

**PERCEPTIONS OF BRIDEWEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY AMONG
THE URBAN AGIKUYU IN NAIROBI**

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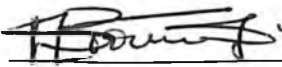
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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this project is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a degree in any other university.

Catherine Wangu Ng'ang'a  Date 4/11/2010

This project has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.

Dr. W. Onyango-Ouma  Date 10/11/10

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, Anne and James Ng'ang'a, my sister Carol and my brother Patrick.

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My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. W. Onyango-Ouma, for his guidance and advice.

Sincere gratitude to my mother, Anne, for her tireless efforts and her dedication as my research assistant and for proof-reading my report. A special thanks to my friends, Wambui and Wamuyu, for their invaluable role in data analysis.

Thanks to all those who willingly accepted to be respondents for the survey and as key informants.

Thank you mum and dad for your constant support and encouragement through the entire period of my Masters programme.

Finally, "To God be the glory for the things He has done."

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ABSTRACT

The practice of presenting gifts to the bride's family is one that has gone on for generations amongst the Agikuyu people. However, the contemporary society has experienced significant developments which have influenced people's perceptions regarding it.

The general objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the urban Agikuyu regarding bridewealth in the 21st Century. The study sought to determine the significance of bridewealth, to examine the different forms of bridewealth exchanged between marriage partners and to examine the changing perceptions as regards bridewealth.

The study was confined to only the Agikuyu ethnic community and more specifically to the people living in urban areas. The research targeted 100 respondents who live in Westlands Division in Nairobi Province. Stratified random sampling was used to select the individuals. The cross-sectional exploratory research design was employed for the researcher to delve into the perceptions of the respondents. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used to garner quantitative and qualitative data. The survey was the main instrument of data collection and the technique made use of a standard questionnaire with both open and close ended questions. This was supported by 10 key informant interviews. Documentary materials, through library research provided secondary data.

The study ascertained that as much as many want to continue to uphold the Agikuyu tradition for cultural identity, a significant number do not know or understand the root of the practice nor its value. More or less the same items are asked for as bridewealth but these are given in the form of money. In addition a growing number of people feel that they should not ask for it. The perceptions on bridewealth are changing due to factors such as religion and cross-cultural marriages.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The custom of presenting gifts in the form of cattle, money, foodstuffs and other articles as well as providing physical service to the bride's family while sealing a marriage contract, is practiced all over Africa, though in varying degrees.

The practice helps create a permanent in-law relationship between two clans and enhances alliances. The practice safeguards against divorce as both families are intimately involved in establishing and nurturing the union. It also creates strong economic benefits for both families that can be accessed in times of need, for example, support in raising school fees, support in payment of hospital bills, and so on (Kirwen, 2005). More importantly, the practice brings about commitment to the marriage union. The bride and groom are obliged to do so because many individuals from the groom's family contribute towards it and many individuals from the bride's family expect to benefit from it. For example, the bride's brothers would hope to receive help to pay the bridewealth for their own wives (Shorter, 1998).

Shorter (1998) describes bridewealth as an indemnity to the bride's family for their expense in bringing her up. It is compensation for losing a productive and reproductive family member. It is also a legal document signifying a marriage has taken place and the husband has conjugal rights, whilst legitimizing children and conferring legal rights over them, upon the father. Kirwen (2005) adds that amongst people with patrilineal inheritance systems, bridewealth legitimizes children born of the union by ensuring that they remain forever within the father's lineage.

In the olden days bridewealth demonstrated that the husband-to-be was capable of caring for and supporting a wife and family. It also made the wife feel that she was highly regarded and valuable. Payment of bridewealth stabilized marriages as the whole community had a vested interest in the process. In addition, the girl's parents

felt appreciated for their efforts and repaid for the expenses incurred in bringing her up and in some cases as compensation for the loss of labour on their farm and homestead.

Kirwen (2005) says that almost all societies in the world have some kind of gift-giving at marriage because it is seen as a means of creating a new relationship for the clans. He says that members feel the need to show their support, concern and solidarity with the marriage union in a tangible concrete way. This is regarded as a way of buying into the relationship because of its fundamental and long-term value to the society. In event of a wife running away, bridewealth had to be paid back.

Mbiti (1999) states that different customs are observed in the marriage process. In some societies, choice of a marriage partner is made by the parents. However, full consent must be given by the couple. In other societies, the young people make their own choice of a marriage partner. The parents initiate the betrothal and marriage process as soon as they are informed by their children.

A marriage process is considered to have begun once a portion of the required bridewealth has been paid. In most communities, the bridewealth is already set at a standard amount by the male elders who also decide the mode of payment. The bridewealth is not paid at once as it is considered an ongoing process since the relationship between the couple, families and communities is expected to continue growing. If a wife dies before the bridewealth is paid, the husband's family is required to give bridewealth to her parents, lest her family repossess her body for burial and take the children (Kirwen, 2005).

The practice of giving bridewealth is viewed as the most concrete symbol of the marriage covenant and security. The marriage gift is seen to elevate the bride's value as a person and as a wife and legalizes the marriage contract. Mbiti (1969) explains that the custom is not a form of payment but is a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's people to those of the bride for their care over her and for allowing her to become his wife. To prove that it is not a payment, Mutua &

Chinchen (2006) give the example of the Kipsigis expression used for the transfer of marriage cattle, *kegoita tuga*. It has no connection with buying. It means 'to give away cattle' and the term *kegoita* alone means 'to prepare a gift'. They add that the marriage gift is a symbol that guarantees that the husband will value and cherish his wife.

This study is on bridewealth among the Agikuyu. It will be carried out in Nairobi Province to investigate their perceptions regarding bridewealth in the 21st century.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although bridewealth was traditionally considered important, significant developments in Kenyan societies in the last 20 years have influenced people's perceptions regarding it. Education has changed the status of women and they are able to get jobs and careers that enable them to be self reliant. This is unlike in the past when they worked on their father's farms and only changed location when they married and moved to their husband's land. Religion also teaches women to recognize themselves as human beings with equal opportunities with men. Women nowadays recognize themselves as partners with men in marriages and not just objects for exchange between clans through bridewealth.

Increased urbanization has also led to migration to the urban areas where individuals have bought property for the purpose of business or employment. In urban areas people live with people from other ethnic backgrounds. This has given rise to town cultures. In the urban context, people are exposed to different ways of life, making it difficult for cultural practices such as bridewealth to thrive in exactly the same way as it did in the traditional setting.

In contemporary society, bridewealth has also become commercialized by families to the extent that some families are unable to afford it. Consequently, it is likely to degrade the woman's status to that of a commodity being sold and purchased when haggling and bargaining enter the negotiations. The changing status of the

bridewealth into a commercial venture encourages some parents to influence or dictate that their daughter marries a man of their choice, in particular where a large amount of bridewealth can be availed.

In view of the changes in society, this study explored how bridewealth is perceived in the contemporary urban settings. It sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Does bridewealth serve the same purpose in the urban setting as it did in the traditional society?
2. What is the composition of bridewealth in the urban setting?
3. What are the perceptions towards bridewealth among urban Agikuyu?

1.3.1 General Objective

To investigate the perceptions of the urban Agikuyu regarding bridewealth in the 21st Century.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the significance of bridewealth among urban Agikuyu people.
2. To examine the different forms of bridewealth exchanged between marriage parties.
3. To examine the changing perceptions towards bridewealth among urban Agikuyu.

1.4 Justification of the Study

It is important to study the practice of giving bridewealth in modern times because most people in Kenya are no longer constrained by the geographical borders of their ethnic communities. In the urban setting, the community is made up of people from different tribes and nations. The interaction of these people has given rise to

intermarriages. The issues involving bridewealth in such an urban setting have definitely been affected and therefore need to be addressed.

Marriage under the urban influence is no longer necessarily a clan affair. In some cases, the two individuals involved may decide how they want to go about the process. They may or may not involve their family members. In the traditional setting bridewealth was meant to cement the relationship between the two clans. This no longer applies. Therefore there is need to examine the perceptions of the Agikuyu people in the urban setting with regard to bridewealth and the role it plays in marriages today. With women being in a position to earn a living in the same way as a man in the modern society, the practice needs to be looked into. It is important to examine and determine if traditional institutions such as bridewealth still hold in the contemporary society.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

A few studies have been done on the topic of bridewealth, mainly with the aim of correlating commercialization of bridewealth to the increase in the prevalence of domestic violence. For purposes of this study, only the perceptions of the Agikuyu people living in the urban area were studied. It involved single and married males and females of varying ages on the basis that they will play a crucial role in giving their perceptions with regard to the relevance of bridewealth today.

The study examined the issues defined in the statement of the problem with the aim of achieving the outlined specified objectives. While the issue under investigation may apply to other tribes in Kenya, the researcher did not have adequate time and funding to cover a larger area.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with literature related to the study. It touches on the significance of bridewealth among the traditional Agikuyu people, forms of bridewealth in the traditional setting and urbanization and bridewealth as well as the theoretical framework and assumptions of the study.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Significance of Bridewealth Among the Traditional Agikuyu People

Giving of bridewealth was an important part of the marriage process. It was significant in many ways which the researcher has categorized into four broad areas: to stabilize a marriage, as a physical symbol of the marriage union, as a source of income and as a source of esteem for the bride and/ or groom. Leakey (1977) stresses that bridewealth had nothing to do with buying and selling or the enrichment of the girl's family. Kottack (1994) argues that the term brideprice is incorrect because people with the custom do not regard the exchange as a sale. They do not see marriage as a commercial relationship between a man and an object that can be bought or sold.

According to Wieland (2004), bridewealth was seen to stabilize marriage and prevent wives from running away. It also gave evidence that the groom was serious about his intentions to make the marriage stable. Leakey (1977) likens bridewealth to marriage insurance, as a guarantee of good faith on the part of the contracting parties. He writes that if a woman left her husband without just cause or without having been unfairly treated by him, then her family was liable to repay the bridewealth. He lists only two reasons recognized to allow divorce once a marriage

has been consummated. The first is if the husband ill-treated and abused his wife. The second is if the woman proved to be such a bad wife in all respects that the husband could not tolerate her. Kottack (1994) agrees that bridewealth is insurance against divorce. He writes that as the value of bridewealth increases, the marriage becomes more stable.

If a marriage ended in divorce, the woman's father had to pay the aggrieved husband a sheep which symbolized the destruction of a house that had been built for his daughter. If the woman died, while divorced, without children, her father had to refund thirty sheep or goats to her husband if he had paid the entire bridewealth (Karanja, 2003). Therefore giving of bridewealth stabilized marriage in that divorce, after a certain time, was impracticable because it was impossible to refund property that had, in the meantime, died (in the case of animals) or been invested elsewhere (Cagnolo, 2006). According to Kottack (1994), bridewealth was used widely. It was shared with those clan members who would be called upon to assist when the bride's brothers marry. Hence, the more difficult it was to reassemble the bridewealth given, the more stable a marriage.

Bridewealth was a physical symbol of the marriage contract that had been entered into by the two parties. Kenyatta (1978) explains that after a certain amount of bridewealth had been paid, it was declared that the girl had been blessed and given away to the boy's clan by her parents in agreement with their whole clan. She was now free to weed gardens with her future mother-in-law. It also signified her betrothal and she could be taken to the boy's home as his wife at any time without any further ceremony being performed at her parents' homestead. Leakey (1977) adds that the chief aim of bridewealth was to make the marriage contract legally binding.

Bridewealth also played a significant part in cementing the relationship between the clans involved (Wieland, 2004). Kottack (1994) indicates that marriage is often more of a relationship between groups than one between individuals. People do not just take a spouse; they assume obligations to a group of in-laws. Kenyatta (1978)

continues that upon signing the matrimonial contract, the marriage ceased to be merely a personal matter for it bound not only the bride and groom but also their kinsfolk. Once a specified amount of bridewealth had been sent to the bride-to-be's family, a date would be set for the *ngurario* ceremony which served to publicly announce her engagement and to let the relatives from the bride's side meet and get to know the relatives from the groom's side. The groom's maternal grandfather and uncles joined in to help him raise the bridewealth as a token of the continuing alliance established a generation earlier, making it clear that it is a concern of the groom's corporate lineage (Kottack, 1994).

Leakey (1977) also shows how marriage was a clan affair. The two recognized reasons for divorce have been mentioned in previous pages. To prevent a divorce from occurring, the family members would get involved. The bride's family would talk to her if she was not being a good wife and the groom's family would talk to him if he was not being good to his wife. This was a way to ensure that each fulfilled their marital obligations and hence, ensured no divorce.

Bridewealth was also a source of income mainly for the bride-to-be's family. Kenyatta (1978) confirms that it was understood that a girl, through marriage, would bring wealth to her family so that her poor brother could find the guarantee necessary for marriage. Cagnolo (2006) adds that in the case of poor families, girls were a source of income through marriage contracts. Her bridewealth increased the possession of the family consequently providing means to enable the sons to marry. He however notes that although the bridegroom's gift or compensation to the bride's father was substantial, sometimes the father and brothers were tempted to give away the girl to the highest bidder, irrespective of her desire to marry the man in question.

The occupation of traditional Agikuyu females included: cooking, fetching water and firewood, planting, weeding and harvesting, dress making, pottery, weaving baskets and pounding grains. Save for trading grains in the market, other duties were centred around the homestead. Hence the bridewealth acted as compensation for

loss of a worker in her parent's homestead (Kenyatta, 1978) and for the loss of companionship (Kottak, 1994). It was also a way to repay her parents for the expenses incurred in bringing her up (Wieland, 2004).

The Agikuyu relied on agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Consequently, it followed that a young man seeking a bride considered a woman who was known to be industrious in the fields and housework to be more desirable as a wife, than one with beauty (Cagnolo, 2006). Such a wife was an asset in an agricultural environment.

Livestock that a bride's father received was, generally already, mortgaged with creditors eagerly awaiting repayment. In addition, her own mother's bridewealth may not have been completed. Other debts contracted by the family may not have been liquidated for lack of means. Hence, bridewealth that was paid for a girl was used to offset loans as described by Cagnolo (2006).

According to Wieland (2004), a wife felt valued by a husband who paid bridewealth for her as this demonstrated that he was capable of caring for and supporting her. Kenyatta (1978) writes that a young lady would be pleased and proud when a large number of cattle and goats were paid for her as this was evidence of her attraction and desirability.

Wieland (2004) writes that modern society has seen marriages break down due to increased infidelity, pre-marital sex, adultery and prostitution. He feels that bridewealth served to link modern African society to the strong moral standard of pre-colonial past.

2.2.2 Forms of Bridewealth in Traditional Setting

The entire marriage process included the giving of various gifts at different stages: from the marriage proposal to the engagement and finally the marriage ceremony and beyond. Karanja (2003) states that it was considered ill luck to bring all the

bridewealth at once. Hence the bridewealth was sent over in instalments. Mutua and Chinchon (2006) contend that when the marriage gift is given all at once, the nurturing of the family ties is lost.

Sheep and goats played an important role in the economic, religious and social life of the Agikuyu (Kenyatta, 1978). Without them, a man could not get a wife for it is sheep and goats that were given as marriage insurance. Karanja (2003) adds that in the place of sheep and goats an equivalent number of cows or oxen would be given. One cow was valued at 10 sheep and goats while an ox was valued at 5 sheep and goats. Cagnolo (2006) indicates that compensation for a bride could have been eighty or one hundred goats, exclusive of other requirements.

Coins had very little meaning and had no religious or sentimental associations within the people's custom. If a man had cash money and wanted to get married, he had, in the first place, to buy sheep and goats because the bride's parents would not accept money (Kenyatta, 1978).

Once a man announced his intention to marry, honey or sugar cane beer would be prepared by his family. This would be taken to the girl's parents to allow for the process to begin. More beer was sent over to be consumed at the time when asking the young lady if she would give consent for the engagement to be formalised. Karanja (2003) adds that the beer sent later on by the boy's father was intended as a blessing so that all the animals he had delivered could breed and increase. It was also a compensation for all the time wasted for his daughter-in-law during courtship as it was assumed that the suitor used to interrupt the girl while she was working in the fields.

Friends were invited to the home of the girl's parents so that a date to sign the marriage contract would be fixed. They would have a feast followed by a big dance and singing of songs. Special presents were brought by the boy for the girl's mother and her clan. A group of women would later go to the boy's home with gifts for his

relatives. Such gifts included food stuff, clothing materials, calabashes, gourds and pots (Karanja, 2003).

Other items exchanged as part of bridewealth are detailed by Leakey (1977) as follows: wooden honey barrels, sword, sheath and belt, tobacco, string bags, axes, gourds, leather carrying straps. As a post-marriage gift from the bride's family to the newly weds, the girl would get six big bags of bulrush millet from her father. This she would use to prepare gruel for her husband during the interval that would elapse before she had time to grow this crop in her own fields, given to her by her husband.

Her father would send to his son-in-law, as many goats and sheep as there were complete units of ten, paid in marriage payments. These were dubbed *mburi cia mathaga* (sheep for jewellery and ornaments). They were compensation to the young man for the fact that from then on he was responsible for the ornaments and effects which his bride, as a woman of married status, would require. These animals also formed the nucleus of a herd for the couple. Therefore if the groom had used up all his stock in marriage payments, he was given back enough to be able to start building up a new herd for the benefit of the wife he had just married.

2.2.3 Urbanization and Bridewealth

The trends of marriage and consequently, bridewealth have changed over time. Firstly, marriage is not given the priority that it had. Kamau (2007) feels that many urban women today consider economic independence as their first priority; marriage comes second whilst children come a distant third.

Makeni (2007) sees a trend whereby many young men and women are avoiding marriage altogether or are getting married very late. Some choose to live alone or with lovers to satisfy their sexual needs but without any commitment. This trend is gaining popularity leading to many "come-we-stay" relationships compared with legal marriages. Waweru (2008) adds that fear of the demands for bridewealth is

one of the reasons for come-we-stay unions. The couple lives together as they look for the money, which is the main medium of bridewealth in the urban setting. Kirwen (2005) finds bridewealth to be one of the causes of a rise in cohabitation because couples are denied consent to marry until a certain amount of cash is raised.

Secondly, urbanization has brought different tribes and nationalities together, thus introducing new ideas and attitudes within the mixed society. This mixing of cultures in urban areas brings about a new dimension to bridewealth. There are also a large number of mixed marriages where two people from different ethnic groups marry. According to Onyango (2005), when two people from a similar background marry, they continue to follow their parents' culture (albeit with modification to suit modern times) which has been the norm for generations. However, in the case of a couple from two different cultures, either one makes all the compromises or both compromise and agree on a third culture to suit their unique situation. They develop a new code that integrates both cultural backgrounds.

In the contemporary society, the traditional practices and ways of thinking have been disrupted. New trends in modern living bring about a new society where the ties of kinship in the city do not have the same power as in the countryside and the individualism of urban life demands its own code of behaviour. Tribal ethics are not easy to apply in the changing situation where urban society requires its own set of morals suited to its type of life (Mbiti, 1999).

Thirdly, in the urban community the way of life is more individualistic than in the traditional community setting. Kirwen (2005) notes that the tradition of paying bridewealth has changed from a family or community affair to become a personal commitment. Today, more than likely, the young couple have to foot the bill of the bridewealth on their own, without assistance from parents and kinsmen.

This is unlike the situation of the traditional young Agikuyu man who had the great advantage of having bridewealth paid for him. It was also guaranteed that he would

eventually inherit his father's livestock. In addition, his brothers and other relatives were always ready to lend him the bridewealth he needed when he contemplated marriage. The instalment system was also in place so he needed only to pay about half the amount before marriage (Cagnolo, 2006).

Fourthly, the essence of the practice seems to have been forgotten with the passage of time. Wangui (2006) points out that learning family values was natural for those who grew up surrounded by their elders but unfortunately this is rare now. Hence modern lifestyles separate children from the elders and their wisdom. This elder-child connection transferred values and ancient cultures to the youth and future generations. Now it is left up to institutions such as schools and churches to pass on wisdom. However, not much teaching of values is incorporated in institutions.

A study by the Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness of Women (CREAW, n.d.) indicated that payment of bride price seems to have lost its original symbolic meaning and is instead being replaced by a girl's parents seeking to elevate their status. A case is given by Waweru (2008) about a young lady who, though excited about her upcoming wedding is worn down by the issue of the "obscene number of cows and goats" demanded by her relatives. This is causing a strain between her and her fiancé who feels that they are asking for too much and that they are materialistic and only interested in enriching themselves. The young lady is in a dilemma, unable to side with either party. As much as she believes her fiancé's sentiments are genuine, as a woman she feels that she may not have much say in the matter.

Ooro (2007) concurs that with cultural dynamism at stake, the changing faces of marriage have devalued bridewealth. No longer is it a token of gratitude. Instead, society has devolved it to mean that the woman is purchased as property. She may be likened to the animals given in exchange for her place. The custom of giving bridewealth is seen today as a commercialized venture by Kirwen (2005).

Mutua and Chinchon (2006) gave the going rate for an educated wife in Kenya to be as much as the cost of a Mitsubishi Pajero car, at that time. They feel that what used to be a morally uplifting cultural practice has become exploited by greed. Waweru (2008) continues that many parents just want to fatten their wallets and are not really concerned about the young couple's happiness. To make sure that they get the best deal, some parents select the best bargainers in the family or go as far as hiring professional negotiators.

The changes in the society as outlined above are an indication of an emerging new culture. Consequently, various customs that have been held onto are now being questioned. At the same time, people are embracing new methods of dealing with these changes.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In determining the perceptions of the urban Agikuyu people on the relevance of bridewealth today, this study used the Cultural Materialism Theory to explain the reason why bridewealth should be re-examined. This theory was developed by Marvin Harris in 1968.

According to Harris (1991), cultural materialism is a research strategy which holds that the primary task of cultural anthropology is to give causal explanations for the differences and similarities in thought and behaviour found among human groups. Cultural materialism makes the assumption that this task can best be carried out by studying the material constraints to which human existence is subjected. These constraints arise from the need to produce food, shelter, tools and machines and to reproduce human populations within limits set by biology, technology and the environment. They do not include conditions imposed by ideas and other mental or spiritual aspects of a society's superstructure such as values, religion and art.

The theory divides culture into the structure and superstructure. Marcoux sees structure as being characterized by the organizational aspects of a culture consisting

of the domestic economy (such as kinship and division of labour) and political economy which involves issues of control by a force above that of the domestic household, whether it be a government or a chief. He defines superstructure as the symbolic or ideological segment of culture. Ideology consists of a code of social order regarding how social and political organization structures the obligations and rights of all the members of society. It involves things such as rituals, taboos and symbols.

Harris (2001) continues that culture refers to the learned repertory of thoughts and actions exhibited by the members of social groups. These repertories are transmitted independently of particular heredity from one generation to the next. The cultural repertories of particular societies contribute to the continuity of the population and its social life. Hence the need arises for speaking of socio-cultural systems, denoting the conjunction of the population, a society and a culture, and constituting a bounded arrangement of people, thoughts and activities.

2.4 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The structure of the Gikuyu traditional way of life is patrilineal hence the men are seemingly entitled to call the shots in the various aspects of marriage life. Bridewealth forms one of the rituals of marriage in the superstructure of the culture. Thoughts and behaviours of people can be viewed from two different perspectives: from the perspective of the individuals themselves or from the perspective of an outsider.

From an emic lens, bridewealth can be seen to satisfy on a materialistic level. It brings in wealth to a bride's family which is further used to provide resources for other obligations. From an etic view, this reduces women to materials for exchange; it commodifies them. On a social level, the emic view would be that it gives opportunity for a social network between clans and families and gives value to marital relationships without the presence of written certificates. It confers rights and privileges to the husband over his wife and the children born to her. However,

the etic perspective may see this control as making woman subject to man, denying her her human rights and culture becomes an impediment to one's happiness.

This research sought to find out if the individual perceptions of both men and women toward bridewealth have changed.

2.5 ASSUMPTIONS

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Bridewealth is no longer considered important among the urban Agikuyu.
2. Bridewealth takes both monetary and material forms.
3. The urban Agikuyu have a negative attitude towards bridewealth.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

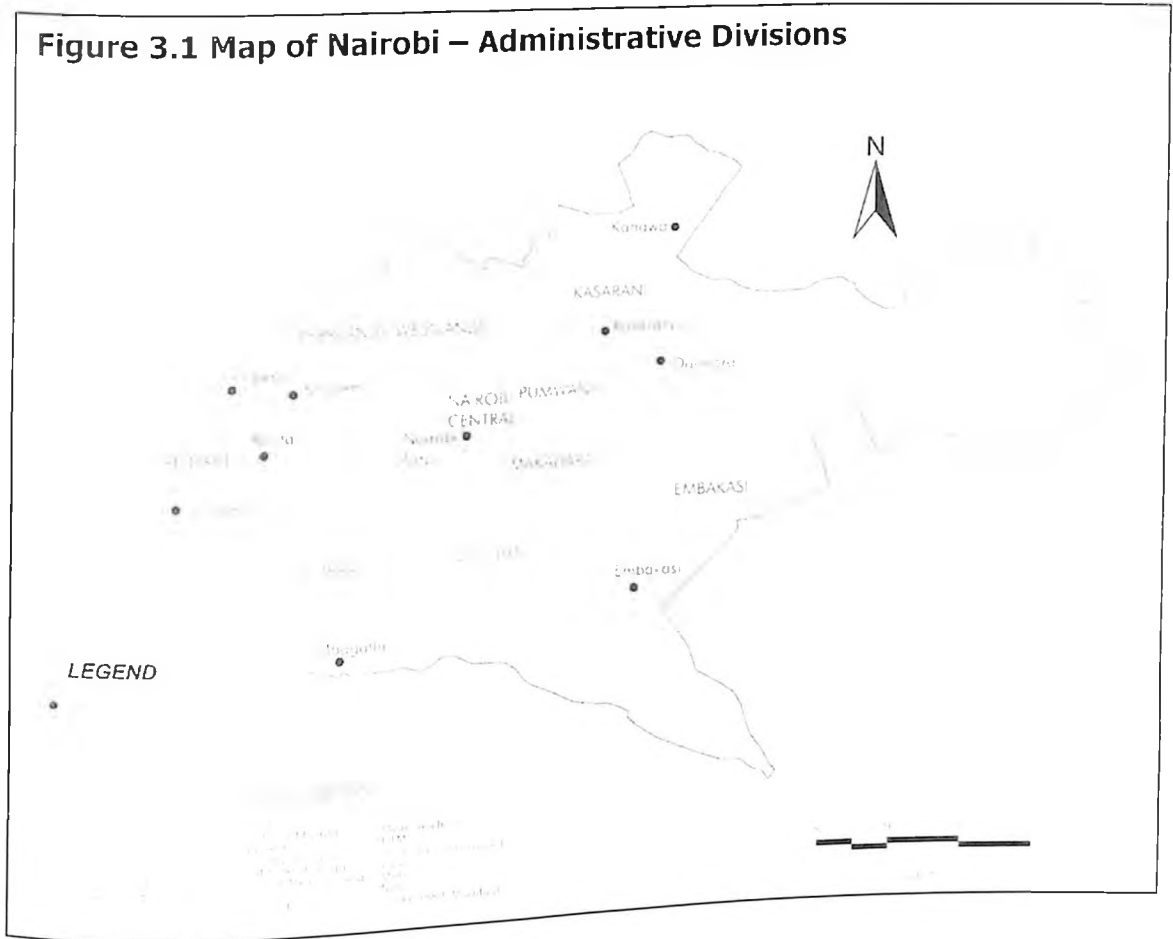
This chapter highlights the methodology which will be used in the study. It has several sections, covering the study area, population, sampling techniques, research design and data collection methods.

3.2 Research Site

The area of the study is Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, which forms one of the 8 provinces in Kenya. It is located 145 kilometres south of the Equator and covers an area of 150 kilometres squared. (See map of Nairobi Province on the next page.) This capital city benefited considerably from urban migration and its population has grown over the years. In 1969 the population in Nairobi was 509,286. The estimated population within Nairobi from the 1999 Census given by the Central Bureau of Statistics - Kenya is 2,143,254 out of whom 1,153,828 are male and 989,426 are female. The population as at 1st July, 2008 is given as 3,038,600.

Nairobi is composed of divergent conditions and realities and presents access to different classes of men and women. It consists of individuals who are educated to different levels from primary up to post-graduate levels and also some who have had no formal education. Some individuals in Nairobi are engaged in private enterprise or in the informal *jua kali* sector. Others are formally employed in the government, in the private sector or for non-governmental organizations within various industries ranging from agriculture, tourism, finance, information technology, insurance, transportation, manufacturing as well as social services, amongst others.

Figure 3.1 Map of Nairobi – Administrative Divisions



3.3 Research Design

This was a cross-sectional exploratory study that took keen interest to ensure that the objectives of the data collection processes were achieved. The major aim of the study was to elicit qualitative data. Data was collected by use of the survey technique and interviews. The research was conducted over a period of three months.

3.4 Study Population

Nairobi province has 8 administrative divisions, namely, Central, Dagoretti, Embakasi, Kasarani, Kibera, Pumwani, Starehe and Westlands. They comprise people from all tribes found in Kenya. The people that live here are involved in

various formal and informal employments. The study population was drawn from one of these administrative divisions. It involved the different socio-economic groups of the Agikuyu.

3.5 Sample Population

The individual was the unit of analysis in this study. This was primarily because the aim of this research was to capture the perceptions of individual women and men on bridewealth and establish whether they find it relevant and what the alternative would be. The research focused on 100 Gikuyu men and women who live in Nairobi Province and are above the age of 18, which is the legal minimum age for marriage in Kenya. The sample population of 100 men and women was drawn from the population in one of the administrative divisions in Nairobi Province.

3.6 Sampling Procedure

Nairobi Province is a large area and the universe cannot entirely and adequately be studied given the constraints of time and financial resources. There was therefore need to select a sample of the population to study. Westlands Division was selected purposively as the area from which the sample population will be drawn. This is because the division is comprised of both low income and affluent persons.

Stratified random sampling was used to select the 100 individuals to be studied for adequate representation of the people of different socio-economic backgrounds. The population was stratified into gender (male or female) and age groups (18 – 34 years, 35 – 44 years, 45 – 55 years, 56 years and above) taking care of a balance in marital status (married or unmarried).

3.7 Data Collection Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected for analysis. Methods of data collection included survey technique, in-depth interviews and secondary data.

3.7.1 Survey Technique

The survey was the main instrument of data collection. The technique made use of a standard questionnaire to ensure that all respondents were asked exactly the same set of questions in the same sequence. The process included both open and close ended questions. The open ended questions encouraged free airing of views. The questionnaire had sections on personal information and on bridewealth. The exercise was preceded by a self introduction and an explanation on the purpose of research so as to establish a rapport. The questionnaire was administered to 100 respondents who were selected through stratified sampling.

3.7.2 Key Informant Interviews

Unstructured interviews were used to complement and reinforce the survey. A sub-sample of 10 individuals was purposively selected for in-depth interviews, based on their knowledge on issues of bridewealth and the changes to the practice. They were not part of the survey. They were used to assist the researcher to obtain data that would provide insight into subjective views of the informants on the research topic. The instrument used was an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions.

3.7.3 Secondary Data Sources

Documentary materials through library research were a major source of data from this study. Relevant literature was reviewed to provide background information to the study. This technique was used to supplement primary data. The available literature on bridewealth was examined before embarking on the fieldwork. Written materials including books, journals, articles, magazines and the internet were made use of throughout the entire period of study.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Data collected was organized according to the researcher's questions that guided the study. Qualitative data was analyzed on content basis to show emerging trends of responses. Descriptive methods were used to present qualitative data. Quantitative data was checked for consistency and completeness, cleaned then analyzed using

the Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) computer package. This was presented in frequency tables, graphs and percentages.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher was responsible for all procedures and ethical issues related to the project. The research gave due consideration to the integrity of the research process. The research was carried out in full compliance with and awareness of, local customs, standards, laws and regulations.

The research avoided undue intrusion into the lives of the individuals studied. The welfare of the informants was of highest priority to protect their dignity, privacy and interests at all times. Freely given consent was obtained from all. They were informed in a manner and language that they understood, the context, purpose, nature, methods and procedures of the research. Participants were fully informed of their right to refuse and to withdraw at any time during the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

SIGNIFICANCE OF BRIDEWEALTH AMONG URBAN AGIKUYU

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the responses that were given by respondents in the survey and key informant interviews on the significance of bridewealth among the urban Agikuyu people.

4.2 Traditional significance of bridewealth

The practice of giving and receiving bridewealth among the Agikuyu goes back to traditional days before urbanisation set in, in Kenya. A number of reasons have been advanced. Leakey (1977) says that bridewealth makes the marriage contract legally binding. Kenyatta (1978) concurs that it is a physical symbol of marriage taking place. Mbiti (1969) sees it as a token of gratitude to the parents for the care of the bride and for allowing her to become his wife. It was insurance to ensure stability of the marriage. Wieland (2004) points out that it was evidence of the groom's seriousness about his intentions to make the marriage stable. According to Shorter (1998), there was commitment from the couple because many individuals contributed towards the bridewealth hence the wider community had a stake in ensuring that the marriage succeeded. This prevented wives from running away.

It was compensation for losing a productive member of the household (Shorter, 1998 and Kenyatta, 1978). Shorter (1998) adds that it was also indemnity for expenses incurred in the girl's upbringing. As indicated by Kenyatta (1978) it was a source of income and Cagnolo (2006) added that it was used to offset loans. It bound the bride and the groom as well as their kinsmen (Kenyatta, 1978). Lastly, it was a source of self-esteem. Kenyatta (1978) writes that a lady would be pleased and proud of her attraction and desirability when a large bridewealth was paid. According to Wieland (2004), a wife would feel valued as it showed that her husband could support and care for her.

Out of the 100 respondents in the survey, almost all (93%) considered bridewealth to be of great significance among the Agikuyu in the olden days. They were of the opinion that the process of demanding, negotiating and receiving bridewealth created a forum where the two families met to know each other, began to understand one another, developed a relationship and finally created a strong bond between them. It served to ensure that young people with blood relationships and other undesirable traits did not get married.

The process gave the girl's family psychological satisfaction that their daughter did not just go away but went through a formal traditional marriage process. Giving of bridewealth was a practice that took a lifetime and was reciprocal whereby the girl's parents gave back some of the bridewealth; "*gucokia guoko*" - a saying that when you are given, you give back some, thereby indicating that giving bridewealth was not a purchase but an exchange of tokens.

4.3 Value of bridewealth in contemporary Agikuyu society

Traditions play an important role in a society. So even though the Agikuyu people have evolved into a more liberal society, their traditions are still a significant part of them. They continue practicing them for social identity and sustenance and also for the purpose of upholding and preserving their cultural values, customs and traditional practices. However, contrary to its significance during traditional times, bridewealth in contemporary society has been found to be of value by only 55% of the respondents.

Those who did pointed out that bridewealth is not for the purchase of a girl but a gift from the boy's family as a way of showing that they have been accepted and also as a way of expressing thanks. It is a token to show appreciation to the girl's family for her upbringing and a sign of goodwill and gratitude to her family as she leaves to join the boy's family. It is also compensation to the bride's family for an assumed loss of their daughter to another family.

The respondents indicated that bridewealth is a statement of love which adds value to a couple's relationship by making the bride feel valued as well as making the groom satisfied that he has received approval and acceptance by the bride's family. Giving of bridewealth is a way of showing respect for the bride and her parents. It symbolizes the extent to which a man would go to acquire his chosen lifetime partner and ensures that the groom will not take his bride for granted. It also proves the worth of the groom by showing his capability to support a family.

The respondents added that bridewealth shows the commitment of the families and the individuals involved. It makes the young couple give serious thought to what they are about to commit themselves to and this instils a sense of responsibility in the groom. Additionally, it is a symbol that seals a marriage covenant, giving legal and social claim and rights over any children born into the household. One respondent felt strongly that the Christian religion supports bridewealth as indicated in the Bible story of Rebecca and Isaac in Genesis Chapter 24.

The remaining 45% of respondents did not see any value in bridewealth in the modern days, mainly due to education and formal employment of both girls and boys which has given rise to a new set of values. They argued that the practice has been commercialized whereby the girl's family makes demands for large sums of money and other costly goods as bridewealth. Thus, with bridewealth being viewed as a gateway to riches by some families, this equates a female to a commodity on sale. As a result a wife becomes a man's property, leaving her open to exploitation and ill-treatment. One respondent was quoted saying "one cannot buy love or put value on a girl". Another respondent equated bridewealth to a kind of human trafficking, slavery or human trade which is both cruel and illegal.

Modern lifestyles are different from the traditional lifestyle. Mbiti (1999) writes that the individualism of urban life demands its own code of behaviour. Tribal ethics are not easy to apply in this changing situation. A key informant pointed out that sometimes the couple themselves end up giving the bridewealth when the groom's

family cannot afford it, leaving them broke, which may cause strain in a marriage. This kind of situation encourages many young men to remain unmarried. In other cases, the couple ends up moving in together (come-we-stay). It was noted by a key informant that what should be important to a couple is mutual respect, care, love, creating good relationships and the establishment of friendship between their families. This may be achieved through providing a forum for the families to talk and know each other and not necessarily by asking for bridewealth.

4.4 Handling of bridewealth for mixed ethnic group couples

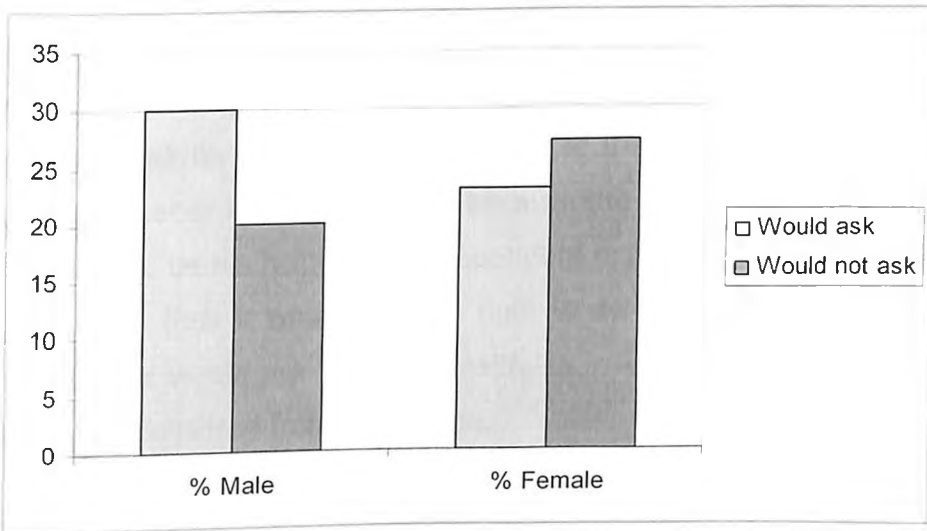
According to one key informant, marriage, the beginning of a permanent relationship, should be based on respect and should not be commercialized. Communication is important to avoid any misunderstanding. How the issue of bridewealth in a cross-ethnic situation is handled, depends largely on the similarity of the cultures. The more similar they are, the less issues are likely to arise. Some ethnic groups attach a lot of importance to bridewealth while others do not. In such a case therefore, the more conservative of the two may insist on bridewealth being paid. However, it is generally the girl's side that has the upper hand and determines the process because they feel that they are 'losing' a daughter because she is marrying into another ethnic group. Thus they insist on bridewealth as they feel it is the only gain they will get.

Only 7 of the respondents were married to non-Kikuyus. Their spouses were from various communities in Kenya and also from other countries. In one case, no bridewealth was asked for because the bride's family does not practice the tradition. Some followed the traditional customs of the bride whilst one followed the customs of the groom and the others mixed traditions from both communities. For most, the items requested for were converted into monetary terms. It was found that the *Ngurario* ceremony (where blood is shed by slaughtering an animal so as to appease the ancestors and to protect the marriage) was omitted for couples whose religious beliefs went against such practices.

4.5 Reasons for asking for bridewealth

Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) indicated that they would ask for bridewealth for their daughters, as shown in Figure 4.1. The main reason for asking was that it is customary, culturally and symbolically significant. They believe in Agikuyu customs and values and want to ensure that the tradition continues through the generations.

Figure 4.1 Number of males and females that would or would not ask for bridewealth for their daughters



Source: Survey (2010)

Asking for bridewealth would show the groom that they value their daughters and love and respect them. As in the traditional times, it is seen as a token to appreciate that they took care of her and are now letting their daughter to go live with him and give him a family. It is a way to create and strengthen the bond with the other family and enhances communication. The meetings during the negotiations allow the two families to meet and interact in a setting understood by both sides. Through this they will learn and understand more about the in-laws and relate with them on a personal level. This enables them to know the kind of family that their daughter is joining.

Asking for bridewealth is also a way for the groom to prove he is serious, committed and capable and willing to care for and support their daughter. It brings into focus the seriousness of the marriage commitment to the couple and forces them to acknowledge the responsibility that marriage brings, not only to one another but also to the in-laws. The groom will appreciate that his bride is not only valuable to her family but also to the family she is joining. It is presumed that because he has earned her he will treasure her more and this will give her more dignity in the marriage. One respondent feared that if a man gets his daughter for 'free' he might mistreat her.

Men who had paid bridewealth for their wives felt that the tradition should continue and would therefore follow suit and ask for the same for their daughters. Another reason to ask for it is to get back some of the expenses incurred while raising and educating her or as compensation because the groom is taking away one member of his family to be his helper. One respondent explained that bridewealth was practiced in the Bible thus it would only be right to do the same today. Another respondent indicated he would ask for bridewealth, to invest it, not for his own benefit but that of his grandchildren from that union.

Those who said no (47%), as in Figure 4.1, reasoned that it has no value or purpose and it is not necessary whilst some do not believe in it. They felt strongly that their daughters are not for sale as a price tag cannot be put on her life and she is not a property for trading. To them, asking for bridewealth is akin to selling or commercializing their daughters in the name of culture which can encourage enslavement or claim for ownership of the girl. They would instead, readily give their parental blessings to the couple without making any demands; they only want for their daughters to live in happy marriages. They reason is that it is after all, her free will to get married and if two people love each other they should be able to live happily. To them, both boys and girls are equal so the issue of 'handing over my daughter' will not arise. A token of gratitude and appreciation given voluntarily would be preferred to demanding bridewealth, thereby allowing the groom's family to offer what they have.

If there is harassment and haggling during negotiations, this can create a negative relationship with the in-laws. This situation becomes a source of conflict between the two families as it may be interpreted as exploitation. This in turn can cause emotional stress and /or financial strain for the couple and may cause delay in starting their family. It was proposed that both families should give gifts and tokens to each other as well as to the bride and groom whilst assisting them financially.

One male respondent indicated that he would follow precedent. Both his father and his father-in-law did not ask for bridewealth for their daughters, hence neither would he for his own daughters. One female respondent did not expect her sons-in-law to give bridewealth because she herself did not expect her own husband to do so. It was noted by another female respondent that women are not consulted to make the decision on whether or not to ask for bridewealth and she would therefore go along with whatever decision her husband makes.

Traditionally, the bride and groom were not consulted because it was only the elders who were concerned with it since the amounts were decided on by the community. Neither were the parents of the bride and the groom allowed to speak during negotiations because culture sets aside the immediate nuclear family saying that they cannot talk on their own behalf. However, majority of respondents (71%) indicated that they think the bride and groom should be consulted during negotiations.

4.6 Women's views on whether her fiancé should give bridewealth

Over half of the female respondents (54%) preferred that their fiancés pay bridewealth. The reasons they gave included: they saw it as a way to adhere to a tradition and fulfil a cultural norm but insisted that their parents should accept what he is able to give; they preferred that the groom gives it as a sign of appreciation to her family for raising her well, educating her and working hard to make her the best;

as a sign of love and respect to the girl's family while seeking permission to marry her.

They felt that it was not a must but if the bride's parents asked for bridewealth, they would prefer that the groom obeyed that request so as to receive parental blessings. It would be a way to show his commitment to her and to their union while signifying a mutual relationship that is growing and acts as a way of cementing family relationships. It was also an opportunity that allowed the two families to meet and interact in a setting understood by both sides. For one respondent, the reason was her religious belief that it is supported by the Bible. It was also felt that if their groom gave bridewealth, he would treat her with respect because he is made accountable for his actions, not only to his bride but to her family as well, ensuring that he does not mistreat her.

On the other hand, 46% of the female respondents preferred that their fiancés do not pay bridewealth for them. They simply did not see value or purpose in it. They did not mind it if it was offered by the groom as a token of appreciation but they were adamant that the groom should be set free to give what he wishes and can afford. In contemporary society, bridewealth implies exchange of money. Respondents confirmed this outlook when they indicated that they were not for sale to highest bidder like property for trading; they do not want their husbands to view them as one of his properties, someone that he purchased, as this would make him hold their lives at ransom.

They were concerned that bridewealth is financially straining on the groom and would prefer that the groom uses the money to invest for the family they are starting. If it has to be paid, the groom's family should support him in paying. They added that it can also be very humiliating to the groom's parents if they are unable to meet unreasonable demands, causing a strain in the relationship. They believe that both families should appreciate one another and not only the girl's family should benefit. It was suggested that both families should give gifts, not only to each other

but also to the bride and groom because a friendly relationship with the in-laws is more important and this does not come from demanding bridewealth.

4.7 Men's views on giving bridewealth

74% of the male respondents indicated that they preferred to pay bridewealth for their fiancées. The main reason was that bridewealth is a part of the Agikuyu culture that should be preserved and fulfilled as it signifies willingness to do the right thing as far as customs go. It is important so that the couple may receive blessings from their parents. Giving bridewealth will show a man's appreciation for the woman and to her family for her good upbringing. Payment of bridewealth was preferred to show that he loves and values the bride he has chosen to partner with her. They felt that the ceremonies associated with bridewealth provide an opportunity to become familiar and enhance understanding between the families and create a relationship.

Giving bridewealth for one's wife gives the husband self-esteem and confidence in his social standing. As one respondent put it, "it is better to pay so as to avoid embarrassment from other members of society." In addition, it gives him legal and traditional social rights over his wife and this will prevent her from running away. In the event that she does run away, she will still be considered his spouse.

The men who preferred not to pay bridewealth for their fiancées (26%), felt strongly that to condone this practice is paramount to putting a price tag on one's wife and it would feel like he is buying her. Cost was also a factor with bridewealth being an expense that one has to shoulder over a long period of time hence they preferred to give her family a token of appreciation. It was suggested that a small inexpensive ceremony would be adequate to join the two families together.

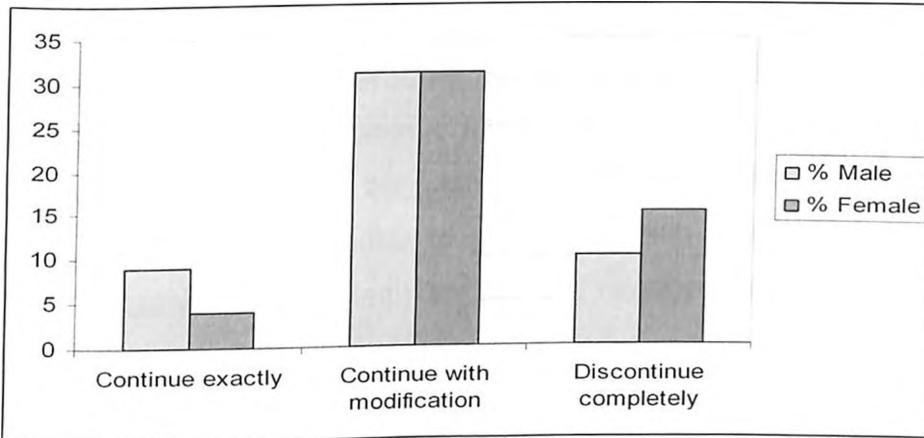
4.8 Continuity of bridewealth

Respondents were asked their opinion on bridewealth: whether it should be continued, modified or discontinued. Those in favour of its continuation exactly as it

was traditionally were only 13%. Respondents who wanted the practiced discontinued were 25% whilst the majority (62%) felt that it should be continued with modifications. The percentages above are further broken down into the gender dimensions as shown in Figure 4.2.

The 13% of respondents, who indicated that the practice should be continued exactly, felt that it is good to uphold tradition and if the practice is modified, some of the meaning will be lost. They felt that the custom of giving bridewealth had value as it appreciated the bride's parents. It was also considered the bridge that connects the couple and their families. As the tradition of giving bridewealth is a social and not an individual affair, this gives the couple a feeling of belonging and acceptance by both families. In terms of cost, bridewealth in the traditional setting was cheaper and every man was able to offer something. A poor man would not miss out on a bride because he had the option to offer his labour.

Figure 4.2 Gender dimensions regarding continuity of bridewealth



Source: Survey (2010)

The 25% who felt that the practice should be discontinued noted that the commitment to remain in marriage is a matter of will and is not dependant on the payment or non-payment of bridewealth. For them, what was important was the creation of a good relationship and the expansion of friendship between the parties involved. They also felt that giving bridewealth should be scrapped as it has no value, is outdated and is unrealistic in the current economic times where the

standard of living is very high. They also felt that it equates the woman to a commodity which leads to hostility between the families and also stirs up power struggles between husband and wife, contributing to gender inequality. Two suggestions were highlighted; that token gifts should be exchanged from both sides and that the newly married couple should be allowed to decide on what/ how they intend to appreciate their parents for their hard work in bringing them up.

The majority of respondents (62%) felt that the practice should be continued but with some modification. A variety of explanations were given. The symbolism of the practice should be preserved as it captures cultural habits that may be forgotten and shows appreciation, commitment and the joining of two families. The negotiations give a wealth of information to both sides and should be seen as an opportunity to give the soon-to-be-wed couple counselling on life in marriage. In contemporary society, it has been commercialized with families making unreasonable demands of the groom. The tendency for bridewealth to be seen as the exchange of money gives the man an attitude that he bought his wife which may lead to violence. It was suggested that modifications should be made with regard to the amount, mode and time of payment by *standardizing the items and amounts given as bridewealth and considering the harsh economic times when planning the associated ceremonies.* The amounts should not be financially crippling to the groom, his family or his fiancé. If the groom is unable to give bridewealth due to high amounts asked for, this may cause low self-esteem for him and negatively affect his attitude towards his in-laws.

It was also suggested that giving bridewealth should not be mandatory; those who wish to participate in it should be allowed to do so, however they choose to do it. The groom may give according to his ability and both families may give gifts to each other and to the couple or the couple themselves may give presents to their parents. One respondent suggested that the groom should shoulder the cost without the help of his parents. The items requested for as bridewealth should be suited to the modern-day set up. An example given was that money should be given instead of animals due to limited space and impracticability of transporting and housing them

in a town. With regard to cross-ethnic/ cross-cultural marriages, the process should be accommodative to both cultures and picking the best attributes from each. Religious beliefs should also be taken into account to cater for modern day Christian practices. For example, one should not ask for beer from a family that does not tolerate the drinking of alcohol.

CHAPTER FIVE

FORMS OF BRIDEWEALTH EXCHANGED BETWEEN MARRIAGE PARTNERS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the responses that were given by respondents in the survey and key informant interviews on the different forms of bridewealth exchanged between marriage parties.

5.2 Traditional factors determining the amount of bridewealth to be given

Cagnolo (2006) states that compensation for a bride could have been eighty to a hundred goats, exclusive of other requirements. In the traditional setting, a key informant noted that there was a basic standard amount for bridewealth that was set by the elders. Each Agikuyu clan had its own upper limit though however, the highest amount was 150 goats for the wealthiest clan. It was noted that the fellowshipping together during the negotiations –*uthoni was ndugu*– was designed to get to know each other and to get them to open up eventually as they socialized with eating and drinking alcohol. There were a variety of factors that determined the amount of bridewealth to be given for a girl and they were based on the traditional sense of what was considered valuable. First and foremost, the girl's father could not ask for an amount higher than the amount that he was asked for when her own mother (his wife) was getting married. This prevented exploitation.

A second factor was the physical attributes of the girl such as her beauty and her purity. If a man impregnated a girl before wedlock he had to pay a special fine. The third was her work ethic. Cagnolo (2006) indicates that a woman who was known to be industrious in the fields and housework was more desirable than one with beauty. If she spoke well, was well respected and had a good social reputation, it greatly increased her value. The more respectable the first girl in a home was, the higher the bridewealth for herself and her sisters, as it was assumed that her siblings would emulate her behaviour. The amount of bridewealth was also determined by the

number of daughters in the home; the fewer the daughters, the higher the bridewealth. The wealth of her family as well as the financial/ economic ability of the groom's family was also a factor. People tended to marry persons from the same social class/ status.

5.3 Modern factors determining the amount of bridewealth to be given

First and foremost it must be noted that marriage is now an individual matter hence more often than not, the groom himself is responsible for payment of bridewealth. Some families still maintain the traditional ways and would only request for the same amount of bridewealth as was given for the bride's mother, according to one's clan (*muhiriga*); nothing more is added. However, the key informants said that it is now found that greed is the main motivator. The wealth of the families or the perceived financial strength of the families involved determines the amount, with tradition being used as the excuse. Often the girl's family ask for bridewealth according to their needs and may want to squeeze as much as they can from the boy's family. The same can also be seen when families claim to follow culture but convert the items to monetary value at outrageous rates.

Other factors, according to the key informants, include the education standard, age or social worth of the girl based on her character. Social class and status also play a role in determining the amount. In addition, the amount that has been invested in her upbringing and the loss of the contribution that the girl brings to the home are considered. The economic empowerment level of the boy and that of the girl also determine the amount. The number of children born out of wedlock also influences the amount asked for.

On the flip side of the coin, some of the key informants no longer want bridewealth and will ask only for a token because these parents are more concerned about their daughter's welfare than any amount of bridewealth that can be given.

5.4 Items requested for as bridewealth

Kenyatta (1978) stressed that goats and sheep were a requirement as bridewealth while Karanja (2003) writes that an equivalent number of oxen may be given instead of sheep or goats. Honey or sugarcane beer had to be prepared for the different ceremonies relating to bridewealth and marriage ceremonies. The groom would bring special presents for the bride's mother and her clan. Later on, a group of women would go to the boy's home with gifts for his relatives. They included foodstuff, clothing materials, calabashes, gourds and pots. Leakey (1977) gives the following list of items that were given as bridewealth: wooden honey barrels, sword, sheath and belt, string bags, tobacco, axes, gourds and leather carrying strap. He notes that after the marriage, the girl's father gave her six bags of bulrush millet and to his son-in-law, he gave goats and sheep to enable him to rear his own herd.

In modern times, money is the most common item asked for as bridewealth. Though the traditional items may be the ones asked for during the negotiations, they are converted into monetary terms at the current market rate. There are certain items such as khangas, beer, soda, foodstuff and a small number of goats and sheep which are not converted to money but are given in their actual tangible form.

Table 5.1 (see next page) shows the items that were asked for in both traditional Agikuyu times and among urban Agikuyu, as indicated by the respondents.

Those interviewed gave their opinions on what bridewealth should be comprised of. One informant felt that as it was done traditionally, it should be based on one's clan and only what was given for the bride's mother is what should be given for her. Another informant indicated that bridewealth should be there but as an exchange of friendship, the groom's family should bring what they can. However, if one cannot afford it then they should still be allowed to go ahead and marry and bring something later on.

Table 5.1 Comparison of items asked for as bridewealth traditionally and in contemporary society

ITEM	TRADITIONALLY (%)	CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY (%)
Goats	91	41
Cows	81	32
Honey	64	9
Sheep	60	19
Sugarcane beer	56	3
Pots	49	5
Gourds	39	1
Calabashes	33	0
Foodstuff	28	14
Tobacco	27	0
Clothes	23	22
Leather carrying straps	22	0
Axes	22	2
Money	21	96
Wooden honey barrels	20	0
Swords	18	1
Land	7	8
Utensils	4	20
Kiondos	3	1
Khangas	3	17
Blankets	3	0
Water tanks	2	14
<i>Ngoima</i> (Specific Sheep)	1	0
<i>Mwati na harika</i> (Nanny Goat & Ewe)	1	0
Beads	1	0
Firewood	1	0
Grinding stone	1	3
Stools	1	0
Porridge	0	20
Beer	0	11
Soda	0	3
Household appliances	0	3
Motor vehicles	0	1
School fees	0	1
Walking canes	0	1

Source: Survey (2010)

One informant added that the couple should be encouraged to care for both sets of parents over time. This has been negated because today people tend to pay everything at once, without instalments, removing the aspect of building a friendship over time. Another informant felt that though it is good to maintain our culture one cannot put a price on his/ her daughter. Another concurred that a girl's value cannot be calculated hence love and respect should be mutually exchanged by both families.

Another informant preferred to have bridewealth scrapped because it has been made so commercial. If it is given, then it should be symbolic and reasonable, as a token of appreciation. It was also suggested that it should resonate with the financial ability of the giver. Therefore one should give what they are comfortable giving with no limits set on neither the amount to give nor the duration within which to pay. In addition, both sides should give gifts; it should be left open for families to exchange gifts as they see fit. In the past, livestock, blankets, clothes, money and so on were given as bridewealth and the cost was shouldered by the groom's father. Nowadays we do not have animals and the groom now has to shoulder the cost. This can be too much leaving only the come-we-stay option.

5.5 Options available if bridewealth is too high for the man

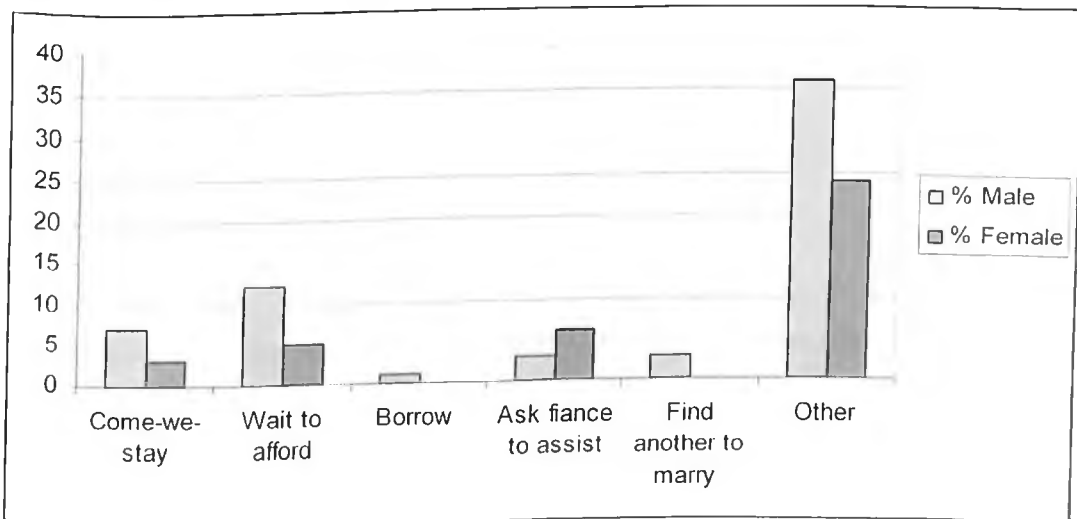
According to Wieland (2004), a young man wishing to marry had no property of his own with which to give the marriage gifts expected but his father, uncles and older brothers would thus consent to his ambition to marry and give him the items required. Cagnolo (2006) finds that it was advantageous that a man could not be disinherited hence his father's goats would eventually be his and brothers and relatives were always ready to lend to him who contemplated marriage.

The informants noted that during the olden days, the gap between the rich and the poor was not so huge. In those times, poor young men were allowed to give whatever little they had as a token and they received assistance from the clan. Poverty would not stop a man from having a wife because an elder on the girl's side

would 'adopt' the boy as one of his sons. They elders were happy to help because love has no price. One of the key informants indicated that traditionally, there was a standard amount so it did not matter if a man who wanted to marry had money or not. The basic asked for was a nanny goat and ewe (*Mwati na harika*) and this was compulsory for everyone and majority were able to afford this. In contemporary society, the amounts and basic requirements asked for differ from family to family. Another informant claimed that poor men feel harassed by their fiancée's parents' when they make high demands that he cannot fulfil. This makes the man feel intimidated and oppressed. This he feels is "an underhand way for them to show despise for his low economic status, unconsciously hoping their daughter will break off her engagement to the man."

If bridewealth was too expensive, 24% of male respondents would wait until they could afford it, as compared to 10% of female respondents. 6% of men would ask their fiancé to assist them to pay it and 12% of women would assist him to pay. 14% of men and 6% of women would take the come-we-stay option. 6% of men would find another woman to marry and 2% of man would borrow money. None of the female respondents would pick another man to marry nor would they borrow money.

Figure 5.1 Options if bridewealth was too high



Source: Survey (2010)

60% of respondents answered 'other' for this question and gave a variety of solutions. The men (48%) indicated that they would find a way to make a token payment just to get her parents' blessings, ask their fiancée to talk to their parents and ask her to find out beforehand what is expected and discuss with him. They would also use diplomacy to negotiate downwards with their fiancée's parents to an affordable or manageable amount. Similarly, discuss a way forward and negotiate an instalment plan over an indefinite period of time with her parents or just go ahead and get married and later give something to her parents when they could afford it.

The women (72%) indicated that they would make their parents understand that they are not merchandise for sale or negotiation. They would speak to their parents on their fiancé's behalf to find a reasonable compromise; persuade them to lower the amount, waive it, accept payment in instalments, or take what is available; negotiate with them to allow him to pay it off while in the marriage or to consider other alternatives that are not punishing to the groom. 6 women would completely ignore bridewealth and get married because they feel he should not have to pay. 4 others noted that the problem of very high bridewealth demanded would not arise because their own parents believe it is an outdated practice and again, if it is a token it should not be high. A discussion with her parents beforehand was considered important as a way to find out their expectations and for her to table her fiancé's financial position. 5 women would opt to go ahead with either a civil marriage or a Christian church marriage. Living together in the come-we-stay union was mentioned, and they would give bridewealth later on, if they could afford it. Only one woman would loan her fiancé the money.

5.6 Appropriate alternatives to bridewealth

The informants were divided on the alternatives to bridewealth. One informant felt strongly that there was no alternative to bridewealth because "when you have love you view it as giving". It was indicated that the meetings, discussions, games and ceremonies during the bridewealth process were important and should be maintained. However, one stressed that the talks should be confined to the parents

and exclude the wider clan members. Another described bridewealth as a souvenir or items of value that people would want to give and added that education should be given to make it clear that it is flexible and not mandatory and neither is it a wife purchase. Supermarket shopping was seen to be an alternative to avoid arousing greed as often happens when money is discussed. The other informants posed that there is no alternative and the practice should be stopped completely.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHANGING PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS BRIDEWEALTH AMONG URBAN AGIKUYU

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the opinions that were given by respondents in the survey and key informant interviews regarding the changing perceptions towards bridewealth among the urban Agikuyu people.

6.2 Perceptions towards bridewealth

Mutua and Chinchon (2006) write that the marriage gift in the Kikuyu culture never ends (*ruracio rutithiraga*). It is a process and not just a one-time event, the wisdom being in founding a lifelong relationship. Kirwen (2005) feels that today bridewealth is a commercialized venture and has become a personal affair, no longer a community affair. A Program Officer at CREAM (n.d.) has been quoted saying "bride price has had a negative impact on the life of a married woman in Kenya". Bridewealth was a cultural practice, deeply rooted in the lives of the Agikuyu. It was protocol and a man was required to give it if he wanted to marry. Failure to do so would bring a curse. One informant was quoted saying, "A man who refuses to give bridewealth when he can afford it invites a curse. If he does not pay it because he genuinely does not have it, then his case will be considered with compassion." It was a process that completed a marriage and was symbolic to show that a man had acquired a wife. It was also done to appease the ancestral spirits so that they would bless the union.

In modern times, bridewealth is regarded as a token dictated by culture and symbolic of days past. It is done to honour, uphold and maintain tradition and customs. This is regardless of whether or not those involved understand its original purpose. 4% of respondents had no idea what the traditional significance of bridewealth was and 2% were not sure of the modern significance of bridewealth; 1% felt that the ceremonies were just an excuse to feast and make merry. A further

20% felt that it has no value, has become a burden and lost significance and meaning due to acculturation. The urban set up has contributed to significant changes in the cultural life of the Agikuyu. Nowadays both young women and men are able to leave their parent's homes once they are self-sustaining. Parents have little say and cannot stop children marrying even if no bridewealth has been given.

Section 2.2.1 categorized the significance of bridewealth into four broad areas namely: to stabilize a marriage, as a physical symbol of the marriage union, as a source of income and as a source of self-esteem for the bride and the groom. These four categories were used to gauge the changing perceptions on bridewealth among the Agikuyu. Two other categories were included: the amount of bridewealth and the mode of handling of bridewealth. According to the survey carried out, the responses from those interviewed showed that the urban Agikuyu population is perceiving bridewealth differently from the way it was perceived in the traditional times.

6.3 Bridewealth and marital stability

Leakey (1977) likened bridewealth to marriage insurance. Kottack (1994) agrees adding that a marriage became more stable as the value of bridewealth increased. Table 6.1 shows that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the perception that bridewealth plays a part in the stability of a marriage.

Table 6.1 Bridewealth and Marital Stability

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The higher the amount of bridewealth, the stronger the marriage bond.	82	9	6	0	3
Bridewealth prevents wives from running away.	59	21	7	11	2
Bridewealth prevents divorce.	62	24	6	5	3
Bridewealth binds a couple legally.	29	16	13	30	12
In the event of divorce, the bridewealth should be paid back.	35	27	17	10	11

Source: Survey (2010)

As seen from Table 6.1, a large section of respondents agreed that bridewealth does not bring stability to a marriage. Bridewealth is not regarded as an *important factor* to keep people married. The commitment that a couple has is what binds them together and shapes their attitudes towards marriage and the practices within it. Bridewealth is an external factor as far as the couple is concerned. They regard it as an issue for their parents.

Girls see themselves as equal partners to men in marriage as they are no longer fully dependant. Often they bring in to their marital home as much financial contribution and their partners and sometimes even more. Young men and women have the attitude that girls should no longer be exchanged with material items. Marital stability is dependant on how committed the couple is towards their marriage and how capable they are in positively dealing with many issues that come into their marriage.

6.4 Bridewealth as a Physical Symbol of Marriage

According to Kenyatta (1978) giving of a certain amount of bridewealth signified a betrothal and this matrimonial contract bound not only the bride and groom but also their kinsfolk. As seen in Table 6.2, the majority of respondents agreed that bridewealth is a physical symbol affirming that a bride-to-be has received her parents' blessings and consent. They also view it as forming a foundation on which a relationship between the two families begins to grow.

As a general rule, the urban Agikuyu regard some form of tangible token given, however small, as marking the beginning of a marital union. This token, as said above, marks the beginning of a relationship between the families of the groom and the bride. It is therefore, still regarded as a physical symbol of marriage.

Table 6.2 Bridewealth as a Physical Symbol of Marriage

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Bridewealth is a physical symbol showing that the parents have given their blessings and consent for their daughter to be married.	9	9	6	47	29
Payment of bridewealth means a girl now belongs to the boy's clan.	19	7	21	37	16
In the event of divorce, the bridewealth should be paid back.	35	27	17	10	11

Source: Survey (2010)

6.5 Bridewealth as a Source of Income

Kenyatta (1979) writes that through marriage, a girl would bring wealth to her family. He continues that bridewealth would compensate her parents for loss of a worker in their homestead. Cagnolo (2006) states that the bridewealth received by the girl's parents was often used to offset various loans. Table 6.3 shows the responses of the respondents on the statements relating to bridewealth as a source of income.

Table 6.3 Bridewealth as a Source of Income

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Bridewealth repays her parents for the cost of her upbringing.	41	24	13	19	3
Bridewealth compensates the parents of the bride for losing her as a worker and/ or contributor within the homestead.	44	22	13	16	5
Bridewealth enables her parents to get bridewealth for their sons.	47	21	15	14	3
Bridewealth provides income for poor families and may be used to offset loans.	39	18	14	24	5

Source: Survey (2010)

The attitude towards bridewealth has changed such that it is no longer viewed as a source of income. Parents have invested in their children, both sons and daughters.

Therefore daughters are invaluable and cannot be exchanged with anything material. Bridewealth given is now regarded as a token meant to mark the beginning of a relationship between the two families involved. It is sometimes so negligible that it cannot be regarded as an income. In many cases, the boy's family are left to offer the gift.

6.6 Bridewealth as a Source of Self-Esteem

Wieland (2004) writes that a wife felt valued when her husband paid bridewealth for her. It demonstrated that he was able to care for her and to support her. Table 6.4 shows the level to which respondents agreed with the statements on bridewealth as a source of self-esteem.

Table 6.4 Bridewealth as a Source of Self-Esteem

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Bridewealth demonstrates the capability of a man to care for and support his wife and children.	30	23	17	21	9
Bridewealth makes the wife feel valued and respected.	24	17	14	29	16
Bridewealth gives self-esteem to the husband because it shows that he can care for and support his wife and children.	15	17	18	35	15
Bridewealth improves the relationship between the bride's family and groom's family.	16	17	22	36	9
The higher the amount of bridewealth asked for, the more valuable the girl.	63	20	8	2	7

Source: Survey (2010)

There are many factors that come into play in a marriage that help build self-esteem to the bride and groom. Self-esteem for the young husband is not based on the size of the tokens that he or his parents gave as bridewealth. The young couple does not look back at what was given or not given, once they are granted permission to get

married. Even if bridewealth was in millions of shillings, it would not give any one of them self-esteem. Bridewealth does not improve the relationship between the families of the young couple. Other factors such as mutual respect help to build the relationship. High bridewealth does not make the bride feel respected. Respect develops as others grow to know the respectable character of a person.

6.7 Amount of Bridewealth

Table 6.5 Amount of Bridewealth

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The amount set for bridewealth is standard for all Agikuyu families.	51	31	9	4	5
Bridewealth should only be paid in monetary terms.	46	32	13	7	2

Source: Survey (2010)

According to the responses received, bridewealth given is not standardised. It is given according to the families' ability and generosity. The form of bridewealth given depends on the situation of the family with most preferring it in monetary form but also in the form of modern day appliances. These preferences are due to the ease of handling. Goats and cattle are not preferred as they are difficult to handle in an urban setting. A key informant suggested that household shopping from a supermarket may be adequate. However, individuals should be left free to make the decision as to which form of bridewealth should be given.

6.8 Bridewealth as a Source of Self-Esteem

While the practice now is for the groom's family to give bridewealth to the bride's father, the responses received showed in Table 6.6 indicate that there should a two way exchange of gifts. The two families should come together to support the young couple as they begin their lives.

Table 6.6 Mode of handling of Bridewealth

	%				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Groom should give gifts to his in-laws throughout the period of their marriage.	20	17	27	21	15
The groom's parents should shoulder the cost of bridewealth.	15	21	25	27	11
Gifts should be given to the groom's parents as well.	16	12	22	34	16
Parents should contribute towards the welfare of the bride and groom.	8	5	16	38	33

Source: Survey (2010)

6.9 Bridewealth and the effect it has on the relationship between the couple and their in laws

The key informants gave the following information with regard to the effect that giving or not giving bridewealth has, on the relationship between the couple and between the couple and their in-laws. When ceremonies related to bridewealth take place in a friendly, positive atmosphere, there develops a good relationship between the groom and his in-laws. The young man even feels like he has been adopted into his wife's family. However, if the process of giving bridewealth is not friendly, he will not feel close to the in-laws and may negatively affect his relationship with his bride especially if he suspects that his bride-to-be was a party to the demands. He may also be of the opinion that he has rights over her and may adopt a superior attitude towards her thus subjecting his wife to his authority. This causes disagreements that may lead to gender-based violence within their home.

If no bridewealth is given, it is felt that the groom may not fully commit to his responsibilities as a husband. On the positive end however, entering a marriage without the burden of bridewealth might create greater respect between husband and wife thus forming a good foundation from which to start their marriage.

The informants felt that as far as the couple was concerned, the process of giving bridewealth was aimed at securing blessings from their parents and for both families to meet and build a relationship with each other. On the negative side, if the relatives of the groom contributed to the bridewealth, they may feel they have the rights over his wife. This might, on the other hand, open the way for the boy's parents to interfere in the marriage. The girl's parent who regard their daughters as a source of income and may have exchanged her with bridewealth, might feel helpless to assist their daughter in time of need as they may hold the opinion that she now belongs to another family. In the instances where bridewealth is not asked for, the groom's family may doubt the credibility of the girl. On the other hand, if the groom's parents refuse to give bridewealth, the girl's parents consider such an act as lacking in respect, seriousness, appreciation and commitment to the marriage.

6.10 Conclusion

Among the urban Agikuyu, the perceptions on the value and purpose of bridewealth have evolved over time. Bridewealth is no longer found to contribute towards the stability of a marriage, or as a way to get income, nor as a way to boost self esteem to the bride or to the groom. However, bridewealth is still considered to be a physical symbol that a marriage has taken place. It is preferred that a couple and their families should be the ones do decide how to appreciate one another according to their financial abilities, which is in contrast to the cultural practices where a clan had bridewealth standardized. As most individuals are now educated and have been socialized with others of different cultures, new values have emerged. Many of them therefore do not put much value on bridewealth. One informant was adamant that even though giving bridewealth is our custom, we should not perpetuate practices that demean any person in the society. "After all, bridewealth does not make a marriage workable or give anyone sleepless nights whether or not bridewealth was given."

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the significance of bridewealth among the urban Agikuyu people, to examine the different forms of bridewealth between marriage partners and to examine the changing perceptions towards bridewealth among urban Agikuyu. Administration of questionnaires and interviews were employed in collecting the information. The Cultural Materialism approach provided the broad theoretical statement which guided the gathering and analysis of data.

Almost all (93%) agreed that bridewealth was significant traditionally as opposed to only 55% who felt it has significance today. Its significance today is mainly to continue to uphold the Agikuyu tradition and for cultural identity. It is valuable in facilitating the meeting of the in-laws and as a sign of appreciation, love and commitment of the parties involved. The ceremonies related to bridewealth should be encouraged for the purpose of the bride's and groom's families getting to know one another and developing a relationship.

However, many do not know the root of the practice hence do not understand its value. It has also lost significance due to new values emerging from education, religion and cross-ethnic interactions. The root, purpose and workings of the practice should be understood.

During negotiations, majority of the items asked for traditionally are still being requested for today. The value of these items converted into money at current market rates. According to the findings, almost half of the respondents (47%) would not ask for bridewealth for their daughters because they feel that she is not for sale. They would prefer a voluntary gift from the groom. It was interesting to note that many men would prefer to give bridewealth for their wives but would not ask for it for their daughters. It emerged that money or wealth gain was not the focus of the

process. However, the fun and games that are associated with the practice and process of giving bridewealth should be maintained as it helps to foster friendly and joyful relations between the families.

Unlike past cultural beliefs, bridewealth does not necessarily stabilize a marital union. It is no longer an insurance against divorce. Today it is a physical symbol of marriage, recognized under customary law. However, most people opt to do away with some ceremonies and requirements and opt to marry in Christian or civil law settings. Bridewealth as a source of income is a contentious issue. The practice has been commercialized; exploited for gain by some families. This has led to many couples opting to cohabit or remaining single until they are much older. Bridewealth is not viewed as a source of esteem in modern times. Some feel no changes should be made; it should be continued exactly as it was without exploitation or extremes. Others advocate that the practice should be modified to suit individuals' personal beliefs and the changes that have come up in contemporary society while others feel that it should be completely eradicated as it is of no value to them.

7.2 Recommendations

This study has applied its findings to develop possible recommendations which can be implemented. The following recommendations are suggested:

1. Families have different financial status, religious beliefs and cultural practices. The process of giving or asking for bridewealth should be carefully handled, with families being sensitive to the others' abilities. It should be left open for families to exchange gifts as they see fit. Families should focus on the aspects that develop friendship, love and respect for each other.
2. The negotiations surrounding bridewealth are mainly a male affair and the couple is not allowed any input. It is recommended that the process would benefit from the inclusion of women and the couple.

3. The purpose of bridewealth has been diluted over time. This has led to commercialization. The elders or parent's representatives should educate the society on the original aim of bridewealth and regulate the process to prevent exploitation while helping to eliminate the idea of purchasing. The church and the local chief's *barazas* should be used as forums to educate the masses.
4. The parents should encourage the exchanging of gifts between the bride's family and the groom's family. The ceremonies relating to bridewealth should be continued as they are without the negotiations, as they play the important role of allowing the families to meet and know each other. The games played during the ceremonies enhance the bonding process.
5. Instead of giving bridewealth, both sets of parents should give gifts to the bride and groom. This will assist the young couple to start off their family on a good financial footing. It also allows the couple to appreciate their parents and even learn to also offer gifts to their parents.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

PERCEPTIONS OF BRIDEWEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY AMONG THE URBAN AGIKUYU IN NAIROBI

This is to introduce to you a study on the Perceptions of Bridewealth in the 21st Century among the Urban Agikuyu. The study is being conducted in Nairobi Province as part of a research project towards a Master of Arts Degree in Gender and Development Studies of the University of Nairobi. The aim of the study is to find out the perceptions on bridewealth in the 21st century among urban Agikuyu. You are therefore being requested to spare some time to answer this questionnaire. Your responses shall be used in strict confidentiality and shall not be attributed to you without your express permission. Please feel free to stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable with it. Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation. Please sign here below to indicate your acceptance to continue with this questionnaire.

Signature _____ Date _____

**PERCEPTIONS OF BRIDEWEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY AMONG THE URBAN
AGIKUYU IN NAIROBI**

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: Respondents profile

1. Gender: Male Female
 2. Age group: 18 - 34 35 – 44 45 – 55 56 and above
 3. Marital status: Single Married Widowed Divorced
 If married, husband/ wife's ethnicity _____
 4. Highest level of education attained: Primary Secondary College
 University Postgraduate degree No formal schooling
 5. Employment status: Unemployed Self-employed Employed
 Retired
 6. Current estate of residence in Nairobi: _____
 How long have you lived in Nairobi? _____ years
-

SECTION B: Forms of bridewealth.

1. Which of the following items were asked for as bridewealth in the traditional Agikuyu times? Please tick.
 Sheep Goats Cows Money Honey
 Clothes Axes Gourds Pots Calabashes
 Swords Land Foodstuff Tobacco
 Sugarcane beer Leather carrying straps Wooden honey barrels
2. Please list any other items that have been excluded from Question 1 above.

3. What is asked for as bridewealth today? Please list.

SECTION C: Significance of bridewealth in the 21st Century

4. (a) In your opinion, was bridewealth necessary in the traditional times?

[] Yes [] No

(b) Does bridewealth hold any value in these modern times? [] Yes [] No

Please expound

5. Which of the following statements do you agree with:

[] The groom should give bridewealth to the girl's parents

[] The groom and his family should give bridewealth to the girl's parents

[] The groom and his bride should give bridewealth to the girl's parents

[] Both families should give tokens to one another

[] Both families should give tokens to the bride and groom

6. If you are married to a non-Kikuyu, please explain how the issue of bridewealth was handled.

7. Should the bride and groom be consulted while bridewealth is being negotiated?

[] Yes [] No

8. Would you ask for bridewealth for your daughter? [] Yes [] No

Why? _____

Men, go to question 10.

9. (a) Would you prefer that your husband-to-be pays bridewealth for you?

[] Yes [] No

Why? _____

(b) What would you do if bridewealth is highly priced and your fiancé cannot afford it?

[] Opt for come-we-stay union [] Wait until he can afford it

- Borrow money to pay it
- Assist him to pay it
- Find another man to marry
- Other. Please state _____

Ladies go to question 11.

10. (a) Would you prefer to pay bridewealth for your bride-to-be? Yes No
 Why? _____

(b) What would you do if bridewealth for your fiancée is highly priced and you cannot afford it?

- Opt for come-we-stay union
- Borrow money to pay it
- Find another lady to marry
- Other Please state _____
- Wait until you can afford it
- Ask for her to assist you to pay it

11. (a) What was the significance of bridewealth traditionally?

(b) What is the significance of bridewealth today?

12. What is your opinion with regard to bridewealth?

- Bridewealth should be continued exactly as it was traditionally
- Bridewealth should be continued but with some modifications
- Bridewealth should be discontinued

Please explain your answer

SECTION D: Perceptions of Bridewealth

Using the scale of 1 – 5 provided below, please express your agreement with the following statements regarding bridewealth.

SCALE: 1 – Strongly disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neutral 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

		1	2	3	4	5
I	The higher the amount of bridewealth, the stronger the marriage bond.					
II	Bridewealth prevents wives from running away.					
III	Bridewealth demonstrates the capability of a man to care for and support his wife and children.					
IV	Bridewealth prevents divorce.					
V	Bridewealth is a physical symbol showing that the parents have given their blessings and consent for their daughter to be married.					
VI	Bridewealth binds a couple legally.					
VII	Payment of bridewealth means a girl now belongs to the boy's clan.					
VIII	Bridewealth repays her parents for the cost of her upbringing.					
IX	Bridewealth compensates the parents of the bride for losing her as a worker and/ or contributor within the homestead.					
X	Bridewealth enables her parents to get bridewealth for their sons.					
XI	Bridewealth provides income for poor families and may be used to offset loans.					
XII	Bridewealth makes the wife feel valued and respected.					
XIII	Bridewealth gives self-esteem to the husband because it shows that he can care for and support his wife and children.					
XIV	Bridewealth improves the relationship between the bride's family and groom's family.					
XV	The amount set for bridewealth is standard for all Agikuyu families.					
XVI	Bridewealth should only be paid in monetary terms.					
XVII	Groom should give gifts to his in-laws throughout the period of their marriage.					
XVIII	The higher the amount of bridewealth asked for, the more valuable the girl.					
XIX	In the event of divorce, the bridewealth should be paid back.					
XX	The groom's parents' should shoulder the cost of bridewealth.					
XXI	Gifts should be given to the groom's parents as well.					
XXII	Parents should contribute towards the welfare of the bride and groom.					

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PERCEPTIONS OF BRIDEWEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY AMONG THE URBAN AGIKUYU IN NAIROBI

This is to introduce to you a study on the Perceptions of Bridewealth in the 21st Century among the Urban Agikuyu. The study is being conducted in Nairobi Province as part of a research project towards a Master of Arts Degree in Gender and Development Studies of the University of Nairobi. The aim of the study is to find out the perceptions on bridewealth in the 21st century among urban Agikuyu. You are therefore being requested to spare some time to for an interview. Your responses shall be used in strict confidentiality and shall not be attributed to you without your express permission. Please feel free to end this interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable with it. Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation. Please sign here below to indicate your acceptance to continue with this interview.

Signature _____ Date _____

PERCEPTIONS OF BRIDE WEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY AMONG THE URBAN AGIKUYU IN NAIROBI

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is the significance of bridewealth in modern Kenya?
2. In what way does the payment of bridewealth have an effect on the couple's relationship with each other and with their in-laws?
3. In what way does the non-payment of bridewealth have an effect on the couple's relationship with each other and with their in-laws?
4. How is the issue of bridewealth handled for a mixed ethnic group couple?
5. What, in your opinion should bridewealth be comprised of?
6. What changes would you advocate be made to the practice?
7. What would be an appropriate alternative to bridewealth?
8. How does bridewealth add value to the groom and to the bride?
9. What factors determined the amount of bridewealth to be given for a girl traditionally?
10. What factors determine the amount of bridewealth to be given for a girl today?
11. How do poor families deal with it if a high amount of bridewealth is asked for?