compulsory in the family. Likewise, the old were to respect, advice and protect their younger members. Again, most ceremonies required the presence of all the family members. In this way individuals learnt to value family welfare and to see their first responsibility as belonging here.<sup>14</sup>

The head of the family, the father, ensured that there was peace and harmony among his family. This was significant because his position in the community depended largely on the type of homestead he kept and how he managed it because the capability of good management of one's homestead was taken as a testimonial that one was able to manage public affairs.<sup>15</sup> However, those

---

<sup>13</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 13.

<sup>14</sup> H.W. Kinoti, *Op. cit.*: 58.

<sup>15</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 9.

family members who rebelled were punished by the council of elders who acted as the custodian of law and order. Nevertheless, this stage was rarely arrived at for in most cases children feared breaking prohibitions, oaths and taboos which acted as social controls among the Kikuyu.<sup>16</sup>

In case of the absence or death of the father, his duties were passed on to the eldest son of the senior wife in an extended family. However, he would normally consult his brothers or other close relatives before executing important matters regarding family affairs.

The *Mbari*, (family group) affairs were co-ordinated by a *Mbari* council comprised of all the initiated males who have attained elder status. Normally the council chose a titular head called a *Muramati* (guardian) whose primary duty was to regulate the day to day affairs of the *Mbari* such as mediating, being spokesman in intra-mbari affairs as well as administering the *Mbari* land and calling the *Mbari* council when the need arose.<sup>17</sup>

The second kinship unit is the clan (*Muhiriga*). It is certain that owing to the polygamous system of marriage a family unit increases rapidly and in a few generations the number increases to several thousands, which render it impossible

---

<sup>16</sup> J. Mukuha, "The Integration of Religious Preparation of Traditional Marriage to Christian Marriage with special reference to Kikuyu community of Kiambu District" (M.A. thesis Catholic University of East Africa, 1996), p.18.

<sup>17</sup> G. Muriuki, *Op. cit.*:115-116.

for a *Mbari* to live together as a group where they could refer to one another as father, mother, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, grandfather, grandmother and so on. When these identities of blood relations disappear, the only bond left between a group is the clan (*Muhiriga*) identity.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth noting that the clan consists of several *Mbari*, who trace their common ancestor not from the male like in the *Mbari* but from the female. There are nine clans who consider themselves the descendants of Gikuyu and Mumbi, their original parents.

The inclusion of a wide range of relatives such as uncles, aunts and grandparents in the clan played a very significant role in the community. For some very sensitive issues such as initiation, boys were mostly referred to their grandfather or a man of their father's age for advice, while girls would be referred to their aunts who were believed to be able to discuss freely with them even that which was considered very secret in life. In case of pregnancy out of wedlock it was the role of an aunt to advise a girl accordingly.<sup>19</sup>

Members of the same clan met when there was big issues involving the clan and discussed them such as marriage, initiation and death.<sup>20</sup> Again clansmen were

---

<sup>18</sup> L S B. Leakey, volume II *Op. cit.* : 115-116.

<sup>19</sup> J. Mukuha, *Op. cit.* : 19.

<sup>20</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.* 7.

obliged to help each other in matters of defence, hospitality and paying compensation for murder or man's slaughter when a member of a clan killed a member of another clan.<sup>21</sup>

The third principal factor in unifying the Kikuyu society is the system of age-grading. *Mbari* and *Muhiriga* system helped to form several groups of kinsfolk within the tribe, acting independently, but the system of age-grading united and solidified the whole tribe in all its activities. Further, age-grading ensured mutual protection of the rights of the individuals in each group, in the absence of centralised form of government.<sup>22</sup>

Each year a time was set when boys and girls would undergo circumcision, thus becoming members of one age-group. This was irrespective of the family, clan or one's place of origin. During this time concerned members acquired new status, new responsibilities and new privileges symbolised by the giving of a name to the initiates.<sup>23</sup>

The system of age-group had two major significance: firstly, the members belonged to each other as age-mates. They were responsible for each other's good and collectively responsible for the good name of the age-group. One of the age-

---

<sup>21</sup> H.W. Kinoti, *Op. cit.* :60.

<sup>22</sup> E.Cavicchi, *Op. cit.* :16.

<sup>23</sup> J. Mukuha, *Op. cit.* :19.

groups' main concerns was to maintain its honour and good reputation. Members were supposed to conduct themselves with integrity for the sake of their own personal reputation, that of their family and that of their age-group. Age-group applied collective measures to any of their member whose conduct they disapproved.<sup>24</sup> For instance, during age-group dances, parties, meetings and other social gatherings, members concerned advised those suspected of betraying the group in terms of behaviour. Songs of praise and condemnation were also used as machineries for social control.

Secondly, group initiation into adulthood marked for men, the beginning of the group's public responsibilities. One had to pass through successive levels of responsibilities. The first age-group was composed of junior warriors. The members were involved in military training, organising dances and trips and participating in war if necessary. The second age-grade was that of senior warriors. It comprised those who had completed junior warrior apprenticeship. They acted as police force in the land. They kept order in market places, dances, games and other festivals. They spied and arrested witch doctors who practised black magic and put spell on other people.

The third age-grade was the council of learning elders. The members of this council had married, established their homestead and their wives had given birth to

---

H W. Kinoti, *Op cit.* : 60.



the first child. They were mainly pre-occupied with learning judicial procedures. The members of the fourth grade formed the council of peace. They carried sacred leaves (*Matathi*) and staff (*Muthegi*) to symbolise that their duty was to be peace makers in the Kikuyu land and that their decision was to be guided by reason and wisdom and not emotions. The last age-group was *Ukuru* (aged-grade). It was for those whose children had all been circumcised and their wives had passed child bearing age. They formed Council of Priesthood, that is they worked alongside *Secrs*.<sup>25</sup>

In the absence of central government one important unifying factor for the entire Kikuyu people was the idea of ruling "generation". All the initiated male population was divided into two generations namely *Mwangi* or *Irungu*. In any period there was a generation in power and a generation in the process of formation. The ruling generation was made up of elders and it exercised authority throughout the country for a period of between thirty and thirty five years. This is the period it took the next ruling generation to be formed. The handing over of power from one ruling generation to the next one was marked by a ceremony celebrated all over the country known as *Itwika*. The elders in question were ritual leaders and held prayers to God and performed several religious ceremonies on behalf of the entire

<sup>25</sup>

---

K. Kayu "When things fall apart: A short study of inculture contact among Gikuyu". A departmental paper presented in the Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, March 18, 1970:4.

population.<sup>26</sup>

Further, it was only the elders of the ruling generation who had the right and duty to preserve and interpret the tradition, make rules for new contingencies, direct military defence and offence, administer justice and generally regulate the conduct of the affairs of the community. Moreover, these elders behaved as the representatives of their families or group of families, of their clans and of the whole tribe. They formed council of elders each with definite powers and territory where to execute them.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.6 THE KIKUYU SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Kikuyu system of education began at the time of birth and ended with death. The child had to pass various stages of age-groupings with a system of education defined for every status in life. The parents took the responsibility of educating their children until they reached the age of tribal education. They aimed at educating their children on more about family and clan traditions.

Play was part and parcel of this education. While playing, the children imitated their elders in anticipation for adult life. For instance, they played the games of husband and wife whereby the little girls assumed the roles of their

---

<sup>26</sup> I.S.B. Leakey, Vol. II, *Op. cit.* :994-8

<sup>27</sup> E.Cavicchi, *Op. cit.* : 17-21.

mothers while the boys played the roles of husbands and behaved in the same way they saw their fathers do in their respective homesteads.<sup>28</sup> Thus role models especially in the context of family were taken very seriously.

When the child had grown beyond babyhood, the father took the charge of the boy's education, while the mother took the whole responsibility of the girl's education and a part of the boy's education. The father taught the boy how to become a practical agriculturalist. The boy was also taught about the family, clan and the tribal lands and their boundaries were carefully pointed out to him. The mother on the other hand, taught her daughter all things concerning domestic duties of a wife in managing and harmonising the affairs of a homestead.<sup>29</sup>

The initiation of both sexes among the Kikuyu was looked upon as the deciding factor in giving a boy or a girl the status of manhood and womanhood in the Kikuyu community.

The trials of circumcision taught the youth how a man must bear pain, meet misfortune and bear himself like a warrior. He was taught to think matters over carefully and not to act on the impulse of the moment. It was made clear to him that he must work hard in the garden so that he might get the wherewithal to marry. He was taught to obey parents and other older people, to help the needy and to

---

<sup>28</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit* : 99-101

<sup>29</sup> Ibid: 102-103.

obey the leader elected by the people. He learnt in particular the right behaviour to certain people especially the in-laws. Moreover, boys were taught to look forward to marriage as a duty to themselves to the clan and the tribe.<sup>30</sup>

When a girl was ready to get circumcised, she was taught manners such as how to behave like a lady, not to show off, not to bathe in the open, not to eat in the presence of men other than those of her own age or kinsfolk. She was taught to treat strangers with the proper mixture of courtesy and suspicion. Respect for her husband's people was inculcated as well as obedience to him; she was also warned against hasty and impetuous behaviour.<sup>31</sup>

At marriage the husband was taught his duties towards a wife, to treat her well, to establish good relations with his parents-in-law and to receive their blessings before he took their daughter to his home. When his wife delivered, he was instructed when the sexual intercourse might be resumed, how he might respect the child's maternal relatives among other issues. At marriage the girl, on the other hand, was taught to obey her husband's parents and to regard all the children and property in her husband's homestead as hers and to treat them with the care she would give her most personal belongings. She was also taught her husband's rights

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid: 109.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: 111.

and her rights over against his.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.7 SEX-LIFE AMONG THE YOUTH IN KIKUYU

### TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY

While young people of the opposite sex were traditionally free to meet freely, it was counted a disgrace for any one of them to engage in sexual intercourse before marriage, and therefore their togetherness was followed by set of rules. In order not to suppress entirely the normal sexual instinct, the boys and girls were taught that in order to keep good health they must acquire the technique of practising restricted form of intercourse called *Ngwiko*. This was practised only by initiated boys and girls. In the process of *Ngwiko* the boy removed all the clothings and the girl removed her upper clothing leaving the lower one (*Mwengu*) which she tacked under her legs to cover her private parts. In this way they fondle rubbing their breasts with their legs tightly crossed. The main concern in the whole process is the enjoyment of breasts and not the whole experience of sexual intercourse. It was believed that this practice helped to save the youth from nervous and physic maladjustment.<sup>33</sup>

It is worth noting that *Ngwiko* was looked upon as a sacred act and one

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> M. Nyaga, "Home and Family Social Change: The Kikuyu". (Unpublished).

which must be done in a systematic, well organised manner. As noted above no sexual intercourse was allowed and hence the youth were expected to develop the technique of self-control in all matters of sex. The girl in particular was expected to be a virgin by the time she married. Any man who rendered a girl pregnant was severely punished by the Tribal Council and was made to pay fine in form of specified number of goats or sheep as the council's fee. Besides, the man was made a social outcast by all the young men and girls of his age-group. The girl who became pregnant, on the other hand, paid a fine by providing a feast to the boys and girls of her age-group. She was also liable to ridicule.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.8 THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE KIKUYU PEOPLE

Among the Kikuyu, the agricultural activity constituted the pivot of the economic traditional system. To own land was thus of vital importance. In fact, to the Kikuyu land was not just the economic asset of a group but it enshrined their very existence.<sup>35</sup> Communion with the ancestral spirits was perpetuated through contact with the soil in which the ancestors of the tribe lie buried. Thus the soil was especially honoured and an everlasting oath was to swear by the earth.

---

<sup>34</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op cit.*:156-160.

<sup>35</sup> Middleton and Greet Kershaw, The Central Tribes of the North Eastern Bantu. [The Kikuyu including Embu, Meru, Mbere, Chuka, Mwimbi, Tharaka and the Kamba of Kenya] (London: International African Institute, 1965): 23

The chief occupations among the Kikuyu constituted growing of crops such as sorghum, millet, beans, bananas, sugarcane and rearing of livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats. Each family constituted the economic unit. This was controlled and strengthened by the system of division of labour according to sex. Each member of the family unit knew perfectly well what task he/she was required to perform, in their economic productivity and the distribution of the family resources, so as to ensure the material prosperity of the group.<sup>36</sup>

According to such a division of labour based on gender, men had precise duties to deforest and break the soil, to plant specified crops, to provide stakes for bananas and to look after domestic animals among others. Moreover, they were in charge of building the house frame, of defending the family and homestead, of hunting and iron processing. Women for their part had responsibility for preparing the soil for sowing, for planting maize, beans and sweet potatoes, for taking care of the fields and crops. Besides, they were supposed to take care of the home. This started with supplying wood and water and ended with cooking of food and the care of the husband, children and any guest; they had also to deal with the manufacturing of leather clothes, potteries and baskets and also completed the building of new houses by thatching the walls and the roof.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 53.

<sup>37</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.* pp. 32.

Both men and women were involved in trading, very often through barter. Usually, women bartered cereals and vegetables while men exchanged cows, goats and sheep. The exchange of such animals was very important because to own livestock was not only a sign of wealth but in some cases, for instance, sacrifice and wedding festivities it became absolute necessity. In those days no parents would allow their daughter to marry unless they received a certain number of goats or cows as bride-wealth. Again in Kikuyu law sheep and goats were required according to a fixed scale in payment of all kinds of offenses.<sup>38</sup> The standard value of commodities, however, was traditionally reckoned in goats.

## 2.9 THE TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE KIKUYU

The Kikuyu community was regulated even in the smallest details by the traditional religion with which it was fully identified. The sense of sacredness permeated every act of the traditional life. From childhood, the Kikuyu grew up in an environment that helped them to learn the beliefs and values of their tribe. This happened especially through the teaching of legends and proverbs, and sometimes through participation in sacred rituals.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> S.K. Gitau, "The Impact of Scripture Translations on Missionary Churches. A Case Study of the Church of the Province of Kenya, Murang'a District, 1903-88", MA Thesis University of Nairobi, 1989): 18

<sup>39</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.* : 33.



On religious life of Kikuyu traditional community Kenyatta makes the following observation:

.... Religion is interwoven with traditions and social customs of the people. Thus all the members of the community are automatically considered to have acquired during childhood teachings, all that it is necessary to know about religion and custom. The duty of imparting this knowledge to the children is entrusted to the parents, who are looked upon as the official ministers of both religious ethics and social customs.<sup>40</sup>

Such traditional religious knowledge and belief hinge upon belief in *Ngai* (God); the ancestors; the spirit of God in the world of the living and the unborn; in the animals, vegetable and inanimate world. God was conceived as an immanent, benevolent and awesome presence among the people. The evidence of his presence was the permanence and the majesty of the sky, the sun, the mountains surrounding Kikuyu country and the prominent, evergreen sacred trees such as fig tree.<sup>41</sup>

According to Kikuyu traditional community, God the creator was also the great giver of things. In his creation, the greatest gift he gave was life. He also gave other things by which life was sustained and safeguarded. They believed that God who gave them life also gave them their agricultural way of life.<sup>42</sup>

God must not be troubled for matters of secondary importance but he must

---

<sup>40</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.* : 232.

<sup>41</sup> H.W. Kinoti, *Op. cit.* pp 69.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

be invoked by the patriarchal family in the crucial moments of the life of a person (birth, circumcision, marriage and death). Further, in the moment of crisis such as famine and epidemic, the whole tribe had to implore in a communal way the supreme being through specific rituals, led by elders. The elders in question must have had proved themselves to have high moral standard and they were the ones who were entrusted with the role of sacrificing to God within the religious divisions called ridges.<sup>43</sup>

Traditionally, organised prayers were not a daily routine. However, every morning an elder prayed on behalf of his household that his home may be granted peace and well being. Individuals were aware that they were somehow accountable to God for their conduct.<sup>44</sup> Further, the Kikuyu believed that the deceased continued to live as spirits and that their influence was supernatural and their approval was necessary for prosperity. During all the sacred ceremonies the ancestors were constantly remembered and, when a calamity or a disease afflicted one person or one family, the medicine-man was supposed to discover the spirit or spirits offended in order to appease them by offering the appropriate sacrifice.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> P.I. Njoroge, "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities Between Kikuyu Traditional Communal Rites and the Seven Sacraments in the Catholic Church" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980/81): 23

<sup>44</sup> H.W. Kinoti, *Op. cit.* : 71.

<sup>45</sup> S. Boltignole, *Op. cit.* : 34.

Moreover, it was believed that the spirit of the deceased continued to belong to the various groups that the deceased belonged in life. There were thus spirits attached to families, clans, age-groups, professional groups among others. Consequently, there was no context in which an individual might misbehave without arousing the displeasure of the spirits in some capacity or other. Human stations in various spheres of life had therefore the backing of the spirits of the deceased. The greatest respect, however, was accorded to the spirits of the deceased parents by their children. They were believed to maintain the vital link between the family and the supernatural realities, God and the ancestors. It was believed that behaviour that angered parents when they were still alive was bound to bring serious harm on the guilty person.<sup>16</sup>

According to the Kikuyu community, the duties of hospitality, solidarity, sharing and respect for the leader and authority were sacred. Each form of individualism and, even, introspection was banished. Therefore, an individual, within his or her family, clan and age-group was viewed as the centre of everything. However, God was believed to be the creator of all and hence to him alone one was supposed to give supreme worship.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> H.W. Kinoti, *Op. cit.* : 78.

<sup>17</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.* : 34.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above it can be concluded that the Kikuyu community believed that they had a common identity in the sense that they regarded themselves as descendants of Gikuyu and Mumbi. A constant reminder of this fact was their belonging to the nine Kikuyu clans which bear the names of the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. We have noted that the kinship system in the Kikuyu community guaranteed the position, responsibilities and obligations of each and every individual right from the family to the entire community level. This kinship system ensured peace and harmony in the community by its application of collective measures to counteract any form of deviant behaviour of a member in anyone given group in the community.

It has also been noted that Kikuyu had a life long education system whereby each stage in life was accompanied with inculcation of relevant values. Elderly members of the community especially the parents and relatives played a crucial role in educating children on relevant values and attitudes expected of them as useful members of the community. An important stage noted was that of initiation whereby both boys and girls were taught accordingly on how they were expected to conduct themselves on entering marital life.

It has been shown that the Kikuyu youth had an opportunity to get acquainted with members of the opposite sex. This freedom was safeguarded from

abuse by training the youth on how to handle and control their sexual instinct. We have also noted that the Kikuyu were agriculturalists and that this occupation of theirs had an impact on the family, namely; division of labour along gender lines.

Finally, this chapter has highlighted the fact that the sense of sacredness permeated every act of traditional life. Noted also was the communal aspect that underlined the religious life of the Kikuyu community. That the belief that the ancestors had an influence on the various groups they used to belong to greatly sanctioned good conduct among the living members of the community.

With the above background of Kikuyu traditional setting, we are now going to discuss the main features of Kikuyu customary marriage in our next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter attempts to examine critically Kikuyu customary marriage. It not only aims at giving the main features of such a marriage but it also scrutinises how particular marital problems and challenges were faced and overcome at the individual, couple and community level. In a nutshell it explores the eligibility for Kikuyu customary marriage, bride-wealth, polygamy, infertility, family planning among other components. The author feels that an exhaustive discussion of the above aspects will enable us in subsequent chapters to assess the full impact of various external agents of change on this institution.

#### **3.2 GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR MARRIAGE**

##### **IN KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY**

Marriage in Kikuyu traditional society, which was a permanent union between a man and one or several women, was the central institution upon which all others were dependent. Every Kikuyu man or woman saw marriage as a duty to himself/herself, his/her family and the clan. Marriage was looked upon as a part of one's life. It was unheard of traditionally for one to decide not to marry. However,

the value and respect that the Kikuyu had for marriage did not warrant every other young man or woman to marry anybody of their liking as the following examples illustrates.

No person male or female could marry in Kikuyu traditional marriage before he/she was circumcised. Uncircumcised person was still a child in the eyes of the community no matter how old he/she was, simply because he lacked basic counselling which accompanied transition from childhood to adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

Again, so strong was the link between initiation and adulthood that uninitiated women were commonly believed to be unable to bear children. It was, therefore, not thought possible that a girl would jeopardise her future by foregoing initiation or that a man would marry such a person.<sup>2</sup> That circumcision has been regarded as an important condition in marriage has been stressed by Lambert when he stated:

Circumcision confers the rite of marriage and procreation on the persons of both sexes and is of more importance in regard to procreation than marriage. The uninitiated mother is just a naughty girl.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Wanjohi, "African and Conjoint Family Therapy". In African Christian Studies (Volume 5 No.1, March, 1989, Journal of the Catholic Higher Institute of East Africa, Nairobi): 68

<sup>2</sup> D.P. Sandgren, Christianity and the Kikuyu's Religious Divisions and Social Conflicts (New York. Peter Lang, (C) 1989): 71.

<sup>3</sup> H.E. Lambert, Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions (London: Oxford University Press, (C) 1966): 66.

Further, in the Kikuyu customary marriage no girl could marry before she went through her first menstrual period. This condition ensured that no girl child was subjected to the conditions of marriage. It was believed that onset of menstrual period was a significant mark of the maturity of a girl.<sup>4</sup>

The parties who intended to marry were not supposed to fall in the prohibited degrees. Such prohibitions were based on consanguinity or affinity. An objection based on consanguinity meant that a man was not to marry any woman to whom he was related in the direct line of descent. Therefore, he would not marry his grandmother, mother, daughters, or his parents' sisters or first cousins.

Prohibitions based on affinity demands that the man should not marry his wife's mother or sisters. Marriage was also not allowed between the children of blood brothers.

It is also worth noting that a particular clan might advise or even refuse its members to marry from a given clan for one reason or another. For instance, traditionally certain clans were associated with mental illness, miscarriages, witchcraft and sorcery, evil eyes among others.

Moreover, the very anti-social behaviour of certain members of a given clan could make other clans desist from marrying there. The following are two cases in point. If a woman happened to break a cooking pot, young men were advised not

---

<sup>4</sup> Oral Evidence, Gulielin, M. Muthiaka, 62 years old, Karurumo Local Church, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1997.



to marry from her family/clan. In those days the "earthen" pot was so essential in cooking food such that breaking it intentionally was taken to mean committing murder since without food one cannot live. Also young men were cautioned not to marry from clans known to have women who "fight" their husbands. By fighting here was meant holding husband's genitals following a quarrel for this was viewed as interfering directly with procreation which was highly regarded in Kikuyu customary marriage.<sup>5</sup>

Again, a married woman had no capacity to contract a valid marriage unless and until she had obtained a divorce. This limitation did not apply to a husband, as it would have contradicted the polygamous nature of the marriage.

### **3.2.1 The main stages involved in Contracting a valid Kikuyu Customary Marriage**

From a very young age the girls spent time with their mothers and other elderly women. This way they learnt duties of a wife and got instructions on how to behave when they got married. Similarly, the boys were coached by their fathers and other elders of the ways of running a homestead. These instructions, as noted in the previous chapter, were particularly emphasised during the circumcision ceremony, when the boys and the girls were educated on all the aspects of

---

<sup>5</sup> Oral Evidence: Joseph Kihungi Kibithe, 57 years old, Tuthu Local Church, 11<sup>th</sup> November,

marriage.<sup>6</sup>

Further, from the earliest infancy there was a close social intercourse between the sexes, which provided them with an opportunity of becoming acquainted with one another for a considerable time before the courtship began. Consequently, hasty judgements in choosing one's husband or wife was out of the question.<sup>7</sup>

The first step in marriage was the search for a companion in marriage. Among the Kikuyu, the individual was left free to choose his/her marriage partner. Once a boy found a girl possible to be a prospective wife he informed his parents. The latter at once started investigating the history of the family concerned: grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, criminal records, sterility, impotency, deformities, abnormalities be they mental or otherwise, family quarrels and divorces among others. Any close or remote blood relationship meant that the marriage was ruled out.<sup>8</sup>

The next step involved consultation of a *Mundu Mugo* (medicine-man) to

---

1997.

D.N. Wambeu, "Kikuyu Customary Marriage with particular Reference to Elopement". (LL.B. Thesis University of Nairobi, May, 1979): 12.

J.Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, (London: Martin Secker and Warburg Ltd., 1961): 165.

R.Wanjohi, *Op. cit.* : 69.

find out whether the girl would bring good luck to the family.<sup>9</sup> The father was now left to instruct the son to adjust himself to the new values which must now exist between him and the selected woman. The young man got hold of one of his intimate age-mate to accompany him to the prospective bride's homestead. It was here that the purpose of their visit was revealed metaphorically to the intended bride.<sup>10</sup>

Usually, the suitor and the best man reported to the former's father their findings. The father in turn had beer brewed and sent a special envoy to the prospective bride's father inviting him to attend a party. When the invitation was accepted, the beer was drunk for mutual understanding. It was during the drinking that he informed his chief guest metaphorically the purpose behind the party. If there was no objection, then, the marriage process began.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.2.2 *Njoohi ya Njurio* (Proposal Beer)

The initial stage in Kikuyu marriage was the brewing of beer known as *Njoohi ya*

---

<sup>9</sup> P.I. Njoroge, "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities Between Kikuyu Traditional Communal Rites and the Seven Sacraments in the Catholic Church". (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980/81): 64.

<sup>10</sup> G.W. Mathu, "Gikuyu Marriage Beliefs and Practices" in Discussion Paper No. 17 (Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, March 1971): 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: 5

*Njurio* (beer of proposal). The main objective of this was to know whether the girl had accepted the boy who brought the beer. It was during its drinking that the girl would affirm her love for the boy. Her father would give her a "horn full of beer" which she was required to give to the one she loved. The husband to-be in turn gave it to his father. While the prospective groom's father held the beer, a close relative from the prospective bride's family asked her, "Have you as my daughter, permitted me to drink this beer together with my family?" The daughter replied, "I have permitted you - drink it for me". By such a declaration she swore before the deity and her family not to ever embarrass them in future. It was after her declaration that both set of parents drank the beer and the betrothal was formalised.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2.3 The *Ngurario* (Pouring the Blood of Unity) Ceremony

The actual engagement ceremony in Kikuyu traditional society was called *Ngurario*. This ceremony announced publicly that the girl was engaged and provided an opportunity for the relatives of both sides to meet and know each other. It also marked the agreement on how much bride-wealth had to be paid. Before the latter was done, the girl had to signify her last consent. This she did by fetching the knife to be used in the slaughtering, took an active role in it and finally ate the roasted

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

kidneys of the ram. Since *Ngurario* announced publicly that the girl was now engaged, it entitled the party to move freely in the company of each other without moral approbium.<sup>13</sup> Besides, the girl was wholly to abandon from then henceforth any more dates and *Ngwiko* with any other man until marriage or wedding.

The participation of relatives from both families in the ceremony and feasting as well as dancing meant that the girl was blessed and was given away to the boy's clan by her parents in the company of and agreement with the whole clan.<sup>14</sup> The pouring of the blood of the sacrificed animal tied the two clans together and made them witness of and responsible for the marriage which had gradually taken effect in their presence and with their blessing.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2.4 *Rurucio* (Bride-wealth)

Bride-wealth in Kikuyu traditional society referred to the transfer of property usually in kind from or on behalf of bridegroom to the bride's family. This was especially done during the courtship period. It is worth mentioning here that bride-wealth as understood by Kikuyu had no commercial motive. Rather, it served as both legal

---

<sup>13</sup> J.I. Kimotho, "A Study of Kikuyu Customary Marriage with Special Emphasis on Rites and Ceremonies". (LL.B. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984): 50-3.

<sup>14</sup> N. Kirima, "Community Interest in African Marriage" in Church and Marriage in East Africa (Ed. A. Shorter, Published by AMECEA Research Department, Eldoret, Kenya, 1975): 287.

<sup>15</sup> R. Wanjohi, *Op. cit.*: 69.

and social condition which was an essential element in the validity of marriage.<sup>16</sup>

The payment of bride-wealth did not pose major problems because of the Kikuyu economic organisation. The young man's father's goats were considered as his own and could be used to pay bride-wealth. Brothers and relatives also assisted by giving him livestock. It was considered a moral obligation to assist a relative contemplating matrimony. Moreover, the instalment system was applied so that a young man might only pay half of the agreed bride-wealth before the marriage and the balance later.<sup>17</sup>

The customary purposes of bride-wealth are as follows: firstly, it served as a recognition of the value of woman both to her husband and to her relatives. It was argued that since the husband gave something in respect to his wife, it enhanced his affection and devotion to her since he would value her highly.<sup>18</sup> "I did not come here for nothing", the wife would say to her husband. Furthermore, it was not easy for a woman to speak before men if no bride-wealth was paid for her.<sup>19</sup>

Again, bride-wealth made a marriage legal, since it was a public acknowledgement that, that was a genuine marriage. If no bride-wealth was paid,

---

<sup>16</sup> P.G. Reriani, "Interaction of Western Christian Marriage with Kikuyu Customary Practices" (Diploma in Cultural Studies, University of Nairobi, 1987): 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: 26.

<sup>18</sup> J.I. Kimotho, *Op. cit.*: 55.

<sup>19</sup> Theological Advisory Group (TAG), A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family Life

that was an indication that the family did not approve of the marriage. This is especially so in the sense that bride-wealth was not in anyway a payment for the bride. Hence no man would remain unmarried simply because he was poor as the extended family was always ready to assist. Bride-wealth further ensured continued good relations between the two families or lineages. By accepting the bride-wealth the two families married each other and they became in-laws. It is to be noted that the payment of bride-wealth continued for a long time, even after the death of the husband responsible for paying it. In such a case the payment would be made by the *Muramati*, the first son who becomes a Trustee of the family property. There was also exchange of gifts between the in-laws. This act symbolised continued exchange of services between the in-laws as well as mutual co-operation in every way.<sup>20</sup>

The bride-wealth in particular helped to stabilise marriages. the fact that the bride-wealth was often contributed by all the members of the groom's family gave them all a chance for undertaking a co-operative venture thereby strengthening their family relationship.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the significance attached to bride-wealth made young men hardworking and obedient to their fathers and to co-operate with their

---

(Scott Theological College, Kenya, (C) 1994): 20.

<sup>20</sup> N. Kirima, *Op. cit.*: 290.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

brothers and relatives. This was very important when it came to solving marital conflicts.

If the marriage broke down, the bride-wealth could be claimed back from the woman's family. This shows the "insurance aspect" of the bride-wealth. This happened if the woman failed to fulfil her wifely duties or if she misbehaved towards the man's family. Few parents generally would have liked this to happen to their daughters. Consequently, no parents would have accepted bride-wealth and allow their daughter to marry a man unless they were reasonably sure that she would remain with her husband and be a good wife to him.

If already married and acting in a way that was likely to wreck the marriage, her parents at once spoke to her and warned her of the consequences, pointing out how serious it would affect the whole family. She was given instructions on how to fulfil her wifely and communal duties satisfactorily.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, if a husband gave his wife a just cause to leave him, he lost both his wife and a considerable part of bride-wealth. Hence, a man was pressurised by his family not to enter into a marriage that was not likely to be a success. However, if already married and it became known to the family members that he was ill-treating his wife, they at once remonstrated with him, reminding what

---

<sup>22</sup> L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903* VI.II, (London: Academic Press INC. 1977): 754.



he had to loose and did everything in their power to make him behave better.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2.5 The Role of *Guthinia Kiande* (cutting of shoulder blade-meat of a goat) in Kikuyu Customary Marriage

The giving of bride-wealth was legalised by the serving of *Kiande* which played a role as a registration document in the modern sense. The shared meat was eaten by the fiance with his boy friends and the fiancee with her girl friends who were witnesses to the marriage contract. In particular, the giving of *Kiande* meat by the groom to the bride was a highly significant aspect of marriage process, as it symbolised the development and promotion of in-law relations to a new level. As soon as it was served, it legally transferred the bride's social rights from her father to the groom and his family. Having been witnessed by the bride's parents and her kinsmen, *Kiande* stood as a living testimony of the transfer - that their daughter now belonged to another family and clan in which her future children would automatically inherit their social rights in society.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, a *Gruthinja Ngoima* (thanks giving) ceremony which once again involved all the members of the two clans if possible, officially ended the litany of these important ceremonies towards marriage covenant. The bride was then

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> For details see G.W. Mathu, *Op. cit.* pp 12 and P.I Njoroge *Op. cit.* 66.

declared a woman by eating a piece of meat from the sacrificial animal. Her physical, sexual, emotional and psychological maturity was no longer questionable. She was now a wife blessed to have children and free to join her husband at the time he was ready to fetch her for life.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.2.6 The Kikuyu Customary Wedding

When a man was ready to receive the wife in his home, he arranged for a day, agreed upon by the female members of his family, when to get her. This day was kept secret from the girl. On that day the women spied for the girl, captured and brought her with them to the boy's new home amid a scene of staged abduction and a mock fight between the female relatives of the boy and the girl. Age-mates also came to express their sorrow at having lost a companion.<sup>26</sup> This ceremony had its own symbolic significance as Mbiti observes:

It was one way of showing the value of the bride. But its major purpose seems to dramatise the very fact that the girl is being cut off from one family and joined to another ... It is also a symbolic act of breaking her completely from the state of unmarried life.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> R. Wanjohi, *Op cit* : 70.

<sup>26</sup> N. Kinma *Op. cit.*: 287.

<sup>27</sup> J.S. Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy. (London: Heinemann Education Books Ltd. 1969): 141.

The bride was first taken into her mother-in-law's hut for eight days. This signified the fact that the bride was being born into the family. The eighth day was the feasting day to celebrate the marriage. This was also the day the bride started eating the food of the in-laws, otherwise, for the last seven days the food came from her own parents.<sup>28</sup>

On the day following the feasting day a new hut, within which the couple would meet for the first time as husband and wife, was built by the community. On the same day a goat or sheep was slaughtered and the *tatha* (stomach content) was used to bless the couple while entering their new hut. From the same ritual goat some *Ngwaro* (skin and stomach ribbons) were cut and then put on the groom's right leg and the bride's left leg. Later on these ribbons were kept on the bed near the position of head. This was a sign that their bed was the foundation of their love and unity.<sup>29</sup>

The night of the ninth day was occasion to consummate the marriage. Traditionally, virginity test was carried out and those who were found to have kept themselves as virgins were not only rewarded with gifts and praises but their mothers also shared as they received a ram from the boy's parents. If she was not, this was seen as a scandal both to her and her mother who was regarded as having

---

<sup>28</sup> P.I. Njoroge, *Op cit.*: 67.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*: 68.

failed in her responsibility. In some cases this girl would be rejected by her husband leaving the alternative to be married as a second or third wife as the only option open to her. On the other hand, if such a wife was retained by the husband, less bride-wealth was paid for her.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3 THE KIKUYU SYSTEM OF POLYGAMY

In the Kikuyu community polygamy was taken to mean the union of a husband with several wives. The Kikuyu customary law provided that the man might marry as many wives as he could support and that the larger one's family the better it was for him and the tribe.<sup>31</sup>

When a man was marrying a second wife, he had to provide most of the bride-wealth if his father had other sons and was not very rich. He was, however, assisted as much as possible especially in marriage negotiations. Having married a second wife, he became independent of his father and if he needed a third wife, all the necessary negotiations took place directly between himself and the father of the girl he wished to marry. No man was, however, allowed to take another wife before he had completed the bride-wealth of the former unless he obtained permission of

---

<sup>30</sup> J. Mukuha, "The Integration of Religious Preparation of Traditional Marriage to Christian Marriage with Special Reference to Kikuyu Community of Kiambu District". (M.A. Thesis, Catholic University of East Africa, 1966): 90

<sup>31</sup> J. Kenyatta, Op. cit.: 174.

the former wife's father. This was to make one honour his promises and behave responsibly.<sup>32</sup>

Customarily, a man married more than one wife for various reasons. For one, every family was expected to be able to protect its own interests and at the same time help to protect the common interests of the tribe from outside attack. To do this effectively and to command the respect of the tribe, it was necessary for every family to have a number of male children who could be called up on for military services in time of crisis and alien aggression. It was also necessary to have a number of female children who would render assistance by cultivating land and looking after the general welfare of the tribe while men were fighting to defend their homesteads.<sup>33</sup>

In Kikuyu traditional society it was believed that to have children of only one sex was a bad omen especially if they were girls. Having a patrilineal system, boys used to occupy a special place in Kikuyu customary marriage. All girls used to leave the family and got married. Hence, boys were badly needed not only for inheritance purposes but also to continue the family line. A home with many sons had much prestige and honour, thus, if the first wife bore only girls, her husband went for a

---

<sup>32</sup> P.G. Reriani, *Op. cit.*: 48

<sup>33</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 175.

second wife.<sup>34</sup>

Traditionally, the qualification to hold a high office in the tribal organisation was based on family and not property. It was held that if a man could control and manage effectively the affairs of a large family this was an excellent testimonial of his capacity to look after the interests of the tribe whom he could also treat with fatherly love and affection as though it were all part of his own family.<sup>35</sup>

Again, one's prestige was intimately tied up with the number of wives and children that he had. Those who had many wives and children earned great respect in the community. Such were destined to live forever, they perpetuated themselves among their children even after their physical death.<sup>36</sup>

There was also the fact of age difference. Men generally married much later, in their twenties, whereas girls married soon after puberty. This scenario made available the number of marriageable girls to be more numerous than that of men ready to get married.<sup>37</sup> Kenyatta observes that:

... The custom also provides that all women must be under protection of men; and that in order to avoid prostitution all women must be married in

---

<sup>34</sup> Oral Evidence: Patrick Thuita Njuguna, 66 years old, Nyagatugu Local Church, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1977.

<sup>35</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 175.

<sup>36</sup> J. Njenga, "Customary African Marriage", in *Afer* (Vol. 16 Nos. 1-4, 1974): 117.

<sup>37</sup> Oral Evidence: Oreste Karanja, 83 years old, Ichichi Local Church, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

their teens-fifteen to twenty. Thus, there is no term in the Gikuyu language for "unmarried" or "old maids".<sup>38</sup>

Further, there existed a taboo of touching a woman when she was breast-feeding, a process which sometimes lasted as long as three years. Absolute abstinence for the man at such times was rather difficult. Thus, polygamy catered for the sexual needs of men and minimised chances of promiscuity and prostitution.<sup>39</sup>

In most cases men stayed out in the pasture all day, sometimes for days, herding cattle and the wives would be alone tending the field to feed the family. The work at times got quite heavy; so for reasons of lightening the load, men married several women to share in the field work.<sup>40</sup> So, to a large extent we can assert that polygamy was a form of a guarantee for prosperity when a large family was necessary to exploit the environment and provide for basic needs. Another reason why men married several wives was because the primary reason for marrying at all was for procreation of offspring to perpetuate the family and the clan. Sometimes it happened that the first wife was infertile. The wife felt that the fault was hers and to correct this defect, she looked around for another girl for her husband to marry so that he could have children.<sup>41</sup>

---

J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 174.

P.G. Reriani, *Op. cit.*: 46.

Oral Evidence: Stephen Mihang'o, 69 years old, Rwathia Local Church, 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1997.

Oral Evidence: Joachim, G. Maimba, 55 years old, Tuthu Local Church, 13<sup>th</sup> November.

Moreover, polygamy occurred as a result of the first wife lacking children and deciding to run away from her husband. If she became pregnant by one of her husband's age-mate while staying with her parents and the bride-wealth had not been returned she was welcomed back even if her husband had another wife.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.4 CHILDLESS COUPLE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

According to Kikuyu customs child bearing was inseparable from marriage. On signing the matrimonial contract it became a duty to produce children. In fact sexual intercourse between a husband and wife or wives was looked upon as an act of production and not merely as the gratification of bodily desire.<sup>43</sup>

A childless marriage in the eyes of Kikuyu was incomplete. It amounts to say that such a marriage was not considered a valid marriage at all. If a person in the clan had failed to have children from his wife or wives he would be regarded as the lowest person in clan, even if he might be rich.<sup>44</sup> In fact the worst thing that could happen to a man was to die childless, because this meant that he would not be remembered and honoured in his children. This is so because the names of children

---

1997.

<sup>42</sup> P.G. Retiani, *Op. cit.*: 46.

<sup>43</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 63.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*: 64.



were believed to perpetuate the invisible and visible existence of both clans: the husband's and wife's ancestral tree of life. Their presence was still visible in the community, if they had died and therefore invisible, through the persons who bear their names.<sup>45</sup>

Further, parents longed for someone to inherit their property. Hence, inheritance posed a major problem to those particular couples who lacked children. More important, children were desired to take care of their ageing parents. The first born was particularly obliged to see to the needs of his ageing parents.<sup>46</sup> Thus childless couple employed every way and means to get children.

If the first wife could not give her husband children, the husband decided to take a second wife. If the second wife remained barren, then, the man suspected that the defect was on him. The man's relatives helped him out by having intercourse with his wife or wives and the offsprings would be his. Besides, impotence was no cause for childlessness as an impotent man would marry as many wives as he would be able and then invite a man of his age-group to give them children.<sup>47</sup>

As regards social stigma of barrenness on the woman. Njoroge observes:

... A woman without children was not looked down upon because polygamy was a common practice among Kikuyu people. The children of any of the wives in the family became the children of all the wives in that family. The

---

<sup>45</sup> J. Kanyikwa, "Family Planning" in *Church and Marriage in East Africa* (by A. shorter, Published by the AMECEA Research Department, Eldoret, Kenya, 1975): 266.

<sup>46</sup> R. Wanjohi, *Op.cit.*: 67.

<sup>47</sup> Oral Evidence: Jeremiah Kaburi, 65 years old, Nyagatugu Local Church, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

barren wife had a right to keep or send any child in the home just as those wives with children had.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, barren women could marry other women to bear them children. Such women would get that which the "married" woman would get from man's property.

### 3.5 ADULTERY AND FORNICATION IN KIKUYU TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Kikuyu customary laws governing sexual relations allowed a considerable degree of legal freedom. Therefore, adultery in the way Kikuyu understood the word was comparatively rare. If a woman was caught having intercourse with a man other than those she was legally entitled to do so, she was severely beaten. A man caught in adultery was taken before the council of elders and had to pay a fine of at least three goats.

In certain circumstances, adultery was connived by old men who were no longer sexually active and could not satisfy their wives. They could call men they knew to be friendly with their wives and talk to them metaphorically that their relationship had been recognised, for instance, the old man would say: "make a habit of coming to ask for a snuff". This was recognised as a formula for revealing that he would not object or start any proceedings against or punish his wife should the man and his wife be friendly with commit adultery.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> P.I. Njoroge, *Op. cit.*: 63.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

Again, adultery was sort of legalised by the community in the case of barrenness and impotence. If a man knew that he was naturally impotent and wished to keep his homestead in harmony he allowed his wife or wives to have sexual companion or friends to fulfil the duty of procreation.<sup>50</sup>

Further, so important were children and their survival among Kikuyu that Kikuyu women had the right to engage in extra marital sex to have a child by a man outside the family in order to protect it from bad omen. If the family were attacked by evil spirits with many children dying, the one not related by blood to the father would be spared, they thought.<sup>51</sup>

Fornication among unmarried youth was prohibited as sexual intercourse was strictly for married people. However, as already noted in chapter two, Kikuyu custom allowed restricted sexual play called *Ngweko*. This allowed the acquaintance of young people with the opposite sex. It was also a form of instilling self-discipline in the young people by overcoming sexual temptations. *Ngweko* was only allowed for young people who had undergone circumcision ceremony, where they had been given instructions on the correct behaviour expected of them.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.6 SEPARATION AND DIVORCE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

Among the Kikuyu, divorce was very rare because of the fact that a wife was regarded as the foundation-rock on which the homestead was built. Without her the homestead was broken. Therefore, it was only when all the efforts to keep the

---

<sup>50</sup> P.G. Reriani, *Op cit.*: 59.

<sup>51</sup> Theological Advisory Group (TAG), *Op. cit.* : 89

<sup>52</sup> P.G. Reriani, *Op. cit.*: 60.

husband and wife together had failed that an action for divorce could be taken.<sup>53</sup>

The following are some of the key reasons as to why termination of a marriage was an exception, rather than the rule: Firstly, it was not easy to return the bride-wealth even just in part. Consequently, women preferred to stay with their husbands if for no other reason than to be with their children whom in the event of divorce they had to leave behind. Thus, presence of children was a sure sign of keeping the couple together.<sup>54</sup>

Further, customarily, those intending to marry did not just marry anybody; this was completely unacceptable to the community which had to suffer the consequence of marriage breakdown. One of the qualities the community looked for a wife they were getting was whether she could bear children or not, for children were a fulfillment both for the man and the woman and a guarantee for the continuity of the clan. Besides, a wife should be industrious and be able to do household chores well; but above all she should be able to get along well with her husband's people. On the other hand, the husband too had to be a man who worked hard, could head his homestead wisely, was considerate to his wife and not an excessive drinker.<sup>55</sup>

The extended family also played a crucial role in marriage. It was based on both families of the two spouses plus their relatives. Together they formed a cultural, economic and social bond. The extended family was like an umbrella over the husband and wife and their children. A husband and wife could solve their

---

<sup>53</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 183.

<sup>54</sup> Oral Evidence: Esther Wanjiku Kamau, 58 years old, Wanjerere Local Church, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

<sup>55</sup> B.J. Ekeya, "The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Customary African Marriage." (M.A. Thesis, St. Johns University Collegeville, Minnesota, 1975): 19.

conflicts privately, but if such conflicts became so complex as to threaten their relationship, the extended family intervened and did everything possible to solve them so as to safeguard marriage breakdown which would greatly threaten its stability.<sup>56</sup>

All in all the following reasons could have caused divorce to be granted: Wife's negligence to feed the husband and livestock especially in a monogamous marriage; disobeying the husband's directives or even abusing the in-laws and co-wives and refusing to co-operate with the family members; being a witch or even poisoning family members and livestock; breaking the pot in the home compound while shouting, swearing and cursing the clan members; persistent adultery and failure to stop it when warned and beaten; barrenness; refusal to offer conjugal rights without reason; being a habitual thief; wilful desertion among others. The above reasons could have offered a husband a ground to divorce his wife. On the other hand a wife had the right to divorce her husband almost on all the above grounds except adultery. She could also divorce her husband for cruelty, ill-treatment, drunkenness and impotence.<sup>57</sup>

When a quarrel or misunderstanding arose between husband and wife the first step they took was to speak between themselves. If it was impossible to reach a compromise they turned to the husband's parents for assistance.<sup>58</sup> If a wife felt that she had been wronged she was not allowed to go back to her parents without following the set traditional procedure. If she did and later decided to return to her husband her family was supposed to bring her back with a goat or ram. The fine was imposed so as to stop the habit of running away every time they had a quarrel

---

<sup>56</sup> K. Kimunya, *A Handbook for Modern Africa Marriage Ceremonies* (C) 1973:26.

<sup>57</sup> R. Wanjohi, *Op.cit.*: 70.

<sup>58</sup> P.G. Reiani, *Op. cit.*: 57.

and neglecting the needs of other members of the family.<sup>59</sup>

If a wife felt that she had been grievously hurt, then she asked her husband to give two elders to take her back to her parents' home. These elders as members of clan which witnessed, solemnised and blessed the marriage had an authority to explore the whole quarreling issue by making the couple to sit down and narrate the divisive issue. Sometimes they succeeded in having the couple patch up their differences and resume a peaceful life. If the husband was found seriously guilty of bad conduct he often incurred a penalty which he paid to the family of his wife and the clan.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, if it was the wife at fault she was allowed to go to her parent's home for a definite period. Two elders were appointed by the whole clan to accompany her and explain the case to her parents and the clan. The latter had to see that she got the right counselling before rejoining her husband.<sup>61</sup>

If divorce was granted by the council of elders the father of the girl was asked to return the bride-wealth in case his daughter had not born a child. Having done this his daughter was free to remarry. If she had children, bride-wealth was returned in part or in full according to the number of children her husband retained. If the bride-wealth was not returned and the woman had children by another man, they belonged to the legal husband and he received compensation for her if she was killed, reason being that the union was not completely dissolved.<sup>62</sup>

In order for Kikuyu marriage to be dissolved the husband had to produce a

---

<sup>59</sup> R. Wanjohi, *Op.cit.*: 70.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid: 71.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid: 71.

<sup>62</sup> J. Middleton and G. Kershaw, Central Tribes of the North Eastern Bantu. (London: International African Institute, 1965): 42.

fatty ram to be slaughtered on the last ceremony. This occasion was witnessed by the elders from the two families dissolving the marriage. The significance of this ceremony was that the marriage union which was created by spilling the animal's blood had to be dissolved in the same manner as the union could not be sustained any longer. After this ceremony the wife and husband were considered separated for life and each was free to contract another marriage without interference from the other party.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.7 FAMILY PLANNING IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

Family planning was in existence in Kikuyu customary marriage and it was almost entirely through the natural method. Traditional family planning regulations among the Kikuyu included the expectations that women should space their children from two and a half to four years apart. It was also about this age that a child was weaned. The taboo against sexual intercourse during lactation was very strong and this checked many births. It is worth noting that a woman's childbearing would usually end at the time her first son was circumcised when she was about forty years of age. In most cases she would have had four or five births by that time.<sup>64</sup>

Traditionally, at the time his first son was circumcised, the man would enter the council of elders wherein he would be increasingly involved in administration. Many of the ceremonies he would become involved in required sexual abstinence as a means of purification. When he entered the senior council, his first duty became

---

<sup>63</sup> P.G. Renani, *Op cit.*: 58.

<sup>64</sup> P.G. Renani, *Op. cit.*: 58.

the social and legal preservation of his community and no longer, the propagation of descendants.<sup>65</sup>

Further, customarily, the couple used to sleep separately in different huts, that is a husband in the *Thingira* and a wife in the *Nyumba*. The wife invited the husband to her bed when she needed him. This enabled them to space their children accordingly since they slept together only when it was very necessary.<sup>66</sup>

As already mentioned circumcision was a doorway to marriage and it was unimaginable for somebody to marry without having gone through that rite. Girls' circumcision involved cutting out the clitoris' gland. This cut down a girl's libido and made it easy for her to abstain from having intercourse for a long period of time.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, polygamy was a form of family planning because it allowed a woman to space her conceptions. Most women in polygamous families had less than five children. This is an indication that polygamy kept fertility rate of women at low level. From man's position in society where having a large family was a determinant of his social status, polygamy facilitated family planning because it allowed him to plan to have many children by having more than one wife.

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 60

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> E. Cavicchi, Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society, (Turini Novastampa di verona, (C) 1977): 78.



Furthermore, polygamy catered for man's sexual gratification while one of his wives was undergoing lactation. This safeguarded extra marital sex that could result to irresponsible parenthood.<sup>68</sup>

Besides, men, especially the newly married ones were advised not to go "near" women frequently. There was a saying that: *Mutumia ni mwaki ndukamugie hakuhi* (a woman is fire do not dare getting near her). Thus, men "feared" women because it was believed that having frequent sexual intercourse with them would diminish their physical strength so badly needed during tribal wars.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.8 THE STATE OF WIDOWHOOD IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

The Kikuyu customary marriage had a strong communitarian character. A woman who was married entered the family community of her husband. She was the "wife of the whole family" (*Muhiki witu*). This, however, did not imply that any other male besides her husband had the right of the woman but stressed her

---

<sup>68</sup> Oral Evidence: Philista Wangari, 85 years old, Kanyenyaini Local Church, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1997.

<sup>69</sup> Oral Evidence: Guhelim M. Muthiaka, *Op. cit.*

communitarian role in the family. Bride-wealth had been contributed by the extended family and thus she and her children belonged to the larger family. When her husband died her marriage in the family was still regarded as being in existence.<sup>70</sup> However, the fact that a woman could not exercise rights of guardianship over children especially if she had no son or her son was a minor necessitated finding a proxy husband for her from among her husband's male relatives.<sup>71</sup>

The Kikuyu expected a younger brother of the deceased to take over (*Guthambia Maguru*) his wife and then perform the customary ceremonial sexual intercourse with her of misfortunes brought by the death of her husband. After sacrificing a ram which was eaten by the clan elders the younger brother took full charge of the widow and her children.<sup>72</sup> He was expected to provide her with land, housing and security and treat her as though she was his wife. Children of such a union were regarded socially and legally as legitimate children of the dead man. The tribal attitude was that the widow reproductive capacity or sexual needs should not be neglected because of her husband's untimely death.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Oral Evidence: Philista Wangari, *Op. cit.*

<sup>71</sup> P.G. Reniani, *Op. cit.*: 51

<sup>72</sup> M. Nyaga, "Home and Family Social Change: The Kikuyu" (Unpublished).

<sup>73</sup> P.G. Reniani, *Op. cit.*: 52

In rare cases the widow decided to marry a stranger. If this happened, the outsider not only paid for marriage bride-wealth but also the bride-wealth for the children. If the latter was not paid for, children for the first husband had to remain in the family of the first husband. To take them out of that family was regarded as a very serious issue. Sometimes the widow decided not to marry, again this free choice was very rare. If this happened, the society expected her not to give birth to other children.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to point out that there is a difference between widow inheritance as elaborated above and widow guardianship. In the latter case a father figure mainly the brother of the deceased supports the widow in every way - materially, judiciary and so on but is not sexually involved.

### 3.8.0 STATUS OF WOMEN IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

Although Kenyatta asserts that a woman was essentially a home maker and that without her there was no home in the Kikuyu sense of social life,<sup>75</sup> a keen observation reveals that she shouldered a greater burden of manual work than her husband. Her duties included all the strenuous work that needed to be done. As already shown in the previous chapter division of labour was based on gender. All

---

<sup>74</sup> M. Nyaga, *Op cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Theological Advisory Group (TAG), *Op. cit.*: 25.

the work of the house was under the wife including educating children-both boys and girls. She provided other necessities of a home such as fetching water and firewood. Goats and sheep had also to be fed by her. All the food eaten at home had to be out of woman's labour, thus, together with the above chores she had to work daily in the garden.

Traditionally, a husband used to allocate a piece of land to his wife and expected her to earn a livelihood from it producing enough to feed him and the family all the year round. In fact, a traditional wife was dependent on her husband on almost everything by the virtue of the fact that she was adopted into his family. In case of divorce, she was only entitled to take with her only what she had brought when she got married. Even the children she bore also belonged to their father's family unless he asked for the return of his bride-wealth from the girl's family.<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, in the community a wife was expected to be submissive and quiet in presence of men. Not to dispute her husband's motives or sayings but to act as she was ordered. To talk when spoken to. In case of feasts and celebrations she was not allowed to join men but eat with the other women in the hut. In no occasion did men and women eat together. Again, on walking with her husband, the woman had to keep three or more paces behind the husband.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> J. Kenyatta, *Op. cit.*: 180.

<sup>77</sup> G. Nyambura, "The Customary and African Christian Marriage Today (B.A. Thesis(LL.B), University of Nairobi, 1980): 35.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above it can be concluded that among the Kikuyu community there existed a stable marriage system. It was shown that there was a lot of pre-marital counselling which intensified during initiation rites. Preparation for marriage was a long process and it was a communal affair. The ceremonies and rituals involved in this preparation brought the two clans together to familiarise with one another, to witness the declaration of those marrying, to approve their marriage, to bless and counsel the couple. Also noted was the vital role that the bride-wealth played not only in validating the marriage but also ensuring its stability by creating a strong bond between the two clan marrying each other.

This chapter has also highlighted some of the reasons behind the practice of polygamy in Kikuyu customary marriage. Also discussed are ways and means employed by Kikuyu traditional society to deal with infertility which could have threatened the stability of marriage in a society where procreation was taken very seriously. It was noted that there were certain provisions in Kikuyu customary laws that safeguarded marriage from being torn apart through adultery. Adultery as Kikuyu understood it was therefore very rare. Finally, this chapter has underlined the fact that the welfare of widows and their children was taken care of by the community through the practice of widow inheritance.

In the next chapter we are going to highlight the main changes introduced by Roman Catholic missionaries on Kikuyu customary marriage. Besides, other agents of change on the same institution are also going to be discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 AGENTS OF CHANGE IN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to trace some of the most important changes that have had an impact in modifying Kikuyu traditional values, attitudes and behaviour. In particular, it focuses on the changes which have had a bearing upon the Kikuyu customary marriage. It takes off by examining in detail the historical background of Roman Catholic Missionaries in Kikuyu land. Besides, an attempt is made to explore some of the most important and far reaching changes that the missionaries introduced in Kikuyu customary marriage. Moreover, other concrete changes on this institution especially those that emanated from British Imperialist economy are also going to be scrutinised.

#### 4.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ROMAN

##### CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES IN KIKUYU LAND (1902-1960)

Late Joseph Allamano (1851-1926) in 1901 gathered around himself the first persons who were to be the cornerstones of the work of the International Institute of the Consolata for foreign mission. His first aim was the evangelisation of the Gallas in Southern Abyssinia but unsurmountable political difficulties forced the postponement of the plan, thus allowing the missionaries to bring about in the

meantime their penetration into the Kikuyu land.<sup>1</sup>

As the Kikuyu land was in the Vicariate of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Fr. Allamano approached them with the request to work in their territory, in which case the latter agreed. The first party of Consolata Fathers who set out for Kikuyu land consisted Revered Fathers Perlo and T. Gays and Brothers Lusso and Falda. They left Turin in Italy on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1902 and on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June landed at Mombasa. Bishop Allgeyer, Apostolic Vicar of Zanzibar, personally brought them to Nairobi via the New Uganda Railway.<sup>2</sup>

Welcomed by the Holy Ghost Fathers who had started the St. Austin's Mission near Nairobi two years before, they set out gathering information and preparing a plan for the evangelisation of the Kikuyu community. In this work they enjoyed the assistance of Bishop Allgeyer and Father Hemery.<sup>3</sup>

At the time the Consolata Fathers arrived, Kikuyu land had just fallen under the British administration which made it the province of Kenya in 1902. The first prominent man ready to enter into friendly relations with them was Chief Karuri of Tuthu near Murang'a. He hoped for the progress of his people. He, therefore,

---

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo, The Kikuyu, their customs, traditions and Folklore (Engl. Trans.) Nyeri: (1933): 268.

<sup>2</sup> J. Baur, The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History. (Nairobi: St. Paul's Publication-Africa, (1990), pp 65.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo, *Op. cit.*: 269.



asked Dr. Hinde, the Sub-Commissioner for Missionaries.<sup>4</sup> Coincidentally, the coronation of King Edward VII was celebrated about the time of the arrival of Consolata Fathers in Nairobi. Chief Karuri had also come for that occasion. He was very happy to meet and to hear the plans of the Consolata Missionaries. He invited them to open a mission and a school in his location (Tuthu) guaranteeing them hospitality and protection.<sup>5</sup>

The first Consolata Missionaries, accompanied by Fr. Hemery and Bishop Allgeyer started their journey by taking the train to Naivasha. With thirty porters they crossed the Aberdare Mountains and found Chief Karuri's home on the other side. The following day which was the feast of St. Peter and Paul (29<sup>th</sup> June, 1902) they celebrated under the canvas the first mass in Kikuyu land presided over by Bishop Allgeyer. With this mass they offered themselves and their missionary work in Kikuyu land to her.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> J. Baur, *Op. cit.*, 64.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo, *Op. cit.*, 269.

<sup>6</sup> P. Muiruri, *Diocese ya Murang'a: Miaka Ikuuni ya Witikia* (Nairobi: views media (C), Diocesi ya Gatoreki ya Murang'a, 1977): 5.

#### 4.2.1 First Period: The First Contact with the Kikuyu Community

The Kikuyu people looked at the intruders with great suspicion.<sup>7</sup> However, a medical dispensary was opened by the missionaries where wounds and sores were treated free. The beneficiaries of the dispensary going back to their villages in an ever widening sphere, with their wounds and sores neatly dressed, were the first propagandists of the missionaries. A certain familiarity granted to everybody, who was allowed to enter tents freely and observe anything therein, helped them to put aside the fear.

Chief Karuri also played a vital role in removing the suspicion of his subjects. He stated before his subjects that the missionaries were not like the white men, they loved the Kikuyu people: that Fathers were his brothers and lay Brethren his sons; and wished the school to begin at once for his sons, taking on himself the duty of gathering them at the blast of the trumpet.<sup>8</sup> Fr. Perlo wrote:

With some sons of Karuri and some of the most intelligent of our little friends the teaching of the three Rs was begun. It pleased the Chief immensely and he followed the teachings himself very attentively.<sup>9</sup>

The following year, 1903, witnessed the rapid development of the Consolata Mission. In two groups there arrived eight new priests, a seminarian, a brother and

---

<sup>7</sup> The Kikuyu had already heard or witnessed the cruelty and harshness of the protectorate government such as expeditions discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Ime Cagnolo, *Op. cit.*: 271.

<sup>9</sup> J. Baur, *Op. cit.*: 67.

a lay volunteer. Also with them came Cottolengo Sisters who were the first female Catholics in the country.<sup>10</sup> These sisters began by making contact with the people and to get acquainted with the exact position of Kikuyu women with their family and social relations. They undertook the treatment of the sick in their villages, the education of children, the opening of elementary schools and of girls dormitories where the first seeds were sown for the training of christian mothers.<sup>11</sup>

Further, more stations were opened. From Fort Hall (Murang'a) a mission station at Limuru on the Railway was started, then Nyeri, later the stations at Gikondi; Mugoiri and Karima; so that by the end of 1903, after only eighteen months from their arrival in the country, seven mission stations had been founded in Kikuyu country.<sup>12</sup> In Nyeri, Fr. Perlo bought the 3,000 acre farm at Mathari, in view of making the mission self-supporting. Opened in 1904, Mathari developed into the Central Consolata Station.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> In 1903 Consolata Sisters started arriving in Kikuyu land to take over from Cottolengo sisters. This gradual process was finalised in 1925 when all Cottolengo sisters returned to Europe.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo, *Op. cit.*: 291.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*: 272.

#### 4.2.2 Second Period: The Evangelisation of the Mass

The rapid external extension necessitated an internal consolidation in regard to having a clear and most suitable method of evangelising the Kikuyu community. Hence in 1904 the Murang'a pastoral conference was convoked. It comprised of eleven priests, six brothers, two theology students and eighteen sisters. The new policy rested on three pillars namely; training of local catechists, visits to the villages and opening of schools and dispensaries.

##### 4.2.2.1 Training of Local Catechists

The missionaries endeavoured to train "half catechists" and "full catechists". The half catechist was to be a simple assistant to the priest, in the village he was to repeat what he had learnt from the missionary and to help him during the visits by gathering the people and explaining his words once more. The full catechist had to be properly trained in a college and be ready to run a catechumen class on his own. In fact he had to be a local pastor in his village. Such catechist training centre was opened immediately at Limuru; in 1906 it was transferred to Nyeri.

Candidates were to be chosen among men ranging from 15-25 years of age. They had to be men of good character, good health and good repute; sympathetic to the missionaries and industrious. They were to memorise rudiments of the

---

<sup>13</sup>

J. Baur, *Op. cit.*: 68.

christian doctrine and the important facts of the Holy Bible, so as to be able to explain to the people the teachings of the missionaries.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen Kamunge in his study about the development of Karima Parish notes:

At Karima Parish a group of young men were chosen to become catechists as suggested during the Murang'a conference ... This group was baptised and confirmed on the same day after a short time of catechetical instruction in order to spread the work of evangelisation. This first catechists were clothed with white *Kanzus* (overalls) to identify them from the common people.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.2.2.2 Visits to the Villages

The conference declared:

Great importance must be attached to the visiting of villages and to the preaching of the gospei. This will prove to be splendid opportunities for mutual understanding. Such visits shall be the missionaries daily routine, half of the personnel visiting in the morning, the other half in the afternoon. One full day a week shall be devoted to visiting the remotest villages in the mission area.<sup>16</sup>

This approach helped them to become familiar with the people. However, they had to give things like, salt, tobacco, tablets and food in order to have people listen to

---

<sup>14</sup> S. Bottignole, Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity. (Nairobi, Heinemann Education Books, (C) 1984), pp.42.

<sup>15</sup> S. Kimunge, "Karima Mission of Italian Fathers", (paper), Kenyatta College, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.*

them. Initially missionaries went home disappointed, realising that they had hardly been trusted or understood. Things changed at once when they began to be accompanied by catechists.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4.2.2.3 Opening of Schools and Dispensaries

In regard to opening of schools and dispensaries the missionaries suggested the following:

The treatment shall always be given free, patients must be attended promptly ... The opening of schools at Tuthu, Fort Hall and Limuru is highly recommended. Other schools should be started on selected sites not too distant from the local chief. For the present we shall be content with reading, writing and arithmetic. The subjects shall be taught in vernacular, and later on English shall be taught.<sup>18</sup>

Following this conference dispensaries came first and the medicine was free and this greatly enhanced their popularity. Again, schools were opened at places with greater population. The parents first were reluctant to send their children to school until they realised that education helped them to get better employment and improve their standards of living.

A government decision of 1911 was instrumental in the founding of the first prominent Consolata school. All the chiefs of the country were ordered to send at

---

<sup>17</sup> Oral Evidence: Philista Wangari, 85 years old, Kanyenyaini Local Church, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> S. Bottignolle, *Op. cit.*

least one of their sons to school, specially built for them by a mission. They had to choose the mission themselves and the chiefs of Kikuyu land chose the Catholic one. Hence with government's subsidies, the Prices' College was erected in Murang'a.<sup>19</sup>

However, it is worth noting that it is a combination of all the three methods that worked namely; training of catechists cum teachers, expansion of dispensaries and of schools to cater for patients and children respectively and daily visits to villages by the missionaries and sisters which constituted a sort of gradual public education and working out a good atmosphere of approaching the Kikuyu even closer.<sup>20</sup>

After a period of few years the atmosphere all over Kikuyu land was saturated with the Word of God, with moral and catechetical instructions. If knowing catechism was the only thing required for being a christian the whole of Kikuyu might have been stated to be christian. However, according to missionaries what was required was the training in christian living was the custom and practice of catechism. Hence baptism was withheld because there still remained unshaken the stubbornness of old ideas and habits sanctioned by centuries of usage such as

---

<sup>19</sup> J.Baur, *Op.cit.*: 70.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo, *Op. cit.*: 273.

witchcraft and immoral dances.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Third Period: The Formation of Christian Communities

In 1909 it was decreed by the Holy See that all the territory on which the Consolata Fathers were working was to become the "Vicariate of Nyeri" (the first Vicariate of Kenya) and that Fr. Filippo Perlo was to be its first bishop.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, some Kikuyu into whose hearts the new doctrine had taken deeper roots, were asking and insisting on baptism; they were beginning to leave the "pagan" atmosphere and their villages and built their homes near the mission under the continued attention of the missionaries, thus laying the foundations of the parishes growing round the churches. This scenario formed a kind of a religious home whereby the church bell gathered everybody to morning and night prayers.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, properly organised schools for youths sprang up from these points. Girls' dormitories were opened, where, under the direction of sisters Kikuyu girls were prepared to become christian mothers. In fact, new christian families were born, which ever widened the crown of huts round the modest little churches where the missionary was a priest, Father, judge, physician and whatever else the

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 274.

<sup>22</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.*: 54.

<sup>23</sup> Fr. Ime Cagnolo *Op. cit.*: 275.



communal life might require.<sup>24</sup> This had rendered possible the first solemn baptism, confirmation and church wedding of the first ten trained catechists and their wives among other adults in 1911.<sup>25</sup>

When the World War I broke out the missionaries had just started the first seminary in Tuthu in 1914. The first three men to join the seminary were James Camissasa, Louis Mugo and Thomas Kimango. Although the conflagration of the war caused the missionaries uneasiness both for the political uncertainties and the lessened staff, the work was not given up, but widened moving the seminary into suitable buildings at Nyeri.<sup>26</sup>

The necessity of supplying with school materials, the constantly increasing schools suggested the opening of a small printing school. The machinery and typewriter arrived from Italy in 1915 and were installed at once at Nyeri producing both catechism and school books and issuing at the same time the first newspaper in the Kikuyu language *Wathiomu Mukinyu* (The Faithful Friend) which became the mouth piece of the Kikuyu community.<sup>27</sup>

A striking event happened on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1916 namely; the baptism and

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> J. Baur, *Op. cit.*: 74.

<sup>26</sup> P. Muiruri, Rugano ruritu rwa witikia na mutlukabu wa mbere wa Diocesi ya Gatoreki ya Murang'a (C) Diocesi ya Gatoreki ya Murang'a, pp. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo *Op. cit.*: 276.

christian wedding of chief Karuri. A missionary was charged with his instruction and on the above date, in the presence of religious and civil authorities and practically the whole of Kikuyu, he was baptised and called Joseph, and his legitimate wife, having repudiated the other sixty, with that of Mary Consolata.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Fourth Period: Activity after World War II

The Kikuyu thrown suddenly into the great world, facing so many novelties offered to them by the experience of civilisation in action, came back to their country with altogether different ideals and a thirst for progress. The century old ideas which they had left at home, had grown weak in their minds hence traditions were broken and there was demand for innovations.<sup>29</sup> The young crowded to the schools which had to be extended and multiplied; the college for catechist - teacher was required to supply more capable and numerous teachers. Nearly one hundred village schools had to be opened within a short time in the native reserve. The elementary schools were no longer enough and the primary schools were opened. Moreover, the school for catechist - teacher became a true and proper normal school where pupils went out with a department certificate.<sup>30</sup> Thereafter, during the Mau Mau uprising the

---

<sup>28</sup> Fr. Imc Cagnolo *Op. cit.*: 277.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

then bishop, Charles Cavallera did not consider to close any of the missions or withdrawal of the personnel, despite the fact that many people had deserted the missions in Nyeri and Murang'a and had adhered to the movement if not by conviction, then through fear. Cavallera concentrated his energy on organising an efficient system of help for the population forcefully gathered in some 450 emergency villages.<sup>31</sup>

During the emergency period bishop Cavallera announced a crusade for the conversion of souls in all the diocese of Nyeri. The bishop decided to build a chapel in every emergency village. It was hoped that people could go to the chapel to learn catechism and be baptised later. In one year 200 chapels were built in Nyeri diocese.<sup>32</sup>

In the Mau Mau aftermath (1956-58) the charitable assistance of Fathers and sisters continued for people still in emergency villages. Moreover, proper pastoral care was given too. Village groups were formed which made a solemn promise to bring members of their village to Christ convincing them by word and deed. They pledged to lead a certain number to the catechumenate and to distribute many religious booklets and leaflets. This two year crusade attracted some 50,000 catechumens and the number of Catholics doubled; it grew from 53,000 in 1955 to

---

<sup>31</sup> J.Baur, *Op.cit.*: 82.

<sup>32</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op.cit.*: 53.

108,000 in 1958.<sup>33</sup> The movement was given additional impetus by the wide spread belief that after the Mau Mau uprising it was better to belong to a church in order to avoid suspicion by the government.<sup>34</sup>

This enthusiasm, however, lasted for a few years and slowly cooled down. Nevertheless, the chapels were there and catholicism had from that moment, a great expansion in the whole of Kikuyu land.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.3.0 CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES ON KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

It is important to note that the Roman Catholic Missionaries who came to Kikuyu land were born and bred in the western way of life and hence their whole attitude was founded on western thought mixed with christian teachings. With this background, anything that contradicted or seemed to be in the conflict with their world view of a sound christian life was bound to be labelled as unchristian. Thus in their evangelisation mission to Kikuyu community they demanded for far reaching changes in the values, attitudes and the behaviour of their prospective

---

<sup>33</sup> J.Baur, *Op.cit.*: 83.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> S. Bottignole, *Op. cit.*: 53.

converts. The consequence of this was that those who associated themselves with the new faith had not only to drop their customary values but also they had to adopt new ones.

In the first place the missionaries introduced church marriage as a new alternative to Kikuyu customary marriage. To them a Kikuyu customary marriage was not a wholesome institution. Consequently, they in one way or the other influenced a change in some of the core values in this institution such as polygamy, choice of a marriage partner, bride-wealth, circumcision, certain ceremonies and rituals. Besides they imposed new moral principles and conditionalities for marriage which were foreign to Kikuyu community.

It is worth mentioning that most early converts were induced and even encouraged by the missionaries to stay in or around the mission stations while the non-converts remained in their homesteads. This idea of dissociating from one's family or community that was not christian made one to become an individual within the community and this is something that had never been heard of in Kikuyu land. Kikuyu people had been leading a corporate life all through. As a consequence, this individual lost the community guilt conscience and hence he was in a position to adopt new values.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in these mission stations it was no

---

<sup>36</sup> P.I. Njoroge, "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities between Kikuyu Traditional Communal Rites and the Seven Sacraments in the Catholic Church" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980): 70.

longer possible for the members of the extended family to discharge their duty of instructing their pre-initiated and initiated boys and girls on matters of sex, especially what was expected of them in their marital life. As a result the children grew up completely ignorant of their sexual life.<sup>37</sup>

Further, the missionaries set up schools which were based on western standard. For those who desired to be enrolled, a change of religion was a prerequisite since school and church were intertwined. In the missionary schools no education was given on traditional customs governing the obligation of an individual to relatives within and outside immediate family circles. Education on ceremonial rites in which kinship obligations were expressed and observed were ignored. It was demanded that no student should be seen observing and participating in those ceremonies.<sup>38</sup> Thus, students having been introduced to catechism, and having been taught about the evils of their customs, they were made to believe that their own parents and the community at large had nothing to offer them because they were pagans;<sup>39</sup> and hence their counselling, advice and guidance on matters of marriage was greatly checked. The consequence of this state of the matter was that many youths were uprooted from their cultural roots.

---

<sup>37</sup> Oral Evidence: Francis Kanyi, 60 years old, Nyagatugu Local Church, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

<sup>38</sup> K. Kayu, "When things fall apart: A Short study of Inculture Contact among the Kikuyu". (A Departmental Paper, Michigan State University, East Lansing, March 18, 1970): 18.

<sup>39</sup> P.I. Njoroge, *Op. cit.*: 69.

A Kikuyu who desired to marry and had gone through a missionary school did not seek advice and counsel from his/her members of the extended family for he/she had been taught to believe that their traditional customs in these area were oppressive and tyrannical, that adhering to them was cumbersome, non-christian, improper and militating against his/her freedom. Mostly affected customs included those taboos that had to do with checking the indulgence in sex among the youth. Such were termed as sheer superstitions. Such an individual was encouraged to undergo sacramental rites aimed at preparing one for a westernised form of marriage.<sup>40</sup>

As already noted initiation rites were among the most important Kikuyu traditions. But unfortunately the missionaries made little or no attempt to use them. The acceptance of christian faith by a Kikuyu was accompanied by a similar acceptance and accommodation of western values. For instance, Protestant Church Missionaries viewed female circumcision as sin or as being contrary to christian principles. They highly condemned it, regarding it as a mutilation of a girl's genitals. They were also opposed to initiation rites on both sexes and undertook to circumcise boys, an operation which in no way satisfied the initiation requirements of the Kikuyu. Thus those who were converted were under spiritual obligation to

---

<sup>40</sup> Oral Evidence: Veronica Wabeti, 68 years old, Rwaithua Local Church, 28<sup>th</sup> December,

avoid not only circumcision of females but also give up observing initiation rites accompanying boys' circumcision.<sup>41</sup>

Customarily, during the circumcision rites the members of the extended family and the clan at large played a major role in counselling the initiates on what entailed marital life. Thus, the parents and the community at large, were in a position to influence decisively the nature and form of marriage through the practice of circumcision. Moreover, circumcision was a prerequisite to marriage in Kikuyu traditional society.<sup>42</sup>

Missionaries, on the other hand, made it a condition that those who wished to have a church wedding for themselves or for their family should have nothing to do with the circumcision of girls. Wanyoike shows clearly how much Protestant missionaries were opposed to this practice. He writes:

If a circumcised woman wished to have a church wedding she would first be excommunicated for two years before wedding. If she completed her excommunication satisfactorily and still sought a church marriage, the wedding would be performed in the church verandah and no spectators were allowed to watch it except the official witnesses.<sup>43</sup>

---

1997.

<sup>41</sup> Oral Evidence: Gulielin, M. Muthiaka, 52 years old, Karurumo Local Church, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Oral Evidence: Moses Kiiru, 70 years old, Kanyenyaini Local Church, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1997

<sup>43</sup> E.N. Wanyoike, *An African Pastor* (Nairobi: E. African Publishing House (C) 1974): 72.



Catholic Church, however, was not so much involved in the circumcision controversy. It is argued that this is the reason why the problem of independent churches did not arise in the Catholic church.

The missionaries greatly insisted on the freedom of choice of one marriage partner by another and recognition that this choice was to be based on love, personal attraction and christian commitment. Thus, the role of parents and other members of the extended family in this choice was considerably undermined. Besides, the missionaries emphasised that the consent was for the two people, the spouses-to-be. The community idea was there, but not much emphasised in terms of being asked about the consent. In the long run the idea of family involvement in the negotiations was systematically discouraged as this was interpreted as a hindrance to the freedom of boys and girls, going against their God given right to choose for themselves. In short the communal aspect of choosing a partner was forced to give way to the individual aspect of it.<sup>44</sup>

It is interesting to note that the missionaries did not bother with the intricacies of bride-wealth in Kikuyu customary marriage. They saw in it only what they believed to be a negation of the individual or a business transaction.<sup>45</sup> They did not hesitate to condemn all the ceremonies that accompanied it such as brewing of

---

<sup>44</sup> M. Kiiru, *Op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> P. Wangari, *Op. cit.*

beer, pouring of libations to ancestors among others as unchristian. Consequently, they were not prepared to regard it as a significant factor for the validity of marriage as was the case in Kikuyu customary marriage. Instead, they based the validity of church marriage on the ring, on the vows made on the wedding day and the document signed in the presence of official witnesses namely the best man, the best maid and the priest. As a result, the approval of the marriage by the parents of both sides and their respective clans was ignored.<sup>46</sup> It is then not a wonder that in the church marriage vows are promises of a husband to his wife and of the wife to her husband that hence forth they are going to live in harmony helping each other to maintain a stable marriage.

Furthermore, those who were already married when the missionaries came and wanted to join the church had to have their marriages solemnised before they were considered for full membership. This is so because the missionaries found the Kikuyu customary marriage "wanting" and thus proceeded to standardise it so as to conform to their western view of christian marriage.

The Kikuyu customary marriage as stressed above was both polygamous and monogamous. The first reaction of Catholic missionaries dealing with polygamy was the condemnation of the phenomenon as being incompatible with the christian faith. They also felt that it contrasted squarely with the western form of lawful

---

<sup>46</sup> G.M. Muthiaka, *Op. cit.*

marriage. To them, polygamy seemed to encourage self-indulgence as well as lowering of women. They felt that in polygamous marriages love and commitment are divided. That a wife is reduced to a chattel to be used and enjoyed and receives a share of divided commitment.<sup>47</sup>

They brought forth the idea that marriage is a contract between two people, man and woman. They taught that love can only be shared between two people and that the essence of marriage is becoming one flesh with the other partner and that the idea of marrying more than one wife negates these two facts. Thus, they emphasised and even made it compulsory for the converts to enter into monogamous marriages. They also laid emphasis on nuclear family and the fact that the two newly married partners have an equal status in their new home.<sup>48</sup>

If a polygamist wished to join a church he could neither be baptised nor be a communicant let alone having his marriage solemnised unless he got rid of all except one wife preferably to be the first wife. Similarly, a woman who was married to a polygamist could not become a full member of the church. If she wanted to be baptised she had to leave her husband.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in accordance to the new faith a

---

<sup>47</sup> H.W. Maingi, "The Christian Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage. Their Relevance to the daily lives of Gikuyu Christians" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994), pp.131.

<sup>48</sup> Oral Evidence: Charles Wagunya, 56 years old, Rwathia Local Church, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1997.

<sup>49</sup> E.N. Wanyoike, *Op. cit.*, 76.

husband was to remain totally faithful to one wife and had to denounce many of his traditional values, as outlined in the third chapter, such as the opportunity to have a large family by having more than one wife.

Besides, the missionaries introduced a new change in the Kikuyu conception on the purpose of marriage. Customarily among the Kikuyu, the procreation of children was the very purpose of marriage and sexual intercourse was its very essence. The missionaries taught that marriage was an institution with a higher value. That it is a creation from God with the help of whom man can reach eternal salvation. They asserted that procreation was not the only important factor since children are a blessing from God and that companionship, that is, life-long partnership, help and comfort which a husband and a wife ought to have of each other holds a higher goal in marriage and hence the issue of children is a secondary one.

Thus, according to the new values brought about by missionaries a childless marriage could remain a happy and valid marriage as long as there is conjugal love and total commitment to each other.<sup>50</sup> As noted in the previous chapter among the Kikuyu childless marriage was a total failure and all ways and means were employed to rectify this predicament. This being the case because marriage was viewed as the

---

<sup>50</sup> J. Mukuha, "The Integration of Religious Preparation of Traditional Marriage to Christian Marriage with special Reference to Kikuyu Community of Kiambu District". (M.A. Thesis, Catholic University of East Africa, 1996): 94.

gateway to life, hence infertility and sterility blocked the channel through which the stream of life flowed and the victims were thus plunged into misery.<sup>51</sup>

The missionaries were totally against any form of divorce. In fact they brought an alien notion in the Kikuyu traditional understanding of marriage namely its indissolubility. This implied that the marriage contract cannot be broken at will or with the consent of the contracting parties but only through death of one of the parties. Notwithstanding, they went further and introduced a foreign reason for divorce namely that if sexual intercourse does not take place soon after marriage, the marriage becomes void and useless. Thus, unlike the case of customary marriage, impotence of the husband became an adequate reason on itself to annul a marriage.<sup>52</sup> This was so because according to the Catholic church it is only by sexual intercourse that the marrying couple become one flesh, which is the essence of Sacramental marriage. Each partner must therefore be able to fulfil the marital obligations in sexual union.

As noted above, the missionaries brought about the notion of marriage being a contract between two people and hence the death of one partner means the end of the marriage. As a result caring of widow's sexual and procreation needs - especially if she had no children with her deceased husband - within the family in

---

<sup>51</sup> H.W Maingi, *Op. cit.*: 79.

<sup>52</sup> Oral Evidence: Stephen, M. Ndoiro, 50 years old, Kanyenyamu Local Church, 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1997.

which she was married was condemned and ruled out among the converts to the new faith. Furthermore, the widow was not supposed to have more children and if she did so, unless she had remarried in church, she was supposed to stop receiving church sacraments.<sup>53</sup>

The missionaries also brought about the idea that one could choose to lead a celibate life either as a sister, brother, christian lay person or as a priest for the glory of God and the service of the wider community. In whichever way the missionaries emphasised that celibacy/single state is a vocation worth equal respect just as marriage is. In Kikuyu traditional society, for various reasons as noted in the previous chapter a mature man or woman was considered nothing and unfulfilled if he/she were unmarried. Marriage was a vocation and duty for all normal persons and those who married enjoyed a higher status in society.

#### 4.4.0 OTHER EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON KIKUYU

##### CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

Besides the missionaries, the colonial administration brought about a number of changes that in one way or the other affected the Kikuyu customary marriage. This sub-section attempts to explore some of the key ones.

<sup>53</sup>

P.G. Reiani, "Interaction of Western Christian Marriage with Kikuyu Customary Practices, the case of Mathira Division (Diploma in Cultural Studies, University of Nairobi, 1987): 66.

The first Europeans to arrive in the Kikuyu country were the members of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC, Co.) who were mainly interested in trade. They traded clothes and other minor European artifacts with food. Their relationship with the Kikuyu was good and friendly as long as they did not come near their homesteads. Gradually they began to build small fortified depots. There was one established by Lord Lugard near Nairobi in 1890. It was besieged and destroyed by the Kikuyu in that area who were under the leadership of Waiyaki, a popular *Muthamaki* (King).<sup>54</sup>

The second agency to come into contact with the Kikuyu was the British colonial government which took over the responsibilities of IBEAC, Co. In 1895, thus establishing Kenya Protectorate. The protectorate government moved in Kikuyu country with fire. There was one Francis Hall who had several punitive expeditions between 1894-1900. His was the work of death, fire and looting. In one expedition in 1899, he set fire to several hundred villages leaving many people homeless and taking along goats and sheep in thousands.<sup>55</sup>

The punitive expeditions were followed by government policies to occupy Kikuyu land, which was understood as a "no man's land" because it was found unused. In 1905 more than one million acres were occupied by settlers. Lord

---

<sup>54</sup> K. Kayu, *Op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*: 13.

Delamere, a leading settler appealed to Labour Commission in 1902 that:

The land reserve for natives be cut so as to prevent them from having enough for self-supporting level of production.<sup>56</sup>

Shortly after this appeal, the *Kipande* (identification card) was introduced. All male and females over sixteen years of age were to take the *Kipande* and pay taxes. No African was allowed to own title deed.

At this juncture it is worthwhile mentioning that the colonial economy was aimed at converting Africa into a source of raw material and a market for metropolitan countries. Pursuing their economic goals, large plantations were started in Kenyan highlands. Also connected with this British Imperialist economy needs was the building of Kenya-Uganda railway. As it progressed, small centres were opened and these later developed into big urban centres.<sup>57</sup>

The introduction of *Kipande*, taxes and land alienation brought another phase of culture contact - the European squatters and towns. Many Kikuyu were forced to work in the European plantations, thus, cutting their kinship ties from the rest of the Kikuyu community. In the squatters they came into contact with new means of exchange namely, money. Urban centres on the other hand, attracted a lot of Kikuyus who came as traders while others came seeking employment.

---

Ibid.

J.I. Kimotho, "Marital Instability in Modern Marriage" (LL.B.) University of Nairobi, 1980): 42



In the towns, there were no *Mbari* or village council to attend nor were there ceremonies and rituals to participate in or land to depend on for livelihood. Thus those Kikuyus who went away to these places, placed themselves outside the effective range of traditional control. Individualism gained control and the result of this was diminishing of the collective aspect of marriage.<sup>58</sup> Emphasis shifted to the individual aspect of marriage hence a move towards regarding marriage as the union between the two spouses alone.

The Europeans looked at most of the aspects of African marriage with disrespect and abhorrence. They failed to understand their significance and social foundation. An example of this was the western type of education whose sole aim was not to produce Africans who would help in promoting their culture. The learned African was expected to be as much westernised as possible in his outlook and mode of production. The by-product of such an education system was Africans who had accepted the western view of good life. Their socialisation was such that they viewed African traditional way of life as outdated.<sup>59</sup>

In the long run, therefore, the Kikuyu traditional education system gave way to modern system of education inherited from colonial society. The education of children was passed on from the parents and the community to the teachers and

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid: 43.

<sup>59</sup> G. Nyambura, "The Customary and Christian Marriage today". (LL.B.) University of Nairobi, 1980), pp.33.

schools where it became more of book learning as an end in itself than an education that prepares the youth for mature life and future career. Whereas under the traditional set up both boys and girls received preparatory education concerning marriage, sex and family life, especially during and after initiation rites, modern schools give little and often no such preparatory education and this leads to loose morals among the youth.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, educated modern young men and women who had acquired very little of what entailed Kikuyu customary marriage, have been getting jobs and responsibilities, producing a situation where the elders find themselves under their authority. Thus, standards of leadership and authority have reversed so that even in marriage affairs, not a few cases are sent to these young ones be they christian preachers or administrators. Such a situation have greatly challenged and even undermined the role that used to be played by the elders in Kikuyu customary marriage.<sup>61</sup>

In the past the cattle, goats and sheep given to the bride's people were not considered in terms of their commercial value. But with the introduction of money and hence cash economy, a commercial element has began to pervert the traditional institution of bride-wealth.

---

<sup>60</sup> A. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa* (London: SPCK (C) 1973):71.

<sup>61</sup> Oral Evidence: Joseph Kihungi, 57 years old, Tutlu Local Church, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

Furthermore, the formation of marriage alliance has also been checked by cash economy. With the change to payment of bride-wealth in form of money there is a growing feeling and spirit of individualism among the younger generation and a fair degree of independence of the extended family. Since most young men can raise money to pay bride-wealth without depending upon their family or clan members it then follows that there is a loosening of ties that traditionally bound together clan members, in the sense that a man who pays bride-wealth by himself feels free of obligation to his clan in choosing a spouse, or in recognising any debt of gratitude owed to his family for their help.<sup>62</sup>

Besides, the introduction of cash economy has introduced inspirations for new values. Additional wives through polygamous marriages and hence having many children may be less likely to be considered as an economic asset or even as a mark of prestige as it was the case in Kikuyu customary marriage. The mere presence of many wives and children today may be a big handicap to get rich. Rather than being a source of income, with the unavailability of job opportunities and diminishing of land as the major means of livelihood, they are a means of expense.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> M. Poluku, Bantu Traditional Marriage: Its Modern Changes and Suggestions of its Inculturation (Nairobi: Hekima College, 1992): 63

<sup>63</sup> Oral Evidence: Virginia Wambui, 46 years old, Rwathia Local Church, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1997.

Changes that have taken place since the advent of colonial administration have led to improved communication, social mobility, industrialisation and urbanisation among others. This state of the matter has resulted to increased migrations and change of people's attitudes, value and belief system. These factors have had a reasonable impact on Kikuyu customary marriage as shown here below.

Urbanisation has led to the separation of youth from their ancestral land and residence. Being away from the influence of their clan and its way of life, most youths do not have the guiding benefit of traditional way of life especially on the institution of marriage. This situation is worsened when the youth gain employment in the urban centres and thus become financially independent of their parents since this more often than not leads to loss of parental control. The consequence of this scenario is that the marriage ceremonies have been shortened to such an extent that the customary sequence of rites and observances are no longer being followed. Many western values have been adopted in such ceremonies which are often very costly and of no real significance.<sup>64</sup>

Further, the migrant worker system brought about by the concomitant effects of industrialisation and modernisation has greatly affected the Kikuyu customary marriage. Since it is men who mostly leave, their powers over family, as discussed at length in the previous chapter, are effectively lessened and weakened.

---

<sup>64</sup> See B. J. Ekeya, "The Sacraments of Matrimony and the Customary African Marriage"

It is then not a wonder that the diminishing power exercised by husbands cum fathers in domestic life has also lowered the status held by them as well as prestige that has traditionally been attached to their status.

Again, the desire to accumulate material wealth has obsessively increased such that individuals have considered it wise to concentrate on this exercise than they would in respect to marriage. In fact, the presence or absence of money has in most cases determined whether or not a person should get married, who to get married to, when, who to involve and to what kind of wedding ceremony to engage in. In this way Kikuyu customary marriage has been contaminated with western values, after all it has to reflect the social economic status quo "aped" from western cultures.<sup>65</sup>

It is also worth noting that customary marriage has been modified to cope with economic and social demands. For instance, the ceremony that concludes marriage has been modified to cope with the economic and social demands. For instance, the ceremony that concludes marriage has been shortened greatly so as to allow parties to the marriage to be in a position to meet other pressing commitments

---

(M.A. Thesis, St. Johns University Collegeville, Minnesota, 1975): 27.

<sup>65</sup> In most of the church weddings, the wedding itself lasts for only a few hours and the new couple proceed for a honeymoon all by themselves for a day or two before they report back to their places of work.

such as official duties. Thus a short cut to a customary marriage has been favoured because it saves one from the elaborate, financially and time demanding ceremonial marriage. This in turn has led to increasing cases of elopement which is neither christian or African.

The sex revolution accompanying modernisation and as advertised and promoted by western media is breaking up the view of sex as mysterious and sacred. It is turning sex into a purchasable commodity, an investment for profit. There has been over emphasis of romantic love and love at first sight and this has penetrated the institution of marriage. This is neither African nor christian but due to western influence and culture.

Moreover, customarily, a woman most precious and valuable assets - her ability to cultivate, to be married, produce and bring up children were under the strict control of men. She also depended upon men for all her protection including that of her rights. Today women enjoy a higher degree of independence and status because just like men, they now possess opportunities, means and power that were traditionally denied their predecessors. It then follows that it is no longer necessary for a woman to look for a man to satisfy most of her needs for if she chooses she can satisfy most of them through her own efforts.

This scenario has enabled women to exercise much greater freedom in sexual relationships. For instance, a woman can decide to remain single and yet get

children, not because of lacking a husband but because of her desire to remain free and self-supporting. Hence to a mature girl, marriage is no longer considered an absolute necessity.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can conclude that the Roman Catholic missionaries managed to win Kikuyu community to their new faith in a relatively short time because of their effective evangelisation approaches namely; visiting the villages for mutual familiarisation, establishment of schools and medical dispensaries where services were given free of charge, training of and later assistance of local catechists among others. We have especially noted the role played by chief Karuri, Fr. Filippo Perlo, Cottolengo sisters and bishop Charles Cavallera in quickening the winning of Kikuyu to the new faith.

It has also been shown that the Roman Catholic missionaries did not hesitate to introduce changes in Kikuyu customary marriage, meant to modify it to fit their concept of a "christian marriage". Thus alien notions, as noted above, were introduced in such aspects as initiation rites, choice of a partner, bride-wealth, polygamy, childlessness, widowhood among others.

Besides other key influences that have had an impact on Kikuyu customary marriage have been discussed in this chapter. It has been noted that the introduction

of monetary economy, western type of education system and new modes of production offering equal social economic benefits to both sexes, by the colonising government has led to adoption of alien values and attitudes, such as individualism and sense of independence, that have counteracted Kikuyu customary ones especially in the realm of marriage. Besides, separation of family members through migrant worker system, pursuance of a career among others has greatly undermined the communal aspect of marriage and this state of the matter has had far reaching negative repercussions on almost all the aspects of Kikuyu customary marriage.

In the next chapter we are going to assess the actual interaction between Kikuyu customary and Roman Catholic church marriage preparation processes today.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 THE INTERACTION BETWEEN KIKUYU CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS TODAY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to assess the actual present day interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage in various issues involved in contracting a marriage today. The content of this chapter is based entirely on the primary data collected from the field. This, in a nutshell, entails views given on the institution of marriage by Kikuyu Catholics residing in Tuthu Parish out of their own experience as both Catholics by denomination and Kikuyu by ethnic group.

This chapter takes off by making a general survey of sex related issues among the community under study, it also endeavours to explore pre-marital sex, family life education, preparation for marriage and church wedding among others. The author feels that by exploring the above issues this chapter will go along way in giving a precise picture of the kind of marriages the Kikuyu Roman Catholics are contracting today.

## 5.2 A GENERAL SURVEY OF SEX-RELATED ISSUES AMONG THE COMMUNITY UNDER STUDY

The preceding chapters give information on how sex education was fully catered for traditionally among the Kikuyu community. It was noted that necessary guidance and advice was given according to one's age and sex in which case female children went to female elders and likewise male children to male elders. This ensured freedom and openness on both children and their parents or other members of extended family a thing that is lacking in many christian families today. According to the majority of informants sex is a taboo in many families. To mention any word dealing with sex is sinful in as far as majority of parents are concerned. The consequence of this is that most parents do not discuss matters related to sex with their children. At this point one would be left wondering about what could be the other alternative sources of information on matters of sex accessible to the children.

**Table 1: Main sources of Family life education as given by Young Informants - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Discussion with peer group	10	15	25	41.7	57.7	50
Mass media	6	4	10	25	15.4	20
Themselves through experience	5	2	7	20.8	7.7	14
Churches and schools instructions	2	3	5	8.3	11.5	10
Parents grand parent and relatives	1	2	3	4.2	7.7	6
Total % and number of youths interviewed (who answered)	24	26	50	100	100	100

The majority of the parents interviewed assume that teachers in schools and catechism classes are better suited to handle this education. As the table above shows this is not actually what is happening. This state of the matter leaves the youth very ignorant on sexual issues and thus to experiment things along. Although the church, just like in Kikuyu traditional society invites the youth to uphold value of virginity, it does not seem to make any impact on them. Having a child when one is

not married is not a surprise as it would have been in Kikuyu traditional culture.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2: Whether the Catholic Church is Relaxed or Strict in Matters of Sex - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
It is relaxed	8	9	17	33.3	34.6	34
It is strict	16	17	33	66.7	65.4	66
Total % and number of youths interviewed (who answered)	24	26	50	100	100	100

Those young informants who were for the idea that the church is strict in sex-related issues argued that it campaigns against any undertaking that seems to undermine sex as being mysterious and sacred such as introduction of sex education in schools.<sup>2</sup> It also teaches against the use of artificial contraceptive devices as it feels that they are likely to promote adultery and fornication since personal discipline is greatly checked by such devices.<sup>3</sup> The church's strictness is further shown on its emphasis and even demand that those seeking the vocation of priesthood, brotherhood and

<sup>1</sup> Catechists from all the ten local churches in the Parish noted that cases of teenage pregnancies are on the increase in their respective churches.

<sup>2</sup> This point was mentioned by practically all the secondary school students interviewed.

<sup>3</sup> Many youths felt that this stand of the Catholic church sets it apart from many other churches hence its strictness.

sisterhood must be ready to observe celibacy.

They further pointed out that the church has continued to sponsor education programmes for youths so as to conscientise them on how to relate with persons of the opposite sex while at the same time pin-pointing some of the dangers involved in indulging in pre-marital sex. Besides, if one engages in pre-marital sex and is proved beyond reasonable doubts then one is expelled from the Catholic Action until confession is done and forgiveness is sought.

Some among the young informants, however, felt that the church is relaxed on the matters of sex in the sense that as youths they are not adequately provided with relevant literature or other forums such as seminars on concrete teachings on the spiritual, biological and emotional aspect of sex life and that they get such literature from the secular world.<sup>4</sup> They observed that among the congregation in their respective local churches there are many single mothers who are known well to them and who have fallen to this state through pre-marital sex. There are also quite a number of faithfuls suffering from or known to have died of AIDS and that this is an indication that the church has not fully managed to convince its adherents of the evils of indulging in sex out of wedlock.<sup>5</sup> They further argued that the church is

---

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Action Students interviewed together as a group at Kiruri Secondary School on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1997 agreed in unison on this point.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that many youths from different local churches were able to know some faithfuls who have fallen victim of AIDS.

relaxed because their own parents as catholics, some of whom have been catholics since childhood, offer very little counselling and education touching on matters relating to their sexual life and they only do so when provoked by external influences such as observed behaviour or hearsay.

### 5.21 PRE-MARITAL SEX

The informants among the youths acknowledged the fact that cases of pre-marital sex have been on the increase among the youths in the recent past. They cited the following as the main contributing factors to this phenomenon in their community today: that there exists excessive pressure and influence from the peer group who regard those who do not have dates with the members of the opposite sex as "abnormal". They observed that in this so called dates sex is the overriding factor. Drug abuse was cited as a factor especially among young men. They argued that such young men loose self-control and quite a number of them end up indulging in indiscriminate sex to gratify their sexual drives. Moreover, they pointed out that many young people are engaging in this practice out of the curiosity created by both print and electronic media, whereby some of them endeavour to put into practice what they read and watch from pornographic literature and films respectively.<sup>6</sup>

With the prevailing socio-economic difficulties many youths engage in pre-

---

<sup>6</sup> Some pornographic films are said to be available at shopping centres.

marital sex to gain materially. Some noted that cases of sugar-daddies are on the increase in their community. It was observed that there are a number of cases where the young people decide to stay together to see whether they are compatible before marriage and then they decide to separate soon afterwards due to misunderstandings having already indulged in fornication.

The fact that there is no adequate intermingling between boys and girls leads them to have curiosity on sex and this is intensified by lack of appropriate and adequate advice on sexual issues by parents, teachers and relatives.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Some informants among the youth maintained that many students engage in fornication during school holidays.

**Table 3: Whether or not youths are adequately acquainted with members of the opposite sex in their church today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
They are adequately acquainted	12	15	27	52.2	60	56.2
They are not adequately acquainted	11	10	21	47.8	40	43.8
Grand Total % and number of youths interviewed (who answered)	23	25	48	100	100	100

Those among the young informants who said they are adequately acquainted with members of the opposite sex in their respective churches cited communal work in church, Catholic Action, music festivals and dramas organised on yearly basis as some of the forums that enable them to share skills and ideas and hence afford them an opportunity to learn more about the opposite sex.

However, some were of the view that such forums are not adequate and that not all of them as youths are eligible since for instance age is not put into consideration.

Practically all the informants among the parishioners felt that pre-marital sex is a real problem in their community today because of a number of reasons: That



pre-marital sex may lead to pregnancy that may force an individual into unplanned marriage that one does not desire. This leads in most of the cases to unhappy and regretful marital life.

On the other hand, it may result to single motherhood since many men do not feel comfortable to marry a woman who already has a child fathered by another man. Thus, pre-marital sex can put a girl into the bondage of a single parent, a state they felt is accompanied by a number of problems as shall be outlined later.

Pre-marital sex may also cause problems in a future marriage. A spouse with a pre-marital sex experience will often compare his/her spouse with a former lover and this may lead to the stalemate of the marriage.

Furthermore, a child born out of wedlock may be a permanent source of embarrassment to a married couple both in church and the community. Curious outsiders and malicious neighbours can do irreparable damage to the child and the marriage. This being so because an illegitimate child can easily raise questions on the morality of a parent.

Pre-marital sex is often a bait of sexually transmitted diseases which affect reproductive organs of an individual especially the female. If proper treatment is not sought, this can lead to childlessness and all the social stigma attached to it (this state).

## 5.22 FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

As we have already seen most catholics have broken away from the traditional family set up where family life education was taught. The institutions of learning where children spend most of their time have not catered for family life education in their curricula and if it is there it is examination oriented and not geared towards the learner's uprightness.<sup>8</sup> To the majority of informants, however, the church remains the only single institution that can give family life education adequately. Asked what the church has been doing towards this end so far, the informants among the parishioners explain that the church has been teaching about natural family planning to the married couples as well as against abortion and use of artificial contraceptive devices to both the married and the unmarried. It has also been emphasising on the virtue of love to all family members and the importance of respect between children and their parents and also between spouses themselves. They further pointed out that parents especially mothers through such forums as Catholic Women Association (CWA) are taught on how to take care and raise their children in a christian atmosphere.

Those mentioned as charged with the above responsibilities included Family Life Coordinators, priests, sisters and some parents who have attended seminars

---

<sup>8</sup> Martin Wanyoike's (40 years old) oral evidence, Rwathia Local Church, 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1997. Nancy Wanjiku also had the same feeling (40 years old), Wanjerere Local Church, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

dealing with marriage and family life.

Quite a number of the informants among the parishioners felt that some customary values ought to be incorporated in this education. According to them this should include careful teaching to the prospective couple and those already married on how to practice natural family planning, especially in as far as spacing and limitation of births are concerned, whereby self-discipline should be emphasised just as was the case traditionally.<sup>9</sup>

There should be more acquaintance between boys and girls to enable them to feel more at home with one another without indulging in immoral activities just as was the case in traditional dances and *Ngwiko* forums where all the youth were given a chance to meet and socialise with members of the opposite sex.<sup>10</sup> This would check estrangement between the opposite sex caused by one sex boarding schools and over protection of children especially girls by their parents. However, boys and girls should be taught separately while discussing very personal things like monthly period, "wet dreams" among others as in past by people of their own sex preferably elderly ones so that they can go deep enough in discussing matters pertaining to sex in marriage and feel free to ask questions. Otherwise other general

---

<sup>9</sup> Some argued that the presence of artificial contraceptive device in local shopping centres clearly portrays how far people have lost self-control in sex matters.

<sup>10</sup> It was observed that some parents have been monitoring their daughters movements to avoid shame of conceiving. Such girls have fallen victims of extra-marital sex through ignorance of the opposite sex.

topics such as family planning, fornication, abortion and so on should be discussed in the presence of both sexes.

The traditional aspect whereby the mother-in-law was the chief adviser of her son's wife should be revisited and incorporated in today's church marriages. Likewise, the husband ought to be counselled by his father on matters of sex as was the case traditionally. Also the value of virginity ought to be stressed for both boys and girls. Those who proceed to marriage without having engaged in pre-marital sex ought to be highly praised and even rewarded if possible.

### 5.30 PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Customarily proper learning about marriage was done during the initiation period and continued even after initiation. But this long preparation process does not seem to take place today. Besides, the role of elders and parents who formerly were responsible for giving youth sex education and instructions on responsible parenthood is becoming less and less recognised. How, then, does the church prepare young people for marriage today?

According to informants among the parishioners the church prepares young people for marriage in the following manner. It organises youth rallies, seminars and workshops whereby it offers counselling on courtship to enhance intellectual, social and emotional maturity of youths contemplating marriage. The church offers

advice on the choice of sponsors who would see the potential couple through the marriage by guiding and counselling them.

Further, the church prepares those contemplating to marry with sacraments such as confirmation and penance. It also counsels them on good morals, social and marital behaviour by emphasising, for instance, on love and care for one another, being faithful to one another till death, accepting to beget and bring up children carefully, morally and spiritually.

The church ensures that courtship is carried out in an orderly manner by, for instance, condemning pre-marital sex, emphasising that young people intending to marry should undergo instructions on matrimony first and that before marriage the consent of the two spouses to-be must be given. It also tries to encourage good family values in the already set-up families so that they can be good role models for those intending to marry. Moreover, it recommends pamphlets, books and other literature on marriage related issues to those contemplating marriage.

It is worth noting that some of the informants had a feeling that there are some aspects that are un-African in the way the church prepares young people for marriage today. They argued that in the past boys and girls were prepared separately but today they are prepared together by the church on marital issues. Also, while being prepared for matrimonial sacrament those contemplating marriage are informed that the church only recognises monogamous marriage, any child, boy

or girl is as good as the other, childless marriage is a valid marriage and that marriage once finalised is indissoluble.

It is also made clear in these marriage preparations that a marriage with or without bride-wealth is a valid marriage and that most ceremonies and festivities accompanying payment of bride-wealth are incompatible with church marriage, and hence those being prepared should delink themselves from them. In addition, there is pronouncement that marriage is one of the seven sacraments and for it to be recognised as proper and valid it has to be presided over by the priest in the presence of two witnesses namely; the best man and best maid.

Furthermore, there is emphasis on the equality of men and women before God in marriage in the preparation process and this checks the authoritarian aspect of men in Kikuyu customary marriage. In addition, one chooses a partner according to the guidance of the church namely that the choice has to be made from Catholic faithfuls who have been baptised and confirmed and only seeks the consent of the parents later while traditionally parents were fully involved in this choice. The role of extended family especially the elders is not taken seriously in this preparation. Also, included in this marriage preparation are alien aspects as conditions for church marriage such as ensuring that one has undergone spiritual stages like baptism and confirmation.

It is interesting to note that majority of the informants among the

parishioners felt that there are some customary values that ought to be incorporated in this preparation. They observed that youths contemplating marriage ought to involve their parents in the marriage preparation right from the very beginning to the end and especially to seek their consent on the choice so that they can be of assistance in counselling after marriage. The church should incorporate strict moral behaviour on sex related abuses to the youth as was the case in customary marriage with a possible penalty to those who would ignore them.

The church should encourage the young people to join various associations such as Catholic Action. In such forums the church should foster the spirit of corporate living where every member is mindful of the well being of the other members. This should revive the spirit of corrective measures against those who would go against the group interests, an aspect which was very much alive in Kikuyu customary age-groups.

There should be an allowance of a proper scrutiny by members of the extended family of both the bride and the bridegroom to ensure that their choice of a marriage partner is an excellent one. They should check for unpalatable traits and habits such as alcoholism, drug abuse abnormalities and diseases such as epilepsy, AIDS, among others. The elderly people especially those who have had stable marriages need to be given the first priority in offering pre-marital instructions to those youths contemplating to marry.

The young men contemplating to marry ought to be encouraged to consider giving bride-wealth to their bride's family as a sign of appreciation and also as a way of strengthening inter-family relationships.

Again, the parents of the bride-groom to-be ought to continue taking the responsibility of having their son's prospective bride as their own child once marriage has been finalised and hence should be enthusiastic to offer all the assistance needed in making her feel accepted and welcomed to settle in her new family and home. In this regard the bride should be made to feel free to consult the members of the extended family including her potential bridegroom's side for guidance and advice, particularly on what would be expected of her in her new family to-be.

Church elders especially from one's extended family should be given adequate attention in marital issues by encouraging the youth to give them their due respect and to consult them regularly and abide by their advice on sex related issues on marriage.

### **5.31 CHOICE OF A MARRIAGE PARTNER**

Some informants among the parishioners felt that in the process of choosing a spouse today there are a number of aspects that differ from the traditional ones.

They asserted that spouse-choosing today is to a large extent left to the suitor



himself or herself. Some of the limitations that used to exist traditionally on the extent to which one could go about choosing a partner are non-existent in church marriages today. In the former days it was the parents who could at times reject a marriage partner, today the church has assumed those powers and the former have been left with none.

The suitability of the spouse is today based on sexual excitement, education background and material wealth. Customarily, the prospective spouse was supposed to be morally upright in the eyes of the in-laws to-be and his/her family had to have a clean background healthwise and it had not to be associated with any anti-social behaviour such as sorcery and witchcraft. The spouse to-be had to be seen to be capable of procreating.

When the young informants were asked why some youth do not inform their parents about their intended marriage they had this to say:

That they fear being directed on who to marry yet their desire is to make their own choices of their partner whom they loved themselves. Some feel that they are "learned" enough to make sound judgements on what they consider to be "personal" things such as marriage. To some, their parents' guidance and counselling are considered as both backward and of no consequence to their future marital life.

Some feel that if they notify their parents about their intended marriage they

would be pressurised to pay bride-wealth which they may not be having in that particular time in point. Some do not because they are forced to hurriedly marry due to unacceptable circumstances such as pregnancy. Faced with this situation they do not disclose their intended marriage to their parents because they feel that their parents may stop them from marrying. Some decide to elope to see whether they are compatible. They feel that they may not have known each other adequately and hence they do not want to make their marriage public until they are fully sure that they have chosen the right person.

Moreover, it was the feeling of some informants among the parishioners that some conflicts have cropped up in the whole process of choosing a spouse and the subsequent preparation for marriage. They argued that the free choice of a partner stipulated by the church without adequate consultation of the extended family members often times leads to divorce or marrying a second wife due to incompatibility. Since traditional customs are very much alive one might choose a partner but the family might disapprove him or her by arguing that they do not marry from such a clan or family. Besides, the fact that the extended family is not adequately involved in the choice of a partner may lead to wrong choices due to lack of adequate background knowledge of the bride or groom to-be. Discovery of certain habits, traits or abnormalities such as alcoholism, epileptic or mental illness may soon lead to separation and divorce.

Further, conflict sets in as the church appears to undermine customary qualities such as procreation and promotes its vision of the family unit as comprising of a husband and wife for the purpose of companionship. There sets in a dilemma on deciding on who to turn to when a marriage goes haywire as a result of one spouse turning out to be infertile. The couple does not quite know who to consult - the church or follow the traditional customs which it (church) does not recognise. On the other hand, sometimes both the church and the families from both sides are not quite sure of their roles when a marital crisis of one of their own sets in. This has led to quite a number of separations, divorces or suicides.

### 5.3.2 The Engagement Process

According to the informants among the parishioners the following traditional engagement customs create problems for church marriages today. The stages and ceremonies involved in traditional engagement customs are very long and tedious and this interferes directly with marriage arrangements in the church. There is also the problem of clanism whereby some members of the extended family demand that such and such a clan cannot intermarry with them.

There is the problem of bride-wealth and the bureaucracy that goes with it. It often happens that the bride and the bridegroom cannot tie the knots of holy matrimony before the bride-wealth which at times is far beyond the means of the

bride's in-laws to-be, is paid. The spouses have to wait until the bridegroom has acquired enough wealth with which to pay the bride-wealth. Again, some requirements such as beer brewing is demanded and yet this does not agree with christian faith.

The following values were cited as being unAfrican in the engagement process today. It was maintained that engagement without proper involvement of one's kinsmen runs the risk of being engaged to a fellow kinsman something which was completely unacceptable in Kikuyu traditional society. Also, viewed as unAfrican is the whole trend of prospective spouses visiting one another unaccompanied and spending a night in each others home. Again, since the prospective spouses are left to one another, some are bearing children before marriage negotiations have taken off. Later on when the negotiations reach a deadlock one of the spouses becomes a single parent.<sup>11</sup>

It was observed that the concept of money has taken the centre stage in many engagements. There are too many pre-wedding parties meant to raise money for the main occasion. Further, people are engaging at a very young age without having attained physical and emotional maturity and majority of whom are still dependent on their parents for physical needs. Still further, ladies are choosing

---

<sup>11</sup> Some of the "aged" declared that some of the cases presented to them of impregnated girls appear to be out of this practice.

young men to engage with and then they are undertaking the role of paying whatever bride-wealth demanded by her parents so as to acquire a husband who may not be financially capable of paying it.<sup>12</sup> There are also a number of cases where a girl becomes pregnant in the course of engagement and is discarded as being unfaithful an indication that fornication has become part and parcel of the engagement process.

Some informants among the youth feel that their own parents ought to assist them in getting more background information about the spouse to-be especially on the character qualities to look for. They should help them in working out reasonable bridewealth so as to check any exploitation. They also ought to assist them in marriage preparations by giving them moral, spiritual and material support in all the areas involved.

Further, they are of the view that their parents should play the role of witnesses as well as being involved in the choice of sponsors to their marriage so that as a couple they could feel secure in the sense that there are people taking interest and caring for their marriage. They feel that their parents should co-operate with them especially by welcoming their spouses to-be without any tendency of fixing them up, else they should be concerned about their well being as though they

---

<sup>12</sup> According to the informants this is a new phenomenon and it is being done by professional women who have advanced in age in pursuance of education or wealth.

were their own children. It is their feeling that in this way their parents are in a better position to extend their parental care to their married sons and daughters and would assist them effectively without necessarily having to decide for, or dictate upon them on how they should carry out their marital affairs. This state of the matter would facilitate a harmonious relationship between the couple and the extended family.

### 5.3.3 Bridewealth

Customarily, it was the boy's father and even the entire extended family's responsibility to pay for a groom's required bridewealth but with socio-economic changes it is required of the groom to pay for himself. Conversely, the girl's father requires enough bride-wealth to cover for his daughter's cost of education. Today bride-wealth is losing its customary significance as bond of friendship between the two families and is being degraded as a mere business transaction even among Catholic faithfuls. Has it lost its customary value? and if so should it be done away with totally?

**Table 4: Should Bridewealth be abolished or not; Or should it be left open? - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Abolished	12	11	23	48	44	46
Should not be Abolished	9	10	19	36	40	38
Should be left Open	4	4	8	16	16	16
Grand Total % and number of youths interviewed (who answered)	25	25	50	100	100	100

Those young people who advocated for the abolition of bride-wealth argued that it might become an impediment to marriage for many relatively poor young people. This is so because it disadvantages a poor family for it drains resources they would have used to lay a sound foundation for their marriage. Others felt that it should be abolished so as to check cases of elopement where young people decide to stay together without formalising their marriage because of lack of bride-wealth. It was further noted that it undermines women's fight for gender equality since unlike customarily it has been commercialised and hence it has ceased to be a sign of appreciation of the role played by the bride's family in bringing her up.

Too often parents recommend and at times pressurises their daughter to marry a man who can give the highest bride-wealth and not the one who can make her happy. Consequently, the girl does not enjoy the freedom of choice of her partner; which results to depriving the boy the opportunity of marrying his loved partner simply because of his poor background. Some informants asserted that following its commercialisation; bride-wealth contradicts both the church's teaching on the right of every person to freely choose a marriage partner and a customary one of serving as a bond of friendship between the two families, hence it ought to be abolished as it serves no particular purpose in today's marriages.

Some informants, however, felt that it should not be abolished because there is need to show a sign of appreciation to the bride's parents for having brought her up and that the bride-wealth serves this purpose best. It was pointed out that even today bride-wealth is a form of assurance to the bride's parents by the groom that he has taken their daughter who he promises to take care of and hence it still remains a sign of his commitment to her welfare. On the other hand when the bride-wealth is accepted the groom feels that he has the blessings of his spouse's parents.

Some maintained that it should stay since apart from strengthening the relationship between the in-laws it makes the bride feel that her husband really needed and loved her dearly by the sacrifice he made in paying for her bride-wealth. Furthermore, if abolished it would encourage free unions and voluntary separations



since there would be no public witness or a sense of guilt.

Some of the young informants felt that bride-wealth should be left open. It should be left on one's will to give what one would afford as a token of appreciation.

### **5.3.3.1 Bride-wealth and Marriage Stability**

In the preceding chapters we have noted that customarily, bride-wealth to a greater extent ensured the stability of marriages in the sense that all the extended family members were involved in its payment and hence they did all they could to ensure that the marriage remained intact. This was the case because if marriage broke down, the deviant spouse as well as his/her extended family stood to lose. This loss was effected through return or non-return of the bride-wealth. In addition, bride-wealth served other numerous roles traditionally as discussed at length in chapter three. What about today when both the church and socio-economic changes have had an impact on it?

**Table 5: Has Bridewealth Promoted Stability or Instability in Marriages Today? - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Promoted Stability	20	17	37	45.4	53.2	48.7
Promoted Instability	24	15	39	54.6	46.8	51.3
Grand Total % and number of parishoners interviewed (who answered)	44	32	76	100	100	100

Those informants among the parishioners who felt that bride-wealth has promoted instability argued that in some instances a husband feels that he has bought a woman. This mentality sets in when such a man is forced to search for bride-wealth for so many years. In such a situation the wife becomes a tool for the husband because the latter feels that he has all the power over her. It thus makes the bride be seen as an asset and hence she is over burdened.

Some women on the other hand felt that they were treated as if they were bought from the market. They maintain that their husband do not love or appreciate them as co-partners in marriage and this makes them retaliate by being care-free and this in turn reduces happiness in marriage. In some cases some in-laws demand far

too high bride-wealth for their daughter which the groom cannot afford. The groom feels threatened and seeks property through unjustified means such as crime and blackmail all of which are a threat to the stability of marriage.

If the bride-wealth is not paid, the bride's family at times has a low opinion towards the family of the bridegroom and may influence their daughter to abandon it.<sup>13</sup> Bride-wealth has shortcomings in today's marriages, for instance, the poor financial state facing most of the newly married couples. Bride-wealth should be used in creating a strong family base instead of impoverishing the couple hence, worsening their new marital life.

Bride-wealth payment encourages elopement for two people who could have had a normal recognised marriage because of lack of funds to cater for it. Such couples tend to feel that they do not have their parents' blessings and any calamity in their family is associated with this "belief" which eventually creates a wall of suspicion between the two parties which distabilises the marriage.

Some informants, however, pointed out that bride-wealth payments promotes to some extent marriage stability. They argued that through bride-wealth the parents of both sides feel that the couple is not co-habiting and hence they feel obliged to give advice, guidance and counselling to strengthen the marriage of their

---

<sup>13</sup> The author was informed of well known married women who were heard saying publicly that before marriage they had never lacked some of the "essentials" they were lacking in their married state.

children. Besides, the wife feels that the man was serious in marrying her since he had to sacrifice so much to have her as his partner. As a result, she appreciates him very much and does all she could to assist him to establish a strong family base.

According to the informants among the parishioners there are some areas in which the Kikuyu understanding of bride-wealth have conflicted with the church's understanding of the same. That in Kikuyu customary marriage, it was mandatory for the bridegroom to pay bride-wealth and it was refundable in case of divorce. Today the church views bride-wealth as mere presents meant for thanksgiving and there is no follow-up in case one is not in a position to give it of if the wife decides to "desert" the husband without a reasonable cause. Further, unlike customarily, the church does not see bride-wealth as a condition to be met before the marriage is acknowledged as valid. It (church) sees church wedding as a way of avoiding fornication and since the bride's family usually asks for bride-wealth before such weddings take place, the church shuns bride-wealth payment as a way of forcing people to remain in "sin".<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the church views the marriage institution as having been created by God and as being built upon sincere love of the spouses and no amount of money can buy this love. Unnecessary delay due to bride-wealth is thus according

---

<sup>14</sup> By sin here is meant the act of young people deciding to stay together as "husband and wife" without having undergone church marriage.

to the church in conflict with the intention and purpose of marriage hitherto ordained by God.

Traditionally, bride-wealth was viewed not only as a sign of appreciation to the bride's family but also as a guarantee for the stability of marriage. The church views it today as a business transaction and a threat to the stability of the institution of marriage. Thus if bride-wealth was viewed as an indispensable condition for legitimacy of marriage in the former days, the church sees it as a barrier for a proper church marriage today.

The informants among the parishioners further observed that there are some concrete changes that must take place in the understanding of bride-wealth today. It was asserted that the commitment of both the bride and bridegroom should no longer be measured using material things. It is their compatibility which should be the main focus, bride-wealth should come later. In short bride-wealth should not be seen as mandatory when lovers decide to marry, rather, it should come later when they are settled.

Both parents ought to sit down and deliberate on it (bride-wealth) since the spouses are starting a new family and their well being will bring happiness to all of them.

Today, people view bride-wealth as a bridge from poverty to riches, hence they ask huge sums of money as if it is a form of buying a wife. This mentality

must change. It must be understood that now we have changed in our ways of living in that bride-wealth is paid not in form of living animals but money. Money is not easily generated or saved. In a nutshell, payment of bride-wealth should be a life long process and not a one day transaction, since it should not stop lovers from marrying if there are no other impediments.

### 5.34 CHURCH WEDDING

To many elderly informants a church wedding contributes little, if anything in itself to the married state. They felt that at best it regulates the couples position before the church and thus provides an access to the eucharist. They observed that the moral exhortations given to the couple to-be are more applicable to outside situations than those of Africans. Do the youth feel the same?

**Table 6: Youths Preferences to Customary or Church Wedding - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Prefer Church wedding	17	20	37	77.2	86.9	82
Do not prefer Customary wedding	5	3	8	22.8	13.1	18
Grand Total % and number of youth interviewed (who answered)	22	23	45	100	100	100

Those young informants who said they would prefer a church wedding argued that in the church there is not only an opportunity of being instructed on how to live as a christian couple but there is also sound solutions offered on possible problems that the couple is likely to face in their married life. Besides, the church has laid down the standards on which one could aim at ensuring a happy christian marriage. That in the church marriage the extended family which at times may be a nuisance does not come in too much. For instance, the acceptability of a prospective spouse is based on the love that exists between the two youths who are contemplating marriage and not on the standards set by the extended family.

Again, church marriages are relatively modernised as compared with the

traditional ones. There are relatively few dos and don'ts advocated for by the in-laws from both sides. In church marriage equality of both sexes is recognised in the sense that they are advised to live as co-partners in marriage. This would check the exploitation of one partner by the other. Moreover, church marriage offers a reasonable exposure to far more forums of being enlightened as a couple on how to lead an authentic christian life as well as bringing up children in the same manner.

Some informants however, argued that they would opt for customary marriage because unlike church marriage there is provisions for divorce if one has genuine reasons. Through customary marriage one becomes well linked with members of the extended family and this serves as a guarantee to the stability of marriage. Through their involvement in the whole marriage process the extended family members feel free and at ease to give advice and counselling to the couple unlike in church marriage where they feel like strangers to the couple who more often than not do not consult them.



#### 5.3.4.1 Why People do not Marry in Church

According to informants among the catechists and parishoners there are a number of reasons why many people do not marry in church today. Some prospective couple are not quite sure of getting a child and hence they are hesitant to marry in church until they discover that they are fertile. Also, the church recognises only monogamous marriage which should be indissoluble and this makes many fear any future incompatibility between the two couples such as through impotency and mental illness. Hence they avoid church marriage so as not to be caught up by these unpredictable problems.

Sometimes the bride's parents will not agree to a church wedding until their in-laws have completed paying the bride-wealth, even if it takes many years. Thus, the couple is forced to live without the church wedding. On the other hand, some couple do not fully understand the actual meaning of a church wedding. They see it as a mere solemnising of the already existing customary marriage which is considered sufficient. They argue that those who have solemnised their marriages are no better than they are.

They argue that enormous money is spent on church wedding for it has become a fashion to have it accompanied by costly and conspicuous paraphernalia such as bridal parties, expensive imported garments, flowers, car hire, cards among others. Too much time is also consumed in these preparations and at the same time

there is too much dependency on relatives and friends especially in pre-wedding parties meant to fund-raise to meet the costs of the above that at times go beyond the couple means. Not surprising many people get the impression that church wedding has to be made very colourful.<sup>13</sup> For those who cannot afford this a customary marriage or even elopement becomes a better option.

If already married, some parents of the "bride" come for more bride-wealth before a church marriage no matter how long they have been married. Given the financial problems many couples are going through, raising of more bride-wealth is discarded as unnecessary expense. Besides, if already staying together, some are not quite sure they have the right partner in the light of indissolubility of a church marriage.

Since the church does not accept divorce many young people feel that a church wedding will force a bond even after mutual understanding and natural love have been eroded and replaced with conflicts, fights, hatred, break-ups among others. Hence taking of vows to enter into an indissoluble marriage discourages many. Moreover, many young people today opt to live together for convenience, but not with the intention of having children, because they find raising a family as burdensome and a hindrance to their careers. This being incompatible with church

---

<sup>13</sup> It was observed that a number of employed young men are known to borrow money from co-operative banks to make a colourful wedding to impress people.

laws they avoid marrying in church.

Some informants among the parishioners suggested that there ought to be some changes in church marriage so as to make it more appealing to a Kikuyu. They were of the view that the church should persuade and even encourage young people to observe some of the traditional customs such as paying of bride-wealth according to their abilities so as to receive a blessing from the bride's family by acknowledging their marriage as proper and well intentioned. The idea of having traditional dish and drinks instead of western style of expensive cakes and locally made wedding attire instead of western types of gowns should be encouraged in order to cut down unnecessary exorbitant expenses incurred in church wedding.

The church should ensure that the prospective spouses are adequately instructed before they go down the aisle. As much as possible instructions should be done by elderly people from the church community preferably from the prospective spouse's clans who know the latter's life background, character and attitude well.

Further, the priest should ensure that there is an agreement on the bride-wealth before he conducts the wedding. Also, the priest should conduct the wedding ceremony at home before the church community and the extended family members from the in-laws. More important, the extended family members from both sides should be involved in the whole process of preparation, negotiations and

the actual wedding ceremony.

As already noted in our earlier discussions priests are involved in all church marriages and one of the condition for a valid church marriage is that it has to be conducted by a priest. Notwithstanding their celibate state they are concerned with every aspect of marital life of every person under their pastoral care. How then do people view their celibate state?

**Table 7: Priests should or should not be married - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Be married	13	9	22	54.2	34.6	44
Not be married	11	17	28	45.8	63.4	56
Grand Total % and number of youths interviewed (who answered)	24	26	50	100	100	100

For those informants who were opposed to celibate priests they argued that they cannot make good marriage counsellors to the married couple since they lack practical knowledge. They should therefore be married so as to get well versed with family life matters and hence improve on their pastoral work. Some felt that the

priests should be married because remaining single is unAfrican. They asserted that this is a foreign culture which should not be copied.<sup>16</sup> The question of marriage should be left open for them to decide since one never know, having an intimate mate and children to love might end up bringing abundant joy and fulfilment in their lives.

However, majority of the informants regarded marriage as a hindrance for priests in their vocational duties. They need to remain celibate so as to employ their energy fully in serving God's people as marriage would make them have divided commitments and this would not auger well with their pastoral work.

It is worth mentioning that no marriage could have been contracted customarily without adequate involvement of the two clans concerned. Many of the functions that used to be carried out by the extended family such as socialisation process, guidance and advising, material support, security among others have been taken over by other institutions such as churches, schools, banks, hospitals among others. In as far as marriage is concerned, the church has had more influence than the others in the sense that it pronounces what an ideal christian marriage ought to be. Have these pronouncements affected the role of extended family in church marriages today?

---

<sup>16</sup>

It is worth mentioning that some African priests (outside the parish under study) have been reported in the media after engaging themselves in extra-marital sex.

**Table 8: Has the Church Promoted or Undermined the role of Extended Family in Church Marriages Today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Promoted the Extended Family's Role	6	8	14	13.6	24.2	18.2
Undermined the Extended Family's Role	38	25	63	86.4	75.8	81.8
Grand Total % and number of parishoners interviewed (who answered)	44	33	77	100	100	100

The majority of the informants were of the view that the church has greatly undermined the role of extended family in church marriages today especially by its over emphasis on the bond between the couple. This makes the party contemplating marriage appear as an independent entity whose business need not be interfered with by a third party. Though the extended family would like to play an active role in the marriage of one of their own, it is as if the church declares that five persons are enough to finalise the marriage namely; the priest, the bride, the bridegroom, the best man and the best maid.

Furthermore, the church takes an individualistic approach in seeking each

individual's consent to marriage and this distances the couple from the rest of the extended family. There are many engagements that are being broken down today as a result of the members of the extended family, particularly parents being not impressed by the choice made by their son or daughter. This state of the matter has been brought about by church's dismissal of bride-wealth payment and parental consent as essential elements necessary to validate marriage. So most parents feel undermined by being denied a say in their own son's/daughter's marriage.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

From the above the following conclusions can be drawn. That the youths today are not receiving adequate sex education from their parents since the latter assume that the church offers the best forum where such can be learnt. The church has actually been doing very little on this and the youths depend upon their peer groups and media and this scenario has resulted to copying of western values and an increase of pre-marital sex. Besides, the respective couples are no longer adequately prepared for marriage today. This has been due to the church distancing the extended family from the prospective couple by emphasising on the individual choice and consent. Many informants feel that the extended family ought to be involved in this preparation.

The western values such as money and "sexual excitement" have found their

way in the choice of a partner thus undermining the importance placed on the moral uprightness. The choice itself has been "privatised" often time leading to wrong choices and some parents feel belittled for not being consulted in the choice.

When marital crisis sets in the couple is at a loss on who to turn to for assistance. Further, the engagement today is entirely the pre-occupation of suitors who instead of discovering each others' character are out for fun. Hence cases of pregnancy are not uncommon during engagement leading to abrupt marriages or desertion.

It was shown that many informants view bride-wealth as an impediment to marriage following its commercialisation while some are of the idea that if done away with it would lead to free unions and voluntary separations. The church does not seem to offer any solution either. Thus, its payment or non-payment still has an impact on the stability of marriage. It was observed that the place of church marriage has not been very clear. Youths associate it with modernisation while the older generation fear it because of its indissolubility aspect. It was agreed that it is too western oriented and that it should be made more African.

Our next chapter is going to be a continuation of this chapter whereby more on what transpires after marriage has been contracted among Kikuyu Roman catholic community today is going to be highlighted.



## CHAPTER SIX

### 6.0 POST-MARITAL ISSUES: A CONCERN TO KIKUYU ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY POST-MARITAL ISSUES: A CONCERN TO KIKUYU ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter endeavours to explore further the interaction between Kikuyu customary and Roman Catholic Church marriage in the handling of post-marital issues today. Its main goal is to unearth what actually transpires today after a marriage has been contracted either in church, customarily or otherwise among the Kikuyu Roman Catholic community. It also attempts to investigate other closely related issues such as childless marriage, single parenthood, divorce and separation, family planning among others as well as attitudes to the "unmarried"<sup>1</sup> people among this community who are past the marriageable age.

It is the feeling of the author that a thorough scrutiny of the above issues will enable us to see from a first hand experience some of the challenges that the Roman Catholic Kikuyu faithfuls are facing today in their marital life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Means people who have never had a socially recognised marriage where one could be referred to as a husband or a wife.

## 6.2 CHILDLESS MARRIAGES

We have already seen that the prime reason for marriage in Kikuyu traditional society was to beget children. Marriage without children was viewed as incomplete and hence a failure. However, according to the teaching of the church a marriage with or without children is both valid and complete as long as it has been consummated through sexual intercourse.

According to the informants a childless couple today is always in a continuous state of discontentment. This is so because they live in a culture where the ultimate goal of marriage is child-bearing. The community views childlessness as undignifying, especially where there are no direct heirs in the family. However, conflict sets in because in their pre-marital instructions, the prospective couple is told that marriage is indissoluble after the church wedding and their first sexual intercourse. Lack of children, therefore, is not an adequate reason for dissolving a marriage in as far as the church is concerned. But is this the feeling of the Kikuyu adherents?

**Table 9: How one would react if one's spouse turns out to be infertile - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Divorce and Remarry	4	1	5	16.7	3.9	10
Appreciate the situation	10	16	26	41.7	61.5	52
Remarry without divorcing	6	0	6	25	0	12
Adopt a child	4	9	13	16.6	34.6	26
Grand Total % and number of Youths interviewed (who answered)	24	26	50	100	100	100

Those young informants who were for divorce argued that this state of the matter is likely to encourage adultery in the name of trying to resolve the predicament. Thus, by divorcing the infertile spouse one would be in a position to marry a fertile one with whom to bring forth children to carry on the family line. They observed that staying together with an infertile spouse is not logical since they could not be able to get children to cater for them in old age.

Those who said they would appreciate the situation asserted that with the prevailing socio-economic difficulties children are more of liability than an asset and

they are known to promote unhappiness in marriages in the pursuit of trying to meet their basic needs. They would, therefore, be contented with the situation because this would be interpreted as the will of God. Furthermore, what matters most in marriage is companionship.

Some male informants, however, felt that they would retain the infertile wife and marry a second one. They argued that this would ensure that the love they had for the first wife is not lost and at the same time they would get children who would satisfy them psychologically.

Some were for the idea that they would adopt a child to bring happiness in the home and in some way strengthen their marriage. They felt that this would enable them to adhere to their wedding vows and stay together until death separates them and at the same time get a heir.

### 6.2.1 Social Problems Faced by Childless Couple

According to the informants among the catechists and parishioners the following are the main social problems faced by the childless couples in the church today.

They do suffer from anxiety and frustrations because they are expected to have children so as to be treated as normal people in the society. The woman in particular is blamed for childlessness and she becomes the topic of discussion, ridicule and gossip among women folk in the church. The couple is regarded as

inferior and incomplete and there are a lot of speculations as regards the causes of their infertility. Some wonder aloud whether the cause of their infertility was through abuse of sex before marriage.<sup>2</sup>

They also suffer from loneliness because they do not feel free to intermingle and socialise with the rest of the community. They tend to avoid such functions and activities that involve family matters such as seminars on how to bring up children and responsible parenthood, since in these forums they feel inferior to those couples blessed with children and hence the uneasiness.

They do also face discrimination in certain quarters in the church such as being appointed as leaders for youth or in other related areas where parental experience is sought. If interested and not chosen they feel the reason behind this is simply because they are childless. Besides, through various gestures such as being greeted by one's name instead of being referred to as a mother or a father of so and so, while in the company of others who are not greeted in such a manner the spouses are reminded that there is none to continue his/her family name. They are thus under a constant pressure to adopt a child or even marry a second wife.

Majority of the informants among the parishioners felt that there exists a conflict between the solutions given by the church to childless couples and the

---

<sup>2</sup> In this particular point some informants mentioned abortion and other means of preventing pregnancy as possible causes of infertility in women.

customary ones. They observed that most of the victims employ double standards. That is, some christian couples on lacking a child often tend to follow solutions which were offered traditionally such as taking a second wife rather than adhering to the church's teachings on the issue. Some informants noted that the desire to procreate has been manifested by the phenomenon of ensuring the bride is pregnant before they wed. Thus, some couples who do not want to be trapped in a childless monogamous marriage try their luck before marriage.<sup>3</sup>

The church views children in marriage as a gift from God and it can be given or denied. Thus it argues that the couple in question should accept their predicament and learn to live with it as God's will. They are, however, given the alternative of adopting a child if they so desire. This conflicts directly with Kikuyu traditional view of the place of children in marriage, since begetting of the latter was seen as the essence of marriage. Furthermore, it was almost agreed unanimously by men that in a childless home it was the wife who had something amiss. This has been reflected by many men taking a second wife if they could not procreate with the first one.

---

<sup>3</sup> It was noted that some of the young people seeking church wedding have already indulged in sex either through cohabiting or while engaging, to many youths this is not wrong.

### 6.3 SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Cases of single parents especially single mothers are on the increase today. The community and even the church seem to have accepted the defeat. What are the main causes of single parents today? The informants among the parishioners mentioned the following.

Many young people engage in pre-marital sex resulting in teenage pregnancies. The boy not being ready to take up any responsibility leaves the girl alone to take care of the child. Besides, some girls contemplating marriage get children while in the process of trying to find somebody to marry them. Then it so happens that the persons they are seeking are not interested in marrying them.<sup>4</sup>

Further, some parents neglect their parental duty and leave their role to their partners; for instance, a husband taking to alcohol leaving home and living irresponsibly with other women in the urban centres. Through acquisition of education and employment, some women deem themselves independent from their husbands. If their husbands do not show them their due respect they part each other with or without children.

---

<sup>4</sup> This point was emphasised by a group of single mothers interviewed at Kanyenya-ini Local Church on 23rd December, 1997. Three of them mentioned that they are victims of that practice.

Single parenthood also emanates from divorce and separation whereby a wife "runs" away with children to live on their own or with parents or else husbands chasing their wives away and being left alone with children. This could be after domestic quarrels or other family conflicts. Fear of women from being dominated by men may lead some of them to single parenthood choice. This is most common with women who are in well paying jobs. They view marriage as a hindrance to their freedom.

Due to socio-economic problems some young men and women are living together so as to share escalating living costs. Eventually some do start a family during the period they are staying together and beget children only to separate later. There are other people who marry for wealth, position or status. If any of the above disappears the marriage breaks up leading to single parenthood. This scenario has been brought about by the failure of the society and church to educate the youth on matters pertaining to marriage. This laxity is also manifested in cases where marriages are contracted to avoid embarrassment in case of pregnancy before marriage, to keep a job, to avoid disappointment or for other similar reasons which are far from genuine love for the person. Eventually one of the partner deserts the other.

It is also brought about by situations where after a husband or wife's death through sickness, accidents or otherwise the remaining partner decides not to marry.



Such a person will then raise the child/children single-handedly. Population imbalance may also be the cause whereby we have more women than men reaching marriageable age earlier. Bearing in mind that polygamy has been discouraged by both economic hardships and the church, the competition for the few men forces the girls to single parenthood since they also desire to have children of their own.

### **6.3.1 Problems Faced by Children of Single Parents**

The informants observed that some children of single parents are disturbed psychologically. They ask themselves various questions such as why one of their parents is absent and to some extent they feel insecure in being in an incomplete family. They also feel inadequate in the presence of other children with both parents and hence long to know and live with the other parent if still alive. The cultural habit of referring everyone by his/her father's name gives an impression that a child who is known only by his/her baptism and original name lacks identity to tie him to his father or rather there is a stigma in his identity.

Children are deprived of the missing parents part in their lives. The single parent responsible for the family is often too busy that he or she has no adequate time for the children. Given that most single parents are financially handicapped and are the sole bread winners for their family, they spend much time in trying to generate income while leaving children under the care of neighbours and/or

relatives. Such children lack proper parental care and some grow up to be unruly, undisciplined, and may even adopt anti-social behaviour like smoking and taking alcohol.<sup>5</sup>

If living with their mother, the children may not identify themselves with any place of origin. There are at times conflicts especially over inheritance whereby they are viewed as non-members of the family. Hostility may also arise from relatives who may view them as burdens especially where their assistance is sought to feed and clothe them. At times they are made to perform the duties of the absent spouse such as cooking, washing and other child-abuse related chores. Some do lack in essentials such as education, good diet and medical care in cases where their existing parent is financially handicapped.

### 6.3.2 Problems Faced by Single Parents

The informants among the parishioners cited the following as the main problems faced by single parents today. Single mothers are viewed with suspicion as people of loose morals. At times they are accused unfairly of having affairs with husbands of other wives. Moreover, to the woman some men assume she is of loose morals and try to demand sex and for the man on the other hand, women are always at his

---

<sup>5</sup> Many boys and girls loitering in shopping centres were identified as some of the children of single parents.

side to snatch whatever he has toiled for.

Majority of single parents face problems in bringing up their children. Some children lack discipline because the parent is afraid to be hard on them. The children sometimes show their feelings for the absence of the other parent thus emotionally punishing the existing parent. Moreover, loneliness is a major problem - the purpose of marriage is so that a husband and wife can share with one another with trust and mutual help. The single parent feels insecure without a partner to confide to. Health problems may crop up due to over-working and over-thinking. Loneliness may set in and this leads to alcoholism and adultery.<sup>6</sup>

There may be constant quarrels between a single mother and the rest of the members of the family over family property. Stigma also rests on those who have children out of wedlock. The community does not respect a woman having children at home without a husband. She is blamed as somebody who has betrayed the community by bringing forth a child without a social father. Such women are not looked as good examples and parents do not want their daughters to mingle with them.

The church looks at single mothers who beget children at their homes as fornicators. It sees them as sinners before God but it does not hesitate to accept

---

<sup>6</sup> Marriage and family life counsellors in Kanyenya-ini and Karurumo Local Churches stressed that many problem they handle are related to this.

them as church members. Some of these victims feel the church has no good place for them. They are not girls and they are not faithful mothers, so they do not fit anywhere. They feel out of place in community and in church. They feel like condemned people.<sup>7</sup>

### 6.3.3 How the Church could help Single Parents and their Children.

According to the informants among the parishioners the church can alleviate the problem of single parents by doing the following:

The church ought to advice such parents to desist from having more children so as to be able to support well the ones they already have. It should advice them to lead sober lives and try always to stay with their children especially when they are young. It should particularly advice men single parents to avoid marriage because the children of their former wives might be mistreated.

They ought to be asked to form self-help groups of which the church should identify donors to fund them so as to promote their business interests. There should also be a revolving fund in every local church raised through *harambee* or otherwise to be disbursed to the most needy cases of single parents. Such parents should be employed by projects initiated by the church such as hospitals, schools, farms

---

<sup>7</sup> Oral Evidence: Ten representatives of Single Mothers Association, interviewed together on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1997 at Kanyenya-ini Local church.

among others. Besides, the church ought to get donors to meet such parent's and children's education needs.

The church through its catechists should counsel them on how to go about bringing up their children to be of sound moral character and good christians. They should be encouraged to join single parents association in which they could share their problems and through which the priest can channel his counselling and guidance. In particular they should be counselled to be wary of those likely to mislead them by taking advantage of their situation.

The extended family should be encouraged to accept those who are already single and their children while at the same time playing the role of sensitising its members about the problems encountered by such parents so as to minimise tendencies that are likely to lead one into such a state.

Children of such parents should also be counselled on the importance of accepting and co-operating with their parents and even appreciating whatever little they may offer them. They should be instructed to give their parents both their physical and moral support so as to ease their burden of bringing them up.

In addition, single parents especially those who have fallen into this state through unacceptable manner such as pregnancy out of wedlock ought to be made to feel their human worth and that they belong. They ought to be welcomed warmly within the church at all levels and more so in the small christian

communities.

#### 6.4 SINGLE STATE

Single state is picking up in both sexes today. Customarily, the status of unmarried persons was not recognised. Production of legitimate children was a social obligation of men and women. The reasons for remaining single according to informants are several:

There are those who have not found a suitable life partner and live in the hope of finding one. For instance, some girls find it hard to find a devoted christian man to marry for there are far too many girls in church than men.<sup>8</sup>

Some argued that a highly educated woman is seen as a threat to a less educated man. Thus, her very education becomes a hindrance in marriage.

There are also those with physical impediments and other abnormalities that make them incapable of marriage. Some parents also make such unreasonable demands on a prospective husband that they chase away a prospective marriage partner. Besides, children from troubled families where family quarrels and separations are the order of the day often are fearful of marriage. Sometimes, the

---

<sup>8</sup> In the ten local churches that the author visited both women and girls were almost three the number of men both old and young.

daughter refuses to marry either because she fears men or because she wants to take care of her mother who has been abused by her father. There is also christian celibacy where some take single state as a vocation to dedicated service to society and this applies to priests (Fathers), brothers and sisters.

Some of the problems they face include the fact that if one is not a sister or brother then in the eyes of the community he or she fits nowhere in the social structure. He is neither a child nor a parent. He or she is a social misfit since neither the community nor the church has a place for him or her. Such unmarried persons who have reached maturity are looked upon with suspicion. Sometimes a man would be suspected of impotence and the woman of being a prostitute.

## 6.5 POLYGAMY

The informants among the catechists observed that with the pressure from the church and economic difficulties polygamous marriages have decreased at an alarming rate. With the commercialisation of bride-wealth, not every eligible man can afford to marry several wives. It is also clear that with the women becoming economically independent, it is not easy to convince a woman to marry a man who already has another wife. Most educated women opt for monogamous marriages.

However, it is noted that this practice still thrives in its traditional open form as well as its modern clandestine form. Many church adherents have betrayed their

marriage partners as per the teaching of the church by maintaining mistresses and secret homes. This has greatly contributed to the instability of marriages.

The church views polygamous marriage as being illegal. According to it, the Bible urges christians to marry only one wife. Though the church does not encourage the practice, it admits those already polygamous in the church. However, those who are already members of the church are not allowed to enter into polygamous unions.



Table 10: Should Polygamy be Abolished or Not - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Abolished	14	22	36	60.9	91.6	76.6
Should not be abolished	9	2	11	39.1	8.4	23.4
Grand Total % and number of Youths interviewed (who answered)	23	24	47	100	100	100

Those young informants who were for abolishing of polygamy had the following reasons to give. It may encourage animosity between the wives due to jealousy and favouritism. Moreover the death of the husband may lead to family disputes revolving around inheritance. Neglecting of one wife by the husband financially or sexually may lead to prostitution and adultery.<sup>9</sup> With the prevailing socio-economic difficulties, many husbands may not be in a position to meet basic needs of their polygamous families. This may lead to discrimination and hence a threat to the stability of marriage.

There being no land to be cultivated it would encourage family members to engage in anti-social and immoral activities to earn a living. Cases of marriage

<sup>9</sup> One youth noted that a certain polygamous man had revealed to him that if one of his wives wrongs him he denies her everything until she goes onto her knees begging.

breakages and constant quarrels would become rampant, for instance, a husband might decide to sell the family property so as to raise money for bride-wealth for another wife.

Polygamy may be seen as a way of spreading venereal diseases by man to his wives which results to sterility or death. If married to old men, young wives are likely to indulge in extra-marital affairs since the latter are not likely to meet their conjugal rights due to their advanced age.

A child growing in an environment where polygamy is practiced is bound to see marriage as a state where the father is more superior and thus controls the whole family while a child coming from a monogamous marriage views marriage as a life where the father is strictly meant to serve the mother and likewise the mother to serve the father. The association of several wives with her husband is a mark of her loss of dignity and true liberty.

Some informants among the parishioners felt that there exists a number of contradictions and conflicts in the way the church views polygamy and the way it is understood by Kikuyu community today. The church teaches against polygamy and is of the view that one man cannot offer total love to more than one wife; while some Kikuyus support and are for polygamy as they argue that one can care and love more than one wife provided he is physically and mentally capable. In the church today there are far too many women who are unmarried because polygamy

is forbidden by the church. What happens is that since some of such women do adhere to their traditional expectations of procreating and being under the protection of men, they end up being single mothers and mistresses. This leads to marriage instabilities since such women befriend husbands of certain wives and drain resources of the family. The church terms polygamy as a sin because one man should be wedded to one wife. Other women are seen as a gateway to adultery and hatred. Some Kikuyus understood polygamy to mean good things as seen above. It has been noted that when a man marries in a church and after a couple of years begets no children he marries a second wife with whom he procreates. Some men are known to have secret wives (mistresses) whom they procreate with and even provide for at the expense of their official wives and children without any feeling of guilt. These two scenarios go against the church's teachings.

## 6.6 STATE OF WIDOWHOOD TODAY

According to the informants among the elders, catechist and parishioners the state of widowhood exists today in the community just as it was in the Kikuyu traditional society. The main difference between the two is that very few widows/widowers remarry today despite the fact that the church is not opposed to the idea. They advanced the following to be some of the possible reasons for this disinterest. Due to the breakdown of Kikuyu traditional customs the brother of the deceased is not

willing to care for all those children given the socio-economic hardships prevailing today.

Few persons would like to take a woman who belonged to other people who paid bride-wealth and shoulder responsibility for her children who according to custom, belong to another clan. Today young men are not willing to marry older women. In other cases, some widows are very wealthy after inheriting their deceased husband's property. If such a widow marries, she would loose all the property for it would go to the family of the new husband.

What problems do widows/widowers face? The informants noted that the widowers mainly marry single mothers. At times there arises disagreements between the children of both sides and this promotes hatred and unhappiness in the home. Sometimes widowers marry very young women. However, these younger wives are not content with their older husbands hence they seek other young men to meet their sexual drives. In some cases widowers are very old men and women refuse to marry them or they lack bride-wealth or at times they are refused by their own children to remarry. Such men lead a very painful life full of frustrations and dissatisfaction.

The informants among the parishioners noted the following as some of the ways the church contributes to the welfare of widows. The church conducts seminars through which it helps them by encouraging them to trust in God fully so

as to have confidence in facing life. Further, it encourages them to join associations of their choice so that they could feel loved and cared for. The church helps where possible in their daily endeavours, be they spiritual or material. For instance, whenever job opportunities arise in the church, they are given the first priority if they are needy and qualified for the job.

The church also counsels them on how to cope with their loss and at times gives a hand in upbringing of children if the parent is poor. The church also advises them to remarry if and only if they feel they cannot stay without a spouse. Otherwise, they are instructed to desist from having more children out of wedlock. The church further contributes in preaching good morals to its adherents and hence creates a harmonious living in the village something the widows are badly in need of. During funerals and prayer meeting especially in small christian communities (*Miaki*) the church pin points the areas in which the bereaved wife or husband could be helped by the community. It especially sensitises the community on its obligation to help such people.

However, some felt that there is a conflict between how the church views widowhood today and the way it was viewed traditionally.

They asserted that the church recognises widows as just ordinary members of the society whose rights should be upheld. Traditionally all widows were supposed to be remarried by the deceased's brother or any other man. Due to this

mentality a conflict often arises in the whole area of property inheritance. Some people try to intimidate widows to get married elsewhere or to return to their parents so that they could acquire the property they had inherited from their deceased's husband.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the church does not so much encourage the widow/widower to remarry; this has led to fornication and prostitution to some of them. Since the church advocates purity and puts emphasis on remarriage in church, many widows on lacking partners to marry end up having children out of wedlock.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand widowers end up in having secret affairs with widows and single mothers.

#### 6.7 SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Cases of divorce and separation are on the increase despite the fact that the church is very much against them and even teaches on the indissolubility of marriage. According to the informants among the parishioners the following are the main causes of divorce and separation in their community today.

Unfaithfulness in marriage whereby a spouse is proved beyond reasonable doubts or strongly thought to have committed adultery. At other times divorce or

---

<sup>10</sup> The author was told of two cases where widows were accused for the death of their husbands to acquire property. They were chased away by their husband's extended family.

<sup>11</sup> Numerous cases of widows having children with other men while still single were pointed out.

separation occurs when a spouse does not get on well with the extended family because of her unbecoming behaviour, such as being accused of engaging in sorcery.<sup>12</sup> At times it is due to interference on a particular marriage by relatives or even bad guidance and uncalled for gossip from those against the marriage.

Incompatibility could also be another reason whereby due to hurried marriages there is inadequate understanding of the character qualities of the other. Extreme cases of authoritarianism, laziness and extravagance may lead to separation. It at times occurs when one of the spouse suffers from mental illness, terminal illness or becomes impotent. Besides, since marriage without children is regarded by community as inferior and incomplete; the couple which fall victim in most cases end up separating or even divorcing.

Copying of western cultures and values such as gender equality in the decision making in the home results in misunderstanding and the man claiming to be the head of the family sends his uncompromising wife away. Many women today being co-providers feel that they should have a hand in decision making on how the wealth they have contributed in getting should be utilised. In short, lack of openness in domestic affairs at times leads to lack of trust between the spouses and this more

---

<sup>12</sup>

Many women are said to be "buying Samuel" (a kind of love portion) for their husbands to quieten them so as to love them dearly and to become indifferent to their unbecoming behaviour such as leading adulterous life. The woman now assumes the role of the head of the family and dictates to the husband on what to do.

often than not results to separation.<sup>13</sup> Ambitions such as going abroad for business ventures or further studies or being employed to far off places from home has in some cases led to estrangement between the spouses and some have ended up separating.

**Table 11: Has the Church failed to contain the Problem of Divorce and Separation - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Failed	24	15	39	57.1	46.9	52
Not failed	18	18	36	42.9	53.1	48
Grand Total % and number of Youths interviewed (who answered)	43	33	75	100	100	100

Those who felt that the church has failed to contain the problem of divorce and separation argued that even the best man and best maid in most cases do not offer any counselling or guidance to the married couple and hence there is nobody to turn to when crisis sets in a given marriage. The church does not offer practical solution or alternatives to some of the most sensitive problems in marriage such as

<sup>13</sup>

Many spouses are said to be confiding their secrets to the people whom they are not closely related by blood or marriage. If such secrets leak, divorce becomes a possibility.



childlessness, impotence and adultery. Some of those people undertaking guidance and counselling are of dubious character and hence far from being a living example to the couple in question since in most cases at one time of their marriage they have been victims. In the same way most of the parents whom the newly married couples would turn to for counselling have nothing to offer because their marriages are in shambles. This serves to indicate that the church has been too theoretical in its teaching on christian marriage and family life.

It was further pointed out that the church unites two people into a holy matrimony on the basis of their consent and fulfilment of spiritual stages and fails to gather adequate information as pertains to their background and this at times leads to incompatibility and hence a ground for divorce and separation. Moreover, on deciding to separate the spouses do not inform the church for they just desert each other informally. Some do not even attend the church anymore due to shame. Consequently, the church does not know which party has wronged the other and it becomes very hard to approach the case.<sup>14</sup>

However, some felt that the church has not failed to contain the problem of divorce and separation because through forums such as seminars, workshops, marriage encounters, pamphlets among others it inculcates into its adherents the

---

<sup>14</sup> Those who divorce or separate informally are known to keep off from church for sometime thus denying the church a chance to intervene.

basic tenets of marriage such as fidelity, unity, companionship and co-operation that ought to exist between the husband and wife. It also instills cardinal values of marriage and family life through one's spiritual journey from childhood to adulthood through catechism.

The informants among the parishioners noted the following aspects as un-African in the way the church handles divorce today. That in case where divorce is inevitable such as infertility the church is still adamant to grant divorce or to give practical solutions as was the case in Kikuyu traditional customs. When marital crisis sets in the church does not refer them to the elders from both in-laws to handle them, and hence the couple have no confidence on the judgement done. The church deals with the couple directly without a third party.

#### **6.7.1 The Place of the Church in Extra-marital Relationships**

Today the church is a single institution that brings people together in various groups. In such groups there is a likelihood of emerging close inter-personal relationships which could be easily exploited just as it happens in large secular organisations and institutions such as schools. It would be interesting, therefore, to explore the parishioners' views on the place of the church in extra-marital relationships.

**Table 12: Has the Church Promoted or Checked cases of Fornication and Adultery Today - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.**

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Checked	30	24	54	66.6	68.6	67
Promoted	15	11	26	33.4	31.4	33
Grand Total % and number of parishioners interviewed (who answered)	45	35	80	100	100	100

The following supportive evidence were given by those who argued that the church has checked the cases of fornication and adultery. That the church has time and again tried to teach its adherents how to live as good christians by organising seminars and requesting them to join other appropriate forums where they are sensitised on the place of sex in marriage and dangers of its abuse in extra-marital unions such as acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases and general lack of trust between spouses if discovered or suspected. The church teaching against the use of artificial contraceptive devices considerably checks extra-marital sex by watering down security and confidence that such devices give to their users.

Since the church views polygamous marriage as a form of adultery, it has to a large extent promoted monogamous marriages among its adherents. Marrying

another wife results not only to termination of one's leadership but it also stops one from receiving holy communion. Besides, the instructions given to those contemplating to marry and guidance and counselling given to those already married goes a long way in checking extra-marital sex. In these forums one is enlightened on the purpose of marriage and hence issues such as childlessness or physical impairment of one of the spouses are dismissed as grounds for extra-marital sex.

However, a number of informants among the parishioners felt that the church has to some extent promoted cases of adultery and fornication. They observed that the youth lack role models in the church today. For instance, the church does not refuse its adherents from taking alcohol and some take it excessively to a point of lacking self-control and more often than not this leads to fornication and adultery.<sup>15</sup>

The church does not take firm action against those caught indulging in adultery and fornication or to caution those among its adherents who are about to do so. Indeed it has taken an indifference stand and this in turn has resulted to a do not care attitude among the adherents towards fornicators and adulterers some of whom are well known.

The night visits by church leaders unaccompanied by other church members

---

<sup>15</sup> The author happened to witness a church leader being a bit drunk while making some announcements in a certain church in the area under study.

to single mothers for various reasons such as offering advice plus other night meetings among the adherents to a greater extent promotes these practices.

#### 6.8.0 STATUS OF WOMEN TODAY

Almost all the informants in the parish felt that the status of women have improved tremendously since the coming of christianity. Human equality expounded by the church puts the status of women at par with that of men. Women battering on the other hand has greatly been checked by christian teaching on love between spouses. Women have also been set free to choose a marriage partner freely and their consent is a prerequisite to a valid church marriage. Polygamy has also been checked by the church and this has ensured a more dignified position for women like never before since polygamy used to give an overwhelming authority to a man as the overall head of a polygamous family.

Through education, women have also been in a position to hold similar or even more executive positions than their husbands. Traditionally, women could not hold higher authority than men. Moreover, in decision making women are frequently consulted by their husbands on deciding on issues such as the number of children to have, house to live in, acquisition of land among others. Medical care has also contributed a lot in the improvement of the status of women whose needs seem to be ignored. Child mortality has been checked and responsible parenthood

has greatly promoted the health status of women. However, some informants were of the view that there are some aspects in which present day duties of a wife have conflicted with the traditional ones. From her job, a woman becomes a co-provider with her husband and thus she easily ignores her traditional roles such as being submissive and hence appears domineering to her husband. This might generate conflict to those men who still try to assert male supremacy and superiority over women. In some instances employed women have left the caring of young ones and other domestic chores such as cooking to maids. Some no longer depend on their husbands for decision making for the latter have been forced by economic forces to migrate in search for earning an income.

Women are no longer the source of education and counselling to their daughters especially on marital issues. This has been overtaken by the church, media and interest groups. Today, women are holding traditional duties that were purely meant for men such as heading a family in the case of single mothers and thus being the sole breadwinner for her family. Today some women are allowed to be away all the day long (like men) unlike the traditional belief whereby she is expected to remain at home, bring forth children, till land and grow crops. Some men still restrict the movement of their wives in the name of curbing immoral practices. Through education women are presently involved in medicine, animal husbandry, judiciary and even industry which men held autonomously.

As already noted in the preceding discussion the stability of marriages today is not guaranteed and hence it would be worthwhile, to observe the status of women and their children of broken families today:

**Table 13:** An Investigation of the Status of women and children of broken families in the church as compared to that of Kikuyu Traditional Society - Tuthu Parish, October/November, 1997.

Alternatives	Numbers			Percentage		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Improved status	18	20	38	45	62.5	52.8
Deteriorated status	22	12	34	55	37.5	47.2
Grand Total % and number of parishioner interviewed (who answered)	40	32	72	100	100	100

Those who were of the view that the church has improved the status of women and children noted that in Kikuyu traditional society women and children of broken marriages were regarded as servants but in the church today they are respected because all people are equal in the eyes of God in the fact that they were created in his image. That the church advises, encourages and even assists these women to earn their living faithfully so as to be self-reliant. Traditionally, such women were regarded as dependents and they were supposed to remarry in the course of which

they carried children along with them to their new homes. Since the church to a greater extent discourages the remarriage of such women, possible ill-treatment of their children by a step father is relatively checked.

Those who felt that their status have deteriorated argued that children of broken families lack adequate parental care and at times other basic needs such as education and medical attention for the church lacks adequate resources to support them. Traditionally, such victims were incorporated into the extended family and clan, they also acquired a piece of land for their livelihood. Unlike customarily, such victims rarely have good reputation as some indulge in malpractice in the name of being free and independent. There are also no adequate sanctions in place in the church to ensure that they lead a sober life. In Kikuyu traditional society members of the extended family took it as their duty and obligation to ensure that such victims adhered to Kikuyu traditional beliefs, values and attitudes.

## 6.9 FAMILY PLANNING

According to the informants there is a conflict in the realm of family planning. The Catholic church has it that family planning devices are intrinsically evil. It argues that the sixth commandment forbids fornication and adultery. In other words according to the Catholic church, those promoting family planning among teenagers and singles are at least facilitators of adultery and abortion. Only a minority know what the



church teaches about family planning. The majority believed that the catholic church is against all forms of contraceptives and planned parenthood. Most informants, however, said that economic constraints determine the number of children a couple should have but did not elaborate how this is achieved.

The majority of the informants among the catechists and elders felt that long absenteeism in sexual union with a mother of a young baby was comparatively easier in the olden days because many men had several wives. With the church emphasising on monogamous marriage, it has been extremely difficult to some faithfuls to effectively promote monogamy and faithfulness in marriage at the same time. Many men are known to engage in extra-marital sex. Thus, although the church disapproves polygamy, there are some christian men who have several unofficial wives hidden somewhere.

Unlike the traditional practice, the couple share a bed instead of sleeping separately. Responsible parenthood or spacing of children then becomes a major issue. They cannot share the same bed same night and then be able to space the birth of their children with a two or three years traditional period. They have been taught in church that to sleep separately symbolises lack of love for each other. Since the church condemns the artificial contraceptive devices they hesitate to approach the priest for counselling and guidance on their sexual life.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above the following conclusions can be drawn. That a childless couple suffers a great deal both in the church and in the community today. There is social stigma and many feel uncomfortable while in the presence of couples blessed with children. Some end up taking a second wife or ensuring the bride is pregnant before they wed. Cases of single parenthood are on the increase today due to pre-marital sex and marriage instability. Children from such parents suffer from feelings of insecurity, social stigma, lack of proper parental care and general abuse, while single parents suffer from being accused of leading a loose life, conflict over family property and lack of good place for them in the church and community.

It was observed that although polygamy has been condemned by the church, some men from monogamous marriages still practice it secretly by maintaining mistresses and secret homes. It also thrives openly where some men take a second wife especially if the first one is infertile. Also noted is the fact that remarriage of widows/widowers is very minimal today. Most homes of those who remarry are full of stress due to incompatibility and some of those who do not remarry are involved in extra-marital sex.

It was further noted that cases of divorce and separation are on the increase due to hurried marriages, unfaithfulness, infertility and lack of trustworthy

counsellors. That victims of broken marriages rarely have good reputations since neither the church nor the community have adequate sanctions to ensure that they lead a sober life. It was also shown that the status of women have improved tremendously as gender equality has been observed in almost all the spheres of life. Some of their duties have conflicted with the traditional ones especially on the realm of domestic affairs.

Moreover, it was observed that traditional family planning methods such as polygamy and abstinence have been checked by the church by condemning the former and emphasising on the conjugal act as an important aspect in marriage. It was noted that most church adherents are ignorant on the teaching of the church on the whole issue of family planning.

In the next chapter we are going to draw conclusions from the findings on the basis of the original hypotheses. Finally, a number of recommendations and areas of further research are also going to be offered.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7.0 CONCLUSION

This thesis is on the interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage. It has established that before the intervention of christian missionaries in Kikuyu land, there existed a stable marriage system among the Kikuyu. This stability was guaranteed by a number of factors namely: The kinship system among the Kikuyu community which, for instance, guaranteed the position, responsibilities and obligations of each and every individual right from the family to the entire community level. Through its collective sanctions, it ensured peace and harmony by checking any deviant behaviour of a member of any one given group in the community. Anti-social and other unbecoming behaviour which could have threatened the institution of marriage were thus checked since one's behaviour was under close scrutiny from one's agemates.

There was also ample life-long education given to the growing children by the elderly members of the community especially parents and relatives on marriage and family life. The elders also offered a very good role-model for the children to learn from. This education was particularly intensified during the initiation rites when both boys and girls were taught how they were expected to conduct themselves on entering marital life. After initiation the youths had an opportunity of getting adequately acquainted with members of the opposite sex whereby they were

able to identify prospective marriage partners by having had socialised with them in a healthier manner. Moreover they were trained on how to handle and control their sexual instinct and this checked pre-marital sex considerably.

It was found out that one had to marry from an acceptable clan or family and the characteristic qualities of the spouse-to-be had to meet the expectation and standards advocated for by the extended family. The preparation for marriage in particular was a long process that involved both the clans of the prospective husband and wife. The ceremonies and rituals involved in this preparation afforded the two clans an opportunity to meet severally to acknowledge and approve the marriage.

The significance attached to bride-wealth greatly strengthened the relationship between the prospective couple and the in-laws from both sides. Since any form of marital conflict threatened this relationship all the extended family members took it as their duty and obligation to offer advice and counselling to avert anything that could cripple the marriage.

It was found out that infertility was not a threat to marriage because a man had freedom to marry a second wife in case his first one was infertile. An impotent man on the other hand, could invite his male relatives to procreate with his wife/wives on his behalf. Polygamy also guaranteed the marriage of all marriageable women and this checked fornication and adultery from both men and women which could have threatened marriage stability.

The study also established that the flexibility of customary laws on sexual life to a greater extent checked adultery that could have led to divorce or separation. It was found out that impotent men had freedom to allow their wives to befriend some males from their age group to meet their sexual needs. Besides, extremely old and hence sexually inactive men acknowledged and approved the relationship of their wives with other males to meet their sexual needs.

The study also confirmed that the Roman Catholic church played a significant role in the disintegration of Kikuyu customary marriage. It has shown that the missionaries undermined the corporate life which was an essential element in Kikuyu customary marriage by separating converts from non-converts, by encouraging the former to live in and around mission stations. In the mission schools the students were taught of the evils of their own customs such as female circumcision/clitoridectomy which was a pre-requisite to marriage. They were also distanced from the members of their extended families who adhered to such customs and in the long run they were uprooted from their cultural background.

Individual aspect of marriage was over-emphasised at the expense of the communal aspect. There was emphasis on the right of every individual to choose his/her marriage partner and the consent was to be sought from the prospective spouses, thus, the approval of the marriage by the in-laws to-be was ignored. Furthermore, the bride-wealth that brought the two clans together was viewed as a

negation of the individual and was equated with the business transaction. It was no longer viewed as a vital element for the validity of marriage. All the ceremonies and rites that previously accompanied it were condemned as unchristian.

Polygamy was condemned as being incompatible with christian faith. It was felt that it encouraged self-indulgence as well as lowering women's dignity. It was also equated with committing adultery. The missionaries emphasised and even made it compulsory for the converts to enter monogamous marriages. Procreation which was the essence of Kikuyu customary marriage was also undermined. The church had it that a childless marriage is a valid and complete marriage as long as there is conjugal love since companionship according to it has a higher value than procreation.

It was found out that the missionaries also introduced the notion of the indissolubility of marriage once contracted something which was unheard of in Kikuyu customary marriage. Also alien to the Kikuyu community was the idea of single state as a vocation worth equal respect like marriage.

The study further indicates that some variables other than the church have been responsible for the disintegration of Kikuyu customary marriage. These variables include the colonial administration that was the main pace setter for urbanisation, modern education system and monetary economy. The establishment of urban centres led to migrations where people placed themselves far from the

effective range of traditional control resulting to the diminishing of the communal aspect of marriage. Kikuyu system of education also gave way to the modern system of education that, unlike the former, offer little preparatory education for marriage.

Cash economy, on the other hand, not only led to the commercialisation of bride-wealth but it also promoted individualism especially among the younger generation and a fair degree of independence from the extended family which formerly played a major role in marriage. Besides, cash economy introduced inspirations for new values that replaced the old ones in the institution of marriage, for instance, polygamy was no longer seen as a good measure of prestige, material accumulation was viewed to be a better substitute.

New modes of production and gender equality in socio-economic opportunities has led to a fair degree of independence of women and this has greatly challenged prescribed traditional roles and duties especially in the whole realm of division of labour along gender lines. Moreover, print and electronic media have led to the change of customary attitude towards sex and marriage and there is over-emphasis on physical attraction, money and romantic love.

The study has also confirmed that the interaction between Kikuyu customary and Roman Catholic church marriage today has not been entirely a harmonious one and has to some extent caused instability of marriages. The study has underscored



the following as the main areas of conflict of values.

The church has neglected the extended family members in the arrangement of marriages especially in the actual choice, consent and bride-wealth negotiations. This has led to hurried marriages where the spouses are not adequately prepared and this has at times resulted to separations soon after marriage due to incompatibility. Again, having been distanced from the extended family, the engaged couple copies what seems to them as fashionable in most cases western values. When a marital crisis sets in thereafter, such a couple is in a dilemma on who to turn to for counselling.

The church's view that a childless marriage is a valid and complete marriage has led to a conflict of values because many Kikuyus do not concur with this view. It was found out that childless couples suffer a great deal both in the church and in the community. There is social stigma because the notion that the essence of marriage is procreation is still alive among many Kikuyus. The pressure from outside has led some Kikuyu church adherents either to divorce their infertile spouses, to remarry or even ensure that the prospective wife is pregnant before they wed. The latter practice has encouraged extra-marital sex which has often led to single parenthood.

The idea of indissolubility of marriage has led to many people entering trial marriages to ensure that they are compatible with one another before solemnising

their marriages. Such marriages are rarely solemnised since one of the spouses still doubts whether he/she has made the right choice, unexpected pregnancy sometimes crops in leading to desertion and at times the bride's parents make unreasonable demand for bride-wealth from the groom leading to elopement which offers a very shaky ground for marriage stability.

The findings, however, indicate that the church has not so much changed the attitude of some Kikuyus towards some customary values such as polygamy. Some men still practice it secretly by maintaining mistresses. If suspected or caught in action, marriages of such men become very unstable since there is a lot of dissatisfaction among the family members especially the wives. Also according to the findings polygamy thrives openly where some men marry a second wife if the first one is infertile or is incompatible with the husband. Such polygamous homes are rarely happy ones due to jealousy, envy and favouritism among its members.

The findings have established that the over-emphasis by the church on the bond between a husband and a wife and to a certain extent on nuclear family has tended to set apart a married couple from the rest of the extended family. This has contributed in checking the respect and the fear bestowed to them and hence their interest in the stability of marriage especially by offering advice and counselling to the newly married couple has not been very effective. As a result there has been a lot of separations due to trivial issues that could have been contained through proper

guidance and counselling by those who know them well - the extended family members.

The study has, however, validated the fact that other factors apart from the church have also contributed to the instability of marriages. These include socio-economic hardships, separation through migrations, gender equality in socio-economic opportunities among others. Such factors have conflicted in one way or the other with traditionally prescribed roles leading to dissatisfaction in marriages.

Perhaps it is due to the above mentioned conflict of values that church marriages have become unpopular in the community under study.

## 7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The author strongly feels that there are some Kikuyu customary values on marriage that have resisted change. While it is true that some of these values are incompatible with christian marriage he still feels that there are some such as bride-wealth payment, parent's involvement in family life education and the communal interest in the choice of a partner among others which are harmless and need to be incorporated into church marriage. He also feels that some church laws on marriage need to be relaxed in order to accommodate some of the customary values in marriage. In a nutshell, in order to ensure a harmonious interaction between Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage, he thus recommends the

implementation of the following practical suggestions.

The traditional communal up-bringing of children should be re-addressed to ensure a moral community. Customarily, elders were always available to correct children, listen to them and offer guidance at times of crisis. It was uncommon for young people to fail to listen to their elders, be they their parents or those of their parents' age. Similarly, the youth today need to be taught about marriage values and be corrected though with convincing reasons and facts.

Most parents need help to learn the best methods of initiating their children into the facts of human sexuality. It may be advisable for the church leaders to initiate educative discussions (seminars) held by wise and knowledgeable persons addressing issues on facts of human sex to parents in the local churches.

There is need for the parents to resume the duty of instilling family life education to their children right from childhood. The church should encourage them to answer children's questions about sex faithfully according to the latter's level of understanding. This would enable children to learn more about sex and marriage within a context of christian morality rather than within a context of experimentation. The church leaders could also organise "crush programmes" for both boys and girls in order to give proper perspective to the church marriage with African background. There could be frequent seminars in which the youth can be given the opportunity to discuss the best solutions to the problems facing their life.

The church should create the right atmosphere whereby the youth can make the right choice of a marriage partner. This should be done through the promotion of good family relationships, formation of appropriate youth groups and movement in the parish to provide healthy meetings among the youth which can promote the development of their personalities.

The role of the church in the actual choice of a marriage partner should be an advisory one namely; that of informing the candidates for the marriage of the problems they could land into and bringing to their consciousness that in most cases a happy home depends on the choice of a future partner. That in order to get the right partner, the prospective partners should know each other well through regular visits and seeking advice from elders who have married life experience, especially extended family members. In particular, parents ought to be involved in the choice of a partner not only because they can form very good judgement but also because they will help marriage partners much more if they have approved the marriage from the beginning. The parents, however, should not go beyond their responsibility by for instance forcing their children to marry or get married to particular people of their (parents) choice but should rely on persuasion and unselfish concern while expressing their views on their children's intended marriage.

Both the church and the extended family need to be fully involved in preparing the prospective couple for marriage. Instructions both at home and in the

church should be an education towards responsible parenthood and a reminder of some positive Kikuyu customary values on marriage. The prospective couple should be helped to understand that sexual relations are only legitimate and lawful within the context of a church marriage. Experienced married couple should intervene here to give the youth advice on how to master body passions which are a human reality.

No couple should be married before undergoing counselling. The purpose should not only be to teach them everything there is to know about sex, marital relations, relationship with parents and in-laws and so on, but also to introduce them to all the related issues and guiding them into knowing where and how they might find help in these areas. During counselling, relevant literature on marriage problems, the church's directives and other recommendations on marriage should be made accessible to them for reading. Again, those carrying out counselling should aim at making those being counselled to feel at home, for instance, arranging for the prospective couple to be counselled together at times and sometimes separately so as to receive the best of the kind of counselling they deserve.

The engagement process should be allocated more time at least not less than a year where the spouses to-be try to understand each other interests, character, family background, likes and dislikes while at the same time attending instructions on marriage. This will help to reduce their differences and make them part and

parcel of each other.

Bride-wealth should not be condemned in itself because of its acknowledged abuse. The abuses should be countered by sound teachings on the meaning of human behaviour and of marriage. The deciding and handing over of bride-wealth should be christianised and included in church marriage as part of integration of customary values and practices with christian marriage rites. It is worth mentioning that its traditional role as a token to the girl's family has to be appreciated and encouraged by the church if the idea of indissolubility of marriage is to be understood by Kikuyu christians.

Parents and guardians ought to assist their children to plan their weddings. They need to encourage them to make financially realistic wedding plans and discourage unnecessary expenses. More time should be spent on getting counsel from the priest, parents and genuine experienced family friends preferably elderly ones. Lack of money should not stop a prospective couple from pursuing their wedding plans.

Childless couples should be helped to appreciate their state and continue living together. They should be assisted to realise that their childlessness should not be a basis for separation and divorce, because apart from procreation marriage serves many purposes such as companionship and living a sacrificial life for one another for better or for worse. The love of the couple can be strengthened through

adoption of a child, guidance and counselling and involvement in community activities which offer a good forum for socialisation.

Voluntary single parenthood should be discouraged. It is wrong for a man or woman to bring forth a child who will suffer the stigma of illegitimacy. This is a great injustice done to the child, and one can only see selfishness in the one parent family if intended as such. The basic needs of any child is a family where both parents co-operate harmoniously in its up-bringing. Every effort need to be made in form of guidance and counselling to reduce the incidence of single parenthood and to offer assistance to those already involved especially for the sake of their children. For instance, the church ought to embrace them unconditionally in its sacramental life. This would make such parents and their children to feel that they belong to a community that loves and respects them as human beings.

The negative attitude towards the unmarried should be strongly condemned. While young people should be encouraged to marry, they should not be forced to do so or be ill-treated if they fail to marry. This is so because there are many reasons such as impotence, that could cause this condition. The church should take the responsibility of caring for the unmarried as one of its concerns. It should help them to fit and to feel fully integrated in society. This can be done by teaching both the unmarried and the society to accept that the unmarried state is as honourable as the married state.



Those who are already in church should not be allowed to enter polygamous unions under "normal" circumstances. Exception to this stand should include the case of a childless marriage whereby the infertile wife takes the initiative of suggesting polygamy to her husband or a husband who receives his infertile wife's consent to marry a second wife. However, all cases should be treated on their own merit and the consequences looked into carefully. All the new forms of polygamy which are socially disapproved and unacceptable should be worked against.

Whether the widows or widowers marry or not they should be under obligation to live a pure life which is above reproach. The church should counsel the widowers to marry within their age bracket for compatibility sake. The widows or widowers who intends to remarry need to be counselled to prepare them to accommodate the children of their prospective partner's previous marriage. Besides, mature children should be consulted concerning the intended marriage so that they will not be rebellious against their step parent. Those opting to remain single need to be assisted by the church to know how to play the double role of mother/father effectively. Appropriate guidance and counselling as well as spiritual and moral encouragement are quite vital to these people. They may be advised to join supportive groups where they can be strengthened by interacting with other members undergoing similar experiences.

There should be a clear promotion of community involvement in resolving

marriage problems. Each local church should identify traditional customs which safeguarded marriage and preserve them if they do not go against their faith. The church should not take over the role which the community can play effectively on their own to ensure stability of marriages. Where possible the church should encourage the prospective couple to fulfil certain traditional requirements such as bride-wealth payment and seeking parental consent before blessing a marriage.

In order for the divorce and separation rate to be reduced, the care of the married couple must not end at the altar, nor must it thereafter be reduced to mere sacramentalisation. Catechists and priests should, therefore, be better prepared to encourage, support and counsel married couples. Since the first five years of marriage are very important, the church community, priest and other experienced christian couples should play a very important role in assisting the newly married to get settled in their married life.

Before and after marriage the couple should strive to establish a deeper relationship with the families of both sides rather than marginalising them in the name of freedom. This will lead to openness among extended family members thus creating an attitude of sharing problems, crises and joys when they face them. Trivial issues which emerge into big quarrels in an extended family set up will then be done away with before they cause havoc to marriages. Moreover, couples should be encouraged to dialogue over their problems through marriage encounter

and marriage workshops.

Good methods of responsible parenthood should be taught to christian couples and those about to marry. Such methods should be able to cater for their physical, emotional and spiritual health so as to safeguard solidarity and joyous union in marriage. Also the methods ought to be accessible, acceptable, safe, efficient and reversible. The church should co-operate with suitable agencies in enlightening its adherents on these methods. Though the church should not hesitate to speak against any method it regards as not very useful to its adherents, no particular method should be forced on people or denied those who would like to practice it within wedlock. The church should, however, commend continuously the virtue of self-discipline and chastity among the unmarried as part of christian life.

## 7.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- (1) A comparison of husband-wife relationship in Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage today.
- (2) A comparison of the content and extent of the application of pre-marital and post marital counselling in Kikuyu customary marriage and Roman Catholic church marriage today.
- (3) The actual place and influence of parents and in-laws in the contemporary christian marriages among Kikuyu community based in rural areas.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Published Books

- \_\_\_\_\_ All Africa Seminar on Christian Home and Family Life. Kitwe,  
1963.
- Barth, H.H. Christian Ethics in African Context. Nairobi: Act publishing House,  
1976.
- Bour, J. The Catholic Church in Kenya. Centenary History. Nairobi,  
St. Paul Publications. Africa (c) 1990
- Bertenazzo, M.C.C.J. A Catholic Catechism for Adults. Kampala: St. Pauls  
Publications Africa, 1981.
- Bewer, T.F.C. Kikuyu Conflict: Mau Mau and the Christian Witness.  
London: The highway press, 1953.
- Blum, W.G. Monogamy Reconsidered. Nairobi AME/CEA spearhead 105 -107,  
1989.
- Bottignole, S. Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity. Nairobi: Heinemann  
Education books (c) 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Communities in Central Kenya. Nyeri diocese  
pastoral conference, 1976.
- Cagnolo, MC. The Kikuyu, their Customs, Traditions and Fooklores. The mission  
printing pres. Nyeri, Kenya, 1933.

- Castle, E.B. Growing up in East Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Emony: G. Preparing yourself for marriage Nairobi : Uzima Press,  
1997.
- Hastings, A. Christian Marriage in Africa London: SPCK, (C),1973
- Herskorits, M.J. Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact.  
Newyork City. Augustin, 1938.
- Kabetu, M.N. Kirira kia Agikuyu Nairobi East Africa Literature Bureau, 1966.
- Kamunya, K. A Handbook for modern African marriage ceremonies, (c) 1973.
- Kenya Episcopal Conference: The Catholic Church; A Source Book for Every  
Catholic Family, parents, youth and married couples (c)  
1986.
- Kenyatta, J. Facing Mount Kenya. London: Martin Secker and Warburg Limited,  
1961.
- Kimani, G. Courts hip in marriage. Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983.
- Kisembo, B. *et al.* African christian marriage. London:  
Geoffrey Chapman, (c) 1997.
- Kiura, J.M. Courts hip and marriage. Nairobi: St. Paul Publications - Africa,  
1987.
- Lambert, H. E. Kikuyu Social and political Institutions. London: Oxford  
University Press. 1956.

- Leakey, L.S.B.      The Southern Kikuyu before 1903. London: Academic Press INO, 1997, Volume 1, 2 and 3.
- Mailu, D.      Our kind of polygamy. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Limited, 1988.
- Mbiti, J.S.      African Religions and philosophy. London: Heinemann,(c) 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_      Love and marriage in Africa. London: Longman, 1973.
- Middleton and G. Kershaw: "Central Tribes of the North Eastern Bantu". London: International African Institute, 1965.
- Muga, E.      African Response to Western christian Religion: A sociological analysis of african separatist religions and political movements. Nairobi: Literature Bureau, 1975.
- Muiruri, P.      Rugano rwitu rwa witikia na Muthikabu Peter Kairu, Muthikabu wa mbere wa Diocess Gatoreki ya Murang'a (c) 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_      Diocesi ya Murang'a. Miaka ikumi ya witikia. Nairobi: Views media (c) Diocesi ya Gatoreki ya Murang'a 1997.
- Muriuki, G.      A history of the Kikuyu, 1500 - 1900. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Okullu, H.J.      Church and marriage in East africa. Nairobi: Uzima press, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_      Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Mozambique Christian Family in the Church St. Paul's publication - Africa. Kampala - Uganda, 1972.

- Phillips, A., ed. Survey of African marriage and Family Life. London: Oxford University press, 1953.
- Poluke, M. Bantu Traditional marriage its modern changes and suggestions of its inculturation. Nairobi: Hekima College, 1992.
- Ross - Larson B.C. The Kikuyu Live off the Land. An Amecus street Book. Ed. by P.J. Deegan, (c) 1972.
- Sandgren, D.P. Christianity and the Kikuyu Religious Divisions and Social Conflict. Newyork: Peterland (c) 1989.
- Shorter, A. African culture and the Christian church. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973.
- Shorter, A. Ed. Church and marriage in East Africa. Eldoret: AMECEA Research Department, 1975.
- Siege, B. A. Marriage today. A complementary of the Code of Canon Law. Newyork: Society of St. Paul, (c) 1966.
- Simonsson, M. Christian marriage and family life. Christian council of Northern Rhodesia Lusaka, 1962.
- Somba, J.N. Marriage Kenyan style. Kesho publications, Kijabe, Kenya, 1981.
- Sullivan D.O. Family Planning and Kenya's Future. Catholic Mission Machakos, 1983.

Theological Advisory Group: A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family Life in Africa. Scott: Theological College, Kenya, (c) 1994.

Wachege, P.N. Jesus Christ our Muthamaki.(Ideal Elder) Nairobi, Phoenix Publishers I.td, 1992.

African single mothers. Socio-ethical. and religious investigations. Nairobi: Signal Press Limited (c) 1994.

Welbourn, F. B. East African Christian. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Walele, B. Family Spirituality in Africa. Spearhead number 70. February, 1982  
AMECEA GABA Publications.

Wanyoike, E. N. An African Pastor. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, (c) 1974.

Waruta, D. W. and Kinoti H. W.: Pastoral care in african christianity. Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1994.

### Theses, Articles and Papers

Adebola, A.S. "A history of Western education among the Kikuyu 1898-1956"  
Ph.D Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984.

Akiiki, B. "Aspects of Bantu marriage" in African Ecclesiastical Review.  
Volume 20, Number 6, December, 1978.



- Amadi, V. "Marriage Instability in Modern Marriage". LLB Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980.
- AMECEA Conference 1982: "Families Truly Christian, Truly African" in African Ecclesiastical Review.
- Arasu, S.D.P. "Christian Marriage" in African Ecclesiastical Review, vol.38, No. 4, August, 1996.
- Baptiste, J. "Two Problems: Bridewealth and polygamy" in African Ecclesiastical Review, vol. 23, No. 1-2, February-April, 1981.
- Burke, C. "Marriage and Family: Some Pastoral Problems" in African Ecclesiastical Review, Synod of Bishops, vol. 22, No. 5, October, 1980.
- Ekeya, B.J. "The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Customary African Marriage". MA Thesis in Theology, St. John's University, Minesota, 1973.
- Gatimu, C. "Christian Marriage and Christian Family" in African Ecclesiastical Review, AMECEA Pastoral Institute vol. 16, Nos. 1-4, 1974.
- Kibicho, S.A. "The Kikuyu Concept of God, its continuity into Christian era and the question it raises for the Christian idea of revelation". PhD Thesis, Nashville, Tennessee, 1972.

Kinoti, H.W. "Aspects of Kikuyu Traditional; Morality". Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1983.

Kiura, A. "Family Planning" in African Ecclesiastical Review, AMECEA, vol. 28, NOs. 3-4, June-august, 1986.

Maingi, H.W. "The Christian Sacraments of baptism, Confirmation and Marriage: Their Relevance to the Daily Lives of Gikuyu Christians" MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994.

Mathu, G.W. "Gikuyu Marriage Beliefs and Practices" in Discussion Paper No. 17. Institute of African Studies, March, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Impact of Christianity on Kikuyu District: Analysis of its Cultural Processes on the Church Missionary Society". A Paper Presented at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, 1978.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Gikuyu Marriage: Beliefs and Practices in Mila a Bi-annual Newsletter of African Studies, University of Nairobi, vol. 2, No. 1, 1971.

Mbula, J. "Penetration of Christianity into Akamba Family Life". MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_ "The Impact of Christianity on Family Structure and Stability: The case of Akamba of Eastern Kenya". PhD

Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1977.

- Kungu, J.: "Kikuyu Customary Marriage with Special Emphasis on the Rites and Ceremonies". LLB Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1994.
- Kakokota, S.P.: "Remarriage of Divorced Persons" in Church and Marriage in East Africa Ed. by A. Shorter, Eldoret: AMECEA, 1975.
- Kamau, C. "Anxiety in Family Life" in African Christian Studies. Volume II, Numbers 1-4, 1995.
- Kamau, J.L. "Consequences of Birth Control" in African Ecclesiastical Review. Volume 16 Number 1-4, 1974.
- Kamotho, J.I. "A Study of Kikuyu Customary Marriage with Special Emphasis on Rites and Ceremonies". LLB Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984.
- Kamugisha, J.M. "Factors Contributing to Marriage Stability" in African Christian Studies Volume II, Number 1-4, 1995.
- Kanyikwa, J.L. "Family planning" in Church and Marriage in East Africa, Ed. A. Shorter, Eldoret: AMECEA, 1975.
- Karlen, H. "Canonical Form and Traditional Marriage" in African Ecclesiastical Review, volume 23 Numbers 1-2, February-April, 1981.

Kayu, K. "When Things Fall Apart. A Short Study of Inculture  
contact Among the Kikuyu" A Departmental Paper Presented  
in the Department of Anthropology, Michigan State  
University, East Lansing, March, 1970.

Kemdirim, P.O. "A Call to the Church in Africa to Address the  
Plight of Childless Couples" in African Ecclesiastical Review  
volume 38, number 4, August, 1996.

---

"Polygamy, Social Change, and Women's Response in East  
Africa" in African Christian Studies. volume 6 number 1-4,  
1990.

Mburu, J.N. "The Dissemination of Christianity in Nyeri District (1903-1963) with  
special reference to the work of African Teachers and Evangelists".  
MA. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1975.

MC Callum, M. "Family Planning Methods of the Kalenjin" in African  
Journal of Evangelical Theology, volume 12.2, Nairobi,  
Kenya.

Mukuha, J. "The Integration of Religious Preparatories of Traditional Marriage to  
Christian Marriage with Special Reference to Kikuyu  
Community of Kiambu District". MA Thesis, Catholic

University of East Africa, 1996.

- Muriuki, G. "A History of the Kikuyu to 1904". PhD Thesis, University of London, 1969.
- Mutiso, J.S. "Community Interest in African Marriage" in Church and Marriage in East Africa. Ed. by A. Shorter, Eldoret: AMECEA, 1975.
- Mwananchi Issue Number 235, August, 1975.
- Mwananchi Issue Number 243, May, 1996.
- Maidoo, S. "The need for an Obligatory, Graded Preparation for Marriage", in African Ecclesiastical Review, volume 23, numbers 1 & 2, February-April, 1981.
- Njenga, J. "Customary African Marriage" in African Ecclesiastical Review, Volume 16, numbers 1-4, 1974.
- Njoroge, P.I. "An Evaluative Research Establishing Similarities between Kikuyu Traditional Communal Rites and the Seven Sacraments in Catholic Church". MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980/81.
- Nyaga, M. "Home and Family Social Change: the Kikuyu" (Unpublished, Kenyatta University).
- Nyambura, G. "The Customary and African Christian Marriage Today". LLB

- Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1980.
- Obudho, L.O. "The Impact of Christianity on the Luo Traditional Marriage System". MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1985.
- Odumba, C.S. Customary Marriage: The Effect of Socio-Economic Change on the Customary System of Marriage with Specific Reference to Nandi". I.LB Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984.
- Ogala, M. "The role of Women in the African Family Today" in African Christian studies, volume II numbers 1-4, 1995.
- Otunga, M. "African Family Values" in African Ecclesiastical Review, AMECEA GABA Publications, volume 23, number 1 & 2, February-April, 1981.
- Pengo, P. "Marriage in Successive Stages in African Ecclesiastical Review published by AMECEA Pastoral Institute Gaba, volume 28, numbers 3-4, June-August 1986.
- Pokem, P. "Christian and Customary Marriage in Ghana" in Africa Ecclesiastical Review, AMECEA (Gaba) Publications, Volume 23, Numbers 1 and 2 February-April, 1981.
- Reriani, P.G. "Interaction of Western Christian Marriage with Kikuyu Customary Practices. A Case of Mathira Division". Diploma in Cultural Studies, University of Nairobi, 1987.
- Sandgren, D.P. "The Kikuyu, Christianity and the african inland Mission".

Ph.D. Thesis, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1976.

Simuyu, V.G. "Family Life" in Republic of Kenya Muranga District: Social Cultural Profile Draft Report. Ed. by S. Were (c) 1986.

Ssenyonga, J.W. "Christianity as a factor in african Marriage" BA  
Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1972.

Step Africa: Volume 9, number 3.

Step Africa: Volume 4, number 3.

Synod of Bishops: "Christianity and Customary Marriage in Ghana" in  
African Ecclesiastical Review, vol. 23, number 1-2,  
February-April, 1981.

Wagua, P.M. "Pastoral Care for Incomplete Families: A Foreign Ministry in  
African" in African Ecclesiastical Review, April, 1996; vol.  
38, number 2.

Wambeu, O.N. "Kikuyu Customary Marriage with Particular Reference to  
Elopement". LLB Thesis, May, 1979.

Wanjohi, R. "African and Conjoint Family Therapy" in African  
Christian Studies. Volume 5, number 1, March 1989;  
Journal of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic Higher

## LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Name of the informant	Age	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Inter
Patrick Macharia	20	Student	Kanyenya-ini	26/10/97
Peter Kiragu	19	"	"	"
Mary Nyambura	26	Business Wom.	"	"
Rosemary Muthoni	23	Jobless	Tuthu	28/10/97
Titus Gichuki	19	Student	"	29/10/97
Francis Kinga'ru	20	"	"	"
Ann Muthoni	26	Teacher	Ichichi	30/10/97
Leaky Gitogo	19	Student	"	31/10/97
Mary Githira	18	"	"	"
Peter Njiri	19	"	Karurumo	2/11/97
Mary Nyambura	18	"	"	"
Samuel Mutiga	26	Clerk	"	3/11/97
Joseph Nguku	27	Jobless	Wanjerere	7/11/97
Esther Kabura	17	student	"	8/11/97
Mary Wangeci	25	Business Woman	"	"
Edward Gachie	61	Farmer	Kihoya	"
Jennifer Kariuki	26	Clerk	"	"
Paul Gathanu	48	Teacher	"	"
Jane Wangari	28	Farmer	"	"
Mwangi S. N.	21	Student	Nyagatugu	9/11/97
Patrick Thuita	66	Farmer	"	"
Jeremiah Kaburi	65	"	"	"



Name of the informant	Age	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Inter
Mary Njeri	60	"	"	10/11/97
Margaret Wahithe	20	Student	Kiruri	"
Catheline Wangeci	24	Jobless	"	"
Veronica Nyambura	20	Student	Rwathia	14/11/97
Samuel Maina	21	Jobless	"	15/11/97
Mwangi Kamau	60	Farmer	Wanjerere	17/11/97
Esther Wanjiku	58	"	"	"
Nancy Wanjiru	59	"	"	18/11/97
Teresia Wambui	36	Farmer	Wanjerere	18/11/97
Jenniffer W. Njuguna	40	"	"	"
Raphael Hungi	60	"	"	19/11/97
Simon Kariuki	53	"	Kiawambogo	23/11/97
Mary Wairimu	38	"	"	"
Patrick Chege	72	"	"	"
Sergio Ndung'u	68	"	"	"
Joseph Kigutu	49	"	Kiruri	30/11/97
Nelson Wanderi	21	Student	"	"
Stephen Ngang'a	39	Farmer	"	"
James Mbatia	45	Businessman	"	"
Hannah Muroki	50	Farmer	"	"
Bernard Muchiri	47	"	Karurumo	14/12/97
Gulielim Muthiaka	52	"	"	15/12/97
Rotario Waweru	33	Businessman	"	"

Name of the informant	Age	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Inter
Hannah Njeri	61	Farmer	"	"
Samuel Kamau	53	"	Ichichi	16/12/97
Oreste Karanja	83	"	"	"
Jane Nduta	32	"	"	"
Ann Kuria	62	"	"	"
T. K. Wairagu	65	"	"	17/12/97
Stephen Ndoiru	50	Businessman	Kanyenya-ini	21/12/97
Peter Muchuna	40	Farmer	"	"
Jane P. Wangari	26	Business Wom.	"	23/12/97
Philista Wangari	85	Farmer	"	"
Justus Maina	53	"	"	24/12/97
Hirum Mbuthia	50	Health officer	Rwathia	28/12/97
Virginiah Wambui	46	Teacher	"	29/12/97
Grace Wanjeri	25	Housewife	"	2/1/98
Martin Wanyoike	40	Teacher	"	3/1/98
Charles Wagunya	56	Businessman	"	"
Margaret Wangari	40	Farmer	"	"

## GLOSSARY

- |     |                                    |   |   |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Bururi                             | - | In the text it refers to the name customarily given to the whole of kikuyu land.  |
| 2.  | Guthambia Maguru                   | - | Was a Kikuyu word for inheriting a wife of a deceased brother.  |
| 3.  | Guthinja ngoima                    | - | Slaughtering a ram.   |
| 4.  | Gutinia kiande                     | - | Used in the text to refer to the ceremony of cutting of the shoulder blade meat of a goat.  |
| 5.  | Ituika                             | - | Meant breaking away from one ruling generation and ushering in a new one in Kikuyu customary government.  |
| 6.  | Kanzus                             | - | Overalls  |
| 7.  | Kipande                            | - | Identification card   |
| 8.  | Mbari                              | - | Family group  |
| 9.  | Matathi                            | - | These were leaves traditionally regarded by Kikuyu community as being sacred.   |
| 10. | Muhiki witu                        | - | Our wife  |
| 11. | Muhiriga                           | - | Clan  |
| 12. | Mundu Mugo                         | - | Medicine-man/a diviner  |
| 13. | Muramati                           | - | Custodian, guardian   |
| 14. | Muthamaki                          | - | King  |
| 15. | Muthegi                            | - | This was a staff which was traditionally carried only by members of the fourth grade.   |
| 16. | Mutumia ni mwaki ndukamugie hakuhi | - | It was a saying that warned men to keep a distance from women lest they will be tempted to have sex with them. Hence, the idea of likening women with fire which is a symbol of danger. |
| 17. | Mucii                              | - | Homestead.  |
| 18. | Mwaki                              | - | Fire, in the text it refers to a section of a ridge and also a small christian community.   |
| 19. | Ngai                               | - | Kikuyu name for God.  |
| 20. | Ngurario                           | - | It is a kind of a ritual that involves pouring the blood of a slaughtered ram as a symbol of unity.   |
| 21. | Ngwiko                             | - | Love play in which boys and girls engaged in sex play without sexual intercourse.   |
| 22. | Ngwaro                             | - | Skin and stomach ribbons cut from a goat.   |
| 23. | Njoohi ya njurio                   | - | A proposal beer   |

- 24. Nyumba - It was a hut which was traditionally meant for the wife.
- 25. Rugongo - A ridge.
- 26. Ruracio - Bridewealth
- 27. Thingira - It was hut which was traditionally meant for a husband.
- 28. Tatha - Stomach content
- 29. Ukuru - Aged
- 25. Wathiomo Mukinyu - The faithful friend

APPENDICES

(III) QUESTIONNAIRES TO BE USED:

A) QUESTIONNAIRE FOR AGED MEMBERS OF THE PARISH

(60 Years and above)

Name ----- Sex -----

Age ----- Marital  
Status-----

Occupation -----

1. In Kikuyu traditional society what was the primary significance of marriage? -----  
-----
2. Who were involved in marriage preparation what was their roles? -----  
-----
3. What was the role of bridewealth? -----  
-----  
-----
4. (a) What was the role of counselling before marriage?-----  
-----  
-----
- (b) Who carried it out and when? -----
5. (a) Was there post-marital counselling? -----  
-----
- (b) Who carried it out? -----
6. (a) On what grounds could one be divorced?-----
- (b) What procedure was followed? -----

- 
7. Describe a Kikuyu Customary Marriage Ceremony -----  
-----  
-----
  8. Discuss how the following aspects were viewed in Kikuyu Customary Marriage: Childless couple, family planning, divorce, levirate unions, single parents, fornication.  
-----  
-----
  9. Were there taboos saying or proverbs to guide the unmarried youth? -----  
-----  
-----
  10. (a) What factors favoured polygamy in Kikuyu traditional society?  
-----  
(b) Do those factors continue to exist? -----  
(c) What do you consider to have been the advantages and disadvantages of polygamy? -----
  11. What approaches did the first Roman Catholic Missionaries use to win Akikuyu to their faith? -----
  12. (a) Which changes did the missionaries introduce into Kikuyu Customary Marriage? -----  
(b) What were the first marital problems to be noted?  
-----  
(c) Do those problem continue to exist today?-----
  13. (a) Which were the main areas of conflict in Roman Catholic understanding of the institution of marriage and the Akikuyu understanding of the same?-----  
(b) What was the consequence of this? -----
  14. (a) What have been the most important socio-economic and political changes which have affected the life of your community since the advent of Europeans?-----

-----  
(b) What impact have they had on the institution of marriage?  
-----

**B. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CATECHISTS/CHURCH ELDERS:**

Name ----- Sex -----  
Age ----- Marital  
Status-----  
Occupation -----

1. When was your church founded? -----
2. What was the religious status of the place before the church was founded? -----
3. What is the number of married church members? -----
4. (a) What is the approximate number of christians who married in church between 1980-1996? -----  
-----
- (b) What is the approximate number of christian couples who have not yet solemnized their marriage in church? -----  
-----
5. List down possible reasons why many people do not marry or solemnize their marriages in church? -----  
-----
6. Can you identify any conflict(s) between church marriage and Kikuyu Traditional values? -----
7. (a) How many are the cases of girls with babies but not yet married? ----  
-----
- (b) How are they treated?  
(i) in the church -----  
(ii) in the community -----
- (c) What is the church doing to curb this problem? -----  
-----
- (d) Do you feel that the church ought to borrow some traditional aspects in its effort to contain this problem?-----  
-----



- If Yes state which ones. -----
8. (a) How many are the cases of polygamous marriage?-----  
-----
  - (b) How does the church address itself to this issue?-----  
-----
  9. (a) How many are the cases of divorce? -----
  - (b) What could be the main causes of divorce in your church?
  10. (a) What is the approximate fraction of the couple who have married between 1980 and 1996 in church avail themselves for pre- and post-marital counselling? -----
  - (b) In which issues of marriage is counselling mostly sought for? -----  
-----  
-----
  11. Do you feel the church members have any problem with the family planning programme?-----  
Elaborate -----
  12. What do you feel ought to be done to help the church members to improve their married life?-----

(C) QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE YOUTH

Name ----- Sex -----

Age -----

Occupation -----

1. What are the main reasons behind young people marrying today without notifying their parents?-----

2. What role do you feel your parents/relatives ought to play in your marriage?-----

-----Give reasons -----  
-----

3. Should the practice of polygamy be abolished? -----

Give reasons -----

4. What would you do if your spouse turns out to be infertile?

-----

Reasons: -----

-----

5. Should the bridewealth be abolished?-----

Give reasons -----

-----

6. Under what circumstances is a spouse justified to seek divorce?

-----

7. According to you is the Catholic Church too relaxed or strict in respect to matters of sex?-----

Give reasons -----

8. What do you feel are the main contributing factors to extra-marital sex? -----

-----

9. What/who is your main source of family life education?

-----

10. Do you feel you are adequately acquainted with young people of the opposite sex in your church? -----  
Elaborate -----
11. Should priests be granted permission to marry?-----  
Give reasons-----
12. Would you like to marry in church or according to Kikuyu Customary Marriage? -----  
Give reasons -----

D) QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Name ----- Sex -----

Age ----- Marital

Status -----

Occupation -----

1. (a) How does the church prepare young people for marriage today? -----  
-----
- (b) What aspects do you feel are un-African in this preparation?  
-----
- (c) Which traditional aspects do you feel the church ought to incorporate in this preparation? -----  
-----
2. (a) Has the church promoted or undermined the role of extended family in church marriages? -----  
-----
- (b) State any conflict(s) that has been noted -----  
-----
3. (a) In which aspects does the process of choosing a spouse today in church differ from the customary one?  
-----
- (b) Is there any conflict? -----
4. (a) Which traditional engagement customs do you feel create problems for church marriage today?-----  
-----
- (b) Which values do you feel are un-African in the engagement process?  
-----
5. (a) What entails family life education in the church today?  
-----
- (b) Under whose responsibility does it fall and to whom is it focused?-----
- (c) Which Kikuyu customary values do you feel ought to be incorporated in this education?  
-----
- (d) In what respects has the church checked or promoted cases of fornication and adultery?-----
6. (a) According to you what role does the bride wealth serve in marriage today?-----  
-----

- (b) In which ways has the bridewealth affected the stability of marriages today? -----  
-----
- (c) In which aspects have the Kikuyu adherents understanding of bridewealth and the church understanding of the same conflicted?----  
-----
- (d) What must change today in the understanding of bridewealth?  
-----
7. (a) List down elements of church wedding today that hinder young people from undergoing a church marriage? -----  
-----
- (b) What should change in church wedding in order to make it more appealing to a Kikuyu? -----  
-----
8. State any conflict you may feel exist in the church's understanding of polygamy and the Kikuyu understanding of the same today? -----  
-----
9. (a) What do you feel are the main causes of divorce and separation in marriages today? -----
- (b) Do you think the church has failed to contain the problem of divorce/separation? -----Give reasons --  
-----
- (c) What is not African in the way the church handles divorce? -----  
-----
- (d) How do you compare the status of women and children of broken marriages in church today and in Kikuyu traditional society? -----  
-----
10. What social problems are faced by childless couple in the church today? -----  
-----
- (b) Do the solutions that the church gives to childless couple conflict with traditional ones? -----  
-----
11. (a) Which aspects of the status of women have improved or deteriorated since the coming of christianity?  
-----  
-----
- (b) In which aspects have the present day duties of a wife conflicted with the traditional ones? -----

- 
12. (a) How does the church contribute to the welfare of widows/widowers? -----
- (b) Does the way the church view widowhood differ from the way it was viewed traditionally? -----
- 
- (c) Can you identify any conflict(s)? -----  
-----State it/them -----  
-----
13. (a) What do you think are the main causes of single parenthood in the society today? -----  
-----
- (b) What problems do children who live in homes with single parents face? -----  
-----
- (c) What problems do the single parents face? -----  
-----
- (d) Mention some practical ways in which the pastor and the church should help single parents and their children?  
-----  
-----

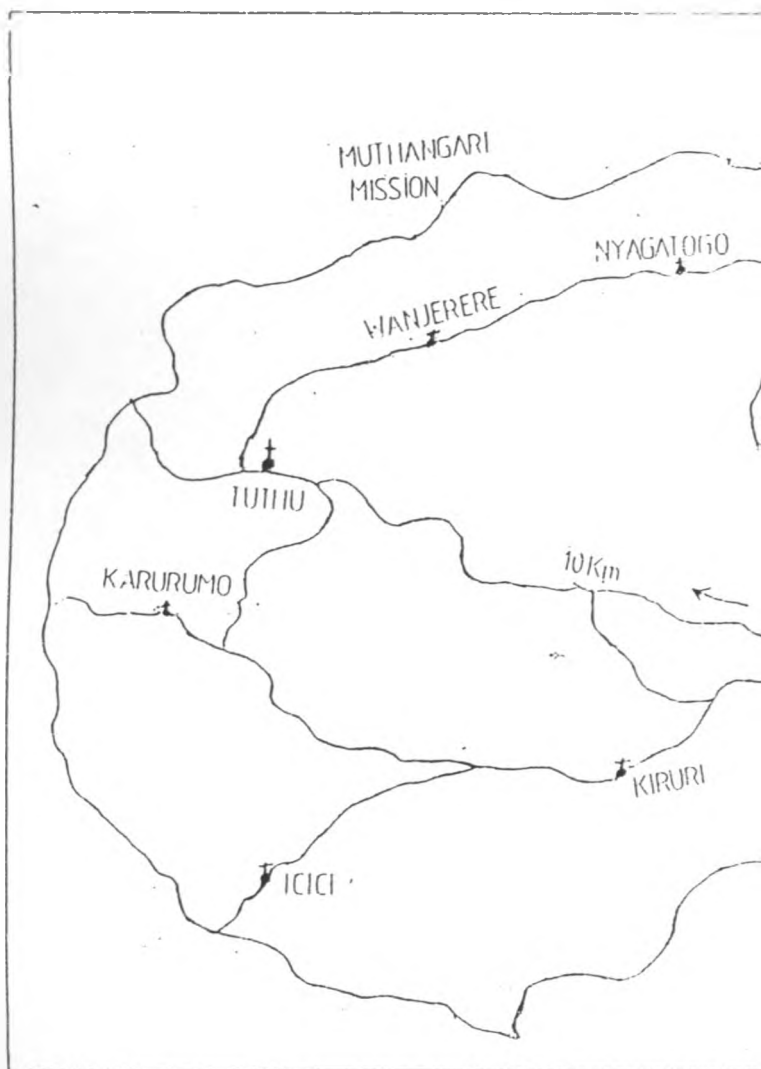


MAP A: Position of Muranga District in Kenya

Source: Compiled From Muranga District Development Plan 1994-1996.







MAP C: A Sketch of Tulhu Parish Showing Local C



Churches