

**THE IMPACT OF THE CHURCH ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDENTITY OF AN
AFRICAN CHRISTIAN WOMAN: A CASE STUDY
OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA,
DIOCESE OF KIRINYAGA**

1910-1999

BY

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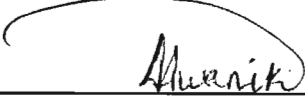
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Rev. Daniel S. Mwaniki and our children, John Moses, Anne and Peter whose unwavering encouragement has been a major source of inspiration in my academic pursuits.

DECLARATION

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



Lydia M. Mwaniki

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the contribution of the church to the development of the identity of a Gikuyu woman. Opposition to the suppression of women by culture has become a strong social, political and religious conviction. There is a growing number of men and women in Africa who are concerned about the marginal status of women. In traditional African society, the experience of women was that of subjugation, exploitation and control by men. These experiences are persistent even today because most African cultures are still patriarchal. This study therefore seeks to establish and evaluate how far the church has liberated a Gikuyu woman from such unjust patriarchal conditionings.

The study was undertaken in ACK Kirinyaga diocese and concentrated mainly on Kirinyaga district in the period between 1910-1999. Among other factors, the study was undertaken as a contribution to the search for the identity of an African Christian by African theologians.

The first chapter introduces the whole thesis and gives a clear explanation of the problem of investigation and the methodology used. Chapter two investigates the status of women in Gikuyu traditional institutions. The chapter concludes that although women held some important roles in Gikuyu traditional society, to a great extent their identity was defined in terms of their reproductive roles.

Chapter three evaluates the impact of colonialism and Mission Christianity on the status of a Gikuyu woman. We observed that this era had both destructive and regenerative effects on the status of women. Chapter four evaluates the different ways in which women have been involved in church life. It singles out the ordination of women as the greatest effort that Kirinyaga diocese has made on emancipation of women.

Chapter five searches for an evidence of the biblical meaning of the identity of a Christian woman, evaluating the place of women in selected controversial biblical passages. Chapter six is the conclusion and sums up the main findings of the study. It

also points out that the study is not exhaustive; much more still requires to be researched in this area.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Diocesan Synod- The highest decision-making body in the structural organisation of an Anglican diocese

Identity- In this study, identity applies to two dimensions: human identity and Christian identity.

Human identity- Two notions of human identity are applied. These are sexual identity and gender identity.

Sexual identity- We have borrowed Yorburg's definition that sexual identity "is the image of the self as a male or a female..." (Yorburg 1974:1). In this study, sexual identity refers to the image of the 'self' of a Gikuyu woman as a female.

Gender identity- This is the image that has developed gradually from infancy as a result of socialisation. In this case it refers to the image of a Gikuyu woman as defined by the society. It incorporated belief about how she ought to think, act and feel by virtue of her being female. It also includes learnt ideals of her feminine behaviour, privileges and emotions, hence affecting her self- confidence, self -esteem, the goals she will seek and also the means of achieving them.

Christian identity- In this study, Christian identity refers to the renewed state or image of the 'self' that a Gikuyu woman should have when she becomes a Christian and how a Christian society should define that image. This image is characterised by a state of liberation from the bondage of sin. This is liberation from what Oduyoye (1995:4) refers to as "the existence of an unjustifiable situation". In this case whatever denies or distorts full humanity of a woman is therefore regarded as unredemptive (Ruether 1983; 18-19). This liberation thus accords women a state of fullness of life in Jesus Christ (Jn. 10: 10), characterised by righteousness, empowerment, self- esteem, human dignity and all other Christian virtues.

Patriarchy- refers to rule by men. It implies that men hold positions of power in all important institutions in the family, political, economic and social realms of the society

and women are kept away from holding such positions. Patriarchy is also an ideology and cultural system, which draws both men and women to its service.

Sexism- unequal treatment of either women or men because of their gender. However in this study it will specifically be applied to the female gender.

Traditional- this refers to beliefs and practices that are not foreign to the Agikuyu but have their roots in pre-colonial Gikuyu society. Some continue to be practiced in the present Gikuyu generation.

Gikuyu-the term is derived from Mukuyu (fig tree) (Kenyatta 1938; 257). The term Mugikuyu (Agikuyu- plural) refers to the people, Gikuyu refers to their country and Gigikuyu refers to their language. Since the Europeans found it difficult to pronounce G (Gikuyu), they rendered K (Kikuyu) instead. In this study, we shall use the original term Gikuyu. Since the Agikuyu occupying different districts differ slightly in accent, the gigikuyu used in this study is the Kirinyaga accent and in particular that used by those who occupy Gichugu division.

Mubiriga- An autonomous social unit composed of several family units who trace their origin from a common ancestor. Its nearest English translation is clan.

Muiru- co- wife, literally meaning 'my partner in Jealousy'.

Muramati- guardian or trustee.

Muthamaki- Judge or president

Muthirigu- A song of protest sung especially by women to protest against colonial oppressors during that period.

Riika- refers to people who underwent initiation into adulthood at the same time. It means age-set or age- group.

Abbreviations

- ACK- Anglican Church of Kenya
AIM- Africa Inland Mission
CMS- Church Missionary Society
CPK- Church of the Province of Kenya
CSM- Church of Scotland Mission
DC- District Commissioner
EAA- East African Association
FA- Father's Association
IBEAC- Imperial British East African Company
JE- Yahweh Elohim sources
KAU- Kenya African Union
KCA – Kikuyu Central Association
KISA- Kikuyu Independent Schools Association
KKISA- Kikuyu Karing'a Independent Schools Association
KNA- Kenya National Archives
Mss – Manuscripts
MU - Mothers' Union
NCKK- National Council of Churches of Kenya
NCWK- National Council of Women in Kenya
NEGST –Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
P- Priestly sources
PCEA- Presbyterian Church of East Africa
TEE- Theological Education by Extension
UMM- United Methodist Mission
YKA – Young Kikuyu Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The problem of identity is not new in Africa. It was the key issue that shaped African theology in the early twentieth century when it emerged as a quest for African Christian identity (Bediako 1992). The most persistent questions were; “who is an African Christian?” “Why should Africans be Europeans?”. African theologians were therefore in search of African Christian identity, which would ensure their integrity and selfhood as African Christians.

Until fairly recently, the quest for identity has been largely understood and conducted as a male affair. Oduyoye (1995:180) for instance observes that even the African theologians who have used the liberation paradigm to express the church’s faith usually ignore gender issues. The quest for the identity of an African Christian woman is an endeavour to liberate her from all unjust patriarchal conditions, by enabling her to realise her full potential as a human being. The point here is that the search for the identity of an African Christian is incomplete if it does not address cultural attitudes, beliefs, practices and language that have continually suppressed the African woman. These attitudes are major causes of the serious identity crises that many African Christian women have continued to experience inside the church.

The search for the identity of an African Christian woman is imperative and urgent in the church today particularly because of the past painful experiences of women, which have not changed much to date. History demonstrates very clearly that women have been discriminated against throughout the centuries both in the church and also in the society. They have not been allowed to actualise their full potential. In the Anglican

church for instance, for a long time the government of the church has been in the hands of men. Leadership to a great extent is shaped by the theology of the Church Fathers who had a very low opinion of women. Tertullian for example views women as the 'devil's gateway' (Hanegraaff 1995:218), Clement of Alexandria advocates that a woman should be covered with shame when she thinks of what nature she is. This theology is patterned after church traditions, which were born by patriarchy.

The Bible and theology have therefore been used to justify the marginalisation and oppression of women. However, we believe that this is a misinterpretation of the Bible. Many feminist theologians have argued that the Bible portrays equality between the sexes. Oduyoye (1995:181) for instance argues that "either men and women are of equal value before God, both created in the image of the one God or else we declare Genesis 1:26 a lie". It may be that the church has deviated from God's ideal perception of a woman.

Besides such unjust theology, a woman has also been marginalised by culture. In Gikuyu traditional society for instance, women's roles were confined to the domestic domain. Decision-making positions were reserved for men. Their identity was not defined in their own right as human beings or through their own qualities and achievements but in terms of their status as wives and mothers. In this case, childless and single unmarried mothers were regarded as social misfits. Worse still, female children were regarded as less important (Kenyatta 1938:13).

Such a history of marginalisation of a woman therefore calls for our urgent attention in order to uproot the unjust patriarchal attitudes, which are manifested both in theology and culture. Our study seeks to evaluate how far the church has brought about this liberation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem \ Motivation

Specifically, the study seeks to investigate and establish the extent to which the church, which is committed to identifying and challenging all sorts of injustices and oppression, addresses such cultural and religious beliefs and practices that are unjust to women. The statement of the problem therefore is: "to what extent has the encounter between the church and Gikuyu culture developed the identity of a Gikuyu Christian woman?" In answering this question the study addresses such questions as:

- (a) How has the church enabled a Gikuyu woman in Kirinyaga to be a 'full person' who is able to participate beyond the culturally ascribed limits of 'sex- linked status' i.e. to rise above a 'woman's place' in society?.
- (b) Is the problem of identity an issue to a Gikuyu woman and why?.
- (c) What changes has the church brought to the society's perception of a woman?
- (d) To what extent does the participation of women in ACK Kirinyaga diocese impact on their position both in the church and in the wider society?.
- (e) Has Christianity improved or worsened the traditional identity of a Gikuyu woman ?.

1.3 Objectives of the Study.

The study first of all seeks to discuss the role and image of a woman in Gikuyu traditional society. This is important because it serves as a background against which we have been able to address our second objective. The second objective mainly evaluates the impact of the interaction between Christianity and Gikuyu traditional attitudes to a woman, in regard to the renewal of her identity in the light of Christian values. The third objective is to assess the attitude of a Gikuyu woman towards 'her place' in Gikuyu traditional society.

The fourth objective is to analyse the contribution of the church in enabling men to take an active role in development of the identity of women. Finally, we seek to provide recommendations on how the dignity of African Christian women can be enhanced.

1.4 Research hypotheses \ Premises

The study is based on various hypotheses, which will guide its basic arguments. These hypotheses are:

- (a) The identity of a woman cannot be fruitfully developed in isolation from and in opposition to that of a man.
- (b) Women have an important part to play in the development of their own identity.
- (c) ACK diocese of Kirinyaga has not interacted with culture adequately to develop the identity of a Gikuyu woman.
- (d) The church has potential to assimilate, reject, select and transform the patriarchal conditioning of a woman in order to develop her identity.
- (e) Traditional Gikuyu society has some values to offer to the church in regard to the development of the identity of a Gikuyu Christian woman.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study was instigated by the growing debate on gender issues. It is therefore a contribution to the debate and to the African Feminist theologians' effort to liberate women from all oppressive situations. It also adds to the literature on Gikuyu women and the ACK, which is meagre.

Another significant factor is that the findings of this study may enable the entire church to critically assess her attitude towards women. This may subsequently lead to the empowering of women to realise their full potential, build their self-esteem and live in a society that recognises their dignity as human beings.

Owing to the fact that early African theologians (Tutu 1987:46-48, Mbiti in Bediako 1992:312-322, Fashole Luke in Bediako 1992:427-428) held a unanimous conviction that African traditional values should be incorporated into Christianity, the study observes that some of what patriarchal culture regards as 'values' in regard to women are incompatible with biblical values. The study is therefore significant in that it is a critique of all those "values". It advocates discontinuity with all cultural attitudes that keep women in a state of subservience. Finally the study is necessary for the purpose of sensitizing women by highlighting the cultural practices that hinder them from acquiring a full Christian identity.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the study

Gikuyu Ethnic group covers a huge territorial expanse. It occupies the Central Province of Kenya, which comprises seven districts. Due to limitation of space, time and finances, this study restricts itself to Kirinyaga district. Consequently, the study focuses on the area served by ACK Kirinyaga diocese. This is a suitable area of study because for a long time, the Anglican Church was the only Christian body allowed by the British government to evangelise the area during the colonial era (Castro 1995:115). It also happens to be one of the areas where the Mau Mau revolt was highly concentrated, which deeply affected the lives of women. This therefore offers us a good opportunity to evaluate the approach of the church to the condition of women.

The limits of inquiry will range from 1910, which marks the beginning of the story of the Anglican Church in the Kenya Highlands, to the present day. Such a period will provide enough information about the interaction between the church and Gikuyu culture in regard to women. However, information about the traditional image of a Gikuyu woman will be traced as far back as the pre-colonial period.

1.7 Review of Relevant Literature

The selected literature in this study is divided into four categories. These are: literature on the Gikuyu community, literature on the history of the ACK, literature on women and finally literature on women and the church including some exegetical material. Examples of the literature on the Gikuyu are Kenyatta (1938), Muriuki (1974), Hobley (1967), Cagnolo (1933), Leakey (1952), Mugo (1982), Routledge and Routledge (1968). These enrich our knowledge about the Gikuyu citing their origin, settlement, customs, traditions and folklore. Kenyatta (1938) for instance gives a detailed account of information about their beliefs and practices and notes that women were the founders of the clans (mbari). Muriuki (1974) who offers a detailed historical account of the Agikuyu however argues that the genealogies of kinship groups are a more fruitful source of historical evidence than the myths of origin.

On the literature about the Anglican Church of Kenya, a book by the Church of the Province of Kenya (1994) traces the history and growth of the Anglican Church from its beginning in 1844 to 1994. Cole (1970) narrows down to the history of the Anglican Church in the diocese of Mt. Kenya from 1900-1970. However this literature says very little about the role and status of women in the church.

Some of the literature that gave insights into the status of a Gikuyu woman on different issues are; Kenyatta (1938), Cagnolo (1933), and Mwaura (1996). Kenyatta for instance cites roles that give women prestige in the family, society and in the economy. Taking these roles further, Mwaura states that some women were endowed with spiritual powers, which enabled them to specialise in healing and other religious duties that gave them prestige beyond Gikuyu boundaries. Cagnolo who is a distant observer of a Gikuyu woman, however offers negative and biased views about her. His work therefore requires a critical evaluation by any reader who desires to

know anything about a Gikuyu woman. Gachihi (1986), Sandgren (1976), Likimani (1985), Kanogo (1987), Rosberg and Nottingham (1966) deal with the Kenyan woman but mainly describe the impact of Mau Mau on her life.

Other literature about women particularly with regard to the denial of her full humanity by patriarchal ideologies are Cooley, Eakin, McDaniel (1973), Daly (1973), Ruether (1983), Fiorenza (1983) and Oduyoye (1995). These bring a feminist perspective. Cooley, Eakin and McDaniel define patriarchy as a social organisation of a culture into systems that are hierarchal and male-dominated in terms of value and power. They state that patriarchy is characteristically "androcentric" meaning that "the dominant norms and values centre on male perceptions, interpretations, experiences, needs and interests". Daly questions patriarchy about the fact of women's low 'caste' status, which is masked by sex role segregation, duality of status where women serve interests of men at the expense of their own interests and ideologies that bestow false identities upon women and men. Fiorenza seeks to reconstruct early Christian history from a feminist perspective. In her view, this history has been codified in a way that is oppressive to women. Reconstruction would therefore reclaim it as history of women and men. All these feminist theologians attribute subordination of women in biblical tradition and in human cultures to patriarchy. Like Ruether and Oduyoye, they therefore regard the critical principle of Feminist Theology as promotion of humanity of women.

Literature on the church and women was also consulted. Murray (1974) is the only detailed literature in our study about women and the CMS in Kenya but she limits herself mainly to the female circumcision controversy. Other literature include Mwaura (1998) and Oduyoye (1990, 1994, 1995). These expose the obstacles that hamper the progress of women both in the church and in the society including the problems of dis-empowerment and violence. Some commentaries and other exegetical books were also consulted such as

West (1993), Fuller (1976), Conzelman (1975), Kidner (1967), Bonhoeffer (1966), Schneiders (1977), Fiorenza (1977), Robertson and Plummer (1993). These enabled us to deal with the place of women in the Bible and especially in the controversial Pauline passages about women.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Since the research mainly deals with the involvement of the church to liberate women from the prevailing cultural and theological underpinnings, our frame of reference is mainly theological. This has not however prevented us from drawing on a variety of sociological, historical and cultural insights where necessary and applicable. The quest for liberation of women has received impetus from feminist theologians. Therefore to a great extent our theological framework has been enriched by feminist theology (which is usually classified as a subset of liberation theology). We have for example used the framework of Mercy Oduyoye (1990, 1994 and 1995). She is an African feminist theologian who regards feminism as a search for what it means to be human and that both male and female humanity are partners who form a balanced community. We have also used Rosemary Radford Ruether's (1983) frame of reference. She attributes subordination of women in biblical tradition to patriarchy. She however states that the Bible is liberative and therefore argues that whatever denies or deminishes the full humanity of women is not an authentic reflection of the divine. The concept of feminist theology has therefore been used in its broadest sense to refer to its search for human existence, which gives equal weight to female experiences, claiming that women are oppressed and therefore need vindication and liberation by God, which will restore their full humanity.

Since we hold patriarchy responsible for the subordinate status of women, we have drawn some insights from its theories. In this, we have used Cooley, Eakin and Mc Daniel's (1973) frame of reference, who regard patriarchy as a social organisation of a culture into hierarchichal systems characterised by

male supremacy. The identity of a woman is derived from her affiliation with a man, either her father or husband. It implies that the value of a woman irrespective of her power, status and authority, is subordinated to that of man within the same rank. Her roles are determined by a division of labour along the line of sexual differences and the tasks allocated to men are more highly valued and rewarded.

1.9 Research methodology

1.9.1 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling method has been used. This has focussed on various categories of Key church leaders, ordinary active Christians, and a few non-ACK members. This method has been favoured because the researcher wanted specific data (since it is not possible to select a research community by chance). Therefore, only those trusted key informants who could provide the required information were interviewed. We for instance interviewed the Archbishop of ACK who is well placed to offer information on the identity of women in the entire church and the current trend that the church is taking to improve it. More importantly, he happened to be the first and longest serving bishop in our diocese of study. He is therefore well acquainted with the past and present status of women in the church.

We then interviewed the current bishop of ACK diocese of Kirinyaga who is also well acquainted with the current information about the status and role of women in his diocese. We interviewed the principal of St. Andrew's College of Theology and Development for details about women and ordination training. The principal of the oldest ACK girl's secondary school in Kirinyaga was interviewed to offer information about the church and education of girls. In regard to education we also interviewed the diocesan education secretary who gave details about the enrollment of girls and boys in both primary and secondary schools. This information enabled us to judge

whether the church has facilitated both boys and girls to have equal access to education.

The other category of informants were women clergy who shared personal experiences as women priests and also their views about the identity of Christian women in the diocese. We also interviewed some clergymen in order to get a balanced view and in particular their views about the ordained women. Other informants included Mothers' Union (MU) leaders and members who stated their role and place in the church, elderly women who supplemented information about the place of women in the traditional society, widows, childless women and women from polygamous families who were better placed to give information about the attitude of the church towards women's status and their feelings about it. Finally we interviewed some non -ACK members to seek their views about the place of women in the church and whether or not the church should empower them.

All this data supplemented other primary and secondary sources, enabling us to build a balanced judgement about the role of ACK in the development of the identity of a Gikuyu Christian woman.

1.10 Methods of Data collection

This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved field research while the second phase was mainly library work.

(a) Primary Data

Several methods were used to generate the primary data. These were oral interviews, participant observation, informal discussions in the church and elsewhere and use of archival material.

(i) Oral interviews

This was the primary method of data collection. Face to face method of interviewing was preferred to the questionnaire method because it was found to be more interactive and revealing. Therefore only a few questionnaires were given out and unfortunately most of them were never returned. However we were successful to interview our purposed key informants. On the whole, 40 informants were interviewed (appendix 1).

(ii) Participant observation

During the period of field research, we were able to participate in worship services, MU annual rally, seminars and also in the ASWOM (Association of ACK Women Church workers). In all these, the author was recognised as a visitor and often given a chance to greet the members. This became an opportunity to explain the purpose of the visit. The explanation aroused interest in some members and hence opened opportunities for informal discussions and some interviews after the meeting. The author was able to observe several things in these meetings about the role and place of women in the church.

(ii) Archival Material

Archival sources were mainly derived from Kenya National Archives (KNA). There were no ACK archival materials.

(b) Secondary Data

We were able to access both published and unpublished documents relevant to our study from several university and home libraries. They include books, theses, periodicals, articles and papers presented in various fora. Copies of the minutes of diocesan synods and sermons preached by the bishop in regard to women during important diocesan events were available at St. Andrew's College of Theology and development.

(c) Data Analysis

Some data gathered was transcribed and translated into English since it was collected in the Gikuyu language. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources was compared for verification. It was analysed in accordance to the hypotheses and objectives of the study and then clearly categorised into chapters and sections of the study.

(c) Problems Related to the Study

We encountered a number of problems in the course of the study. Firstly, distance was a major problem. Our field research was based in Kirinyaga while adequate library and archival sources could only be obtained in Nairobi about 150 km away. This incurred a lot of travel expenses and it was also time consuming. Secondly, some questions were not answered adequately and most of the questionnaires were not returned. Therefore we had to conduct more interviews long after the period allocated for field research had expired. This affected our time schedule. Thirdly, there was scarcity of literature about the Anglican Church of Kenya in general, and particularly in regard to emancipation of women. Finally, we experienced acute financial difficulties since a huge amount of the money allocated was spent on travel and computer expenses.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter we have introduced the aim of the study, citing the statement of the problem and the methodology used to collect data. The study aims at addressing a particular pressing issue in the relationship between Christianity and African culture. It aims at assessing how far the church has enabled a Christian woman to acquire a Christian identity by liberating her from cultural beliefs and practices and theology that have all along kept her in a state of subservience. It is hoped that the study will enrich the African theologians' search for the identity of an African Christian and also the growing debate about gender issues.

In Chapter 2 we shall look at the Gikuyu woman in her own culture, describing and analysing the traditional institutions which have a bearing on her identity.

CHAPTER 2

GIKUYU TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON WOMEN'S IDENTITY AND STATUS.

2.1 Introduction

The identity of a Gikuyu Christian woman cannot be understood fully without a prior understanding of her identity and status in the traditional society. Such a background will enable us assess whether or not Christianity has developed her identity. The traditional status of a Gikuyu woman can only be examined by looking at the structure of Gikuyu traditional society, including its social, economic, political and religious institutions as well as the roles of boys and girls, men and women. Such an overview will provide some of the Gikuyu beliefs and practices, which have significant implications for her identity and status. However, prior to that, we shall have a brief introduction to Gikuyu geographical and historical background, which will enable us to understand the community with which we are dealing.

2.2 The Agikuyu: Their Geographical and Historical Background

2.2.1 Geographical location

The Agikuyu represent the largest ethnic group in Kenya. They presently occupy the Central Province of Kenya which comprises seven districts; Kiambu, Nyeri, Murang'a, Thika, Nyandarwa, Kirinyaga and Maragwa. Our study focuses on the Agikuyu of Kirinyaga district.

Kirinyaga district is situated on the slopes of Mt. Kenya, an extinct volcano of 5199m above Sea Level. The district covers a range of 1437 km². It borders the following districts; Nyeri, Murang'a on the West, Embu in the East and South and then Machakos on its South most tip. It is divided into four divisions: Ndia, Gichugu, Mwea and Kutus-Kerugoya Municipality. The major rivers are Tana, Ragati, Thiba, Nyamindi and Rupingazi. All these

drain into Tana River that flows to the Indian Ocean. There are also some prominent hills including Kamuruana (1890m) in Northern Ndia and Murinduko (1440m) in Eastern Mwea.

2.2.2 Physical environment

The effects of the South-East and North –East trade winds, which blow from the Indian Ocean divide the year into two wet and two dry seasons. December to March mark the dry season traditionally known as *thano*. Heavy rains begin from late March to May, traditionally called *mbura ya njabi* or the long rains. Between June and September there is *kathano*. This is a dry season characterised by mist and light drizzle. Heavy showers then come over again in late September commonly called *mbura ya mwere* or the short rains.

Ndia and Gichugu divisions occupy the high rainfall zone north of the Sagana – Embu road. They are tea and coffee growing areas. Mwea is the driest part of the district experiencing an average of 1000mm annually. It is also less fertile, and only became a permanent place of settlement in the twentieth century. Mwea plains are best for growing cotton although growing of rice under irrigation has superceded it. Currently, commercial production of French beans (*miciri*) through irrigation is on the increase in the district.

2.2.3 Origin of the Gikuyu people

The origin and settlement of Gikuyu ethnic group is presented both in historical and mythical forms. According to history, their origin is not known but it is believed that they constitute part of the Bantu -speaking people, the Thagicu speakers who migrated into the Eastern and Southern Africa (Lambert 1956, Middleton and Kershaw 1965:14, Muriuki 1974, Castro 1995:19). They then occupied their present land by the twelfth

century. This region had been occupied by the Agumba and the Athi people (Routledge and Routledge 1968:3, Muriuki 1974, Kenyatta 1938:24).

On the other hand, according to Gikuyu traditional myth of origin, the Agikuyu originate from their ancestors Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi. Gikuyu was created by *Ngai* (God) who then called him to *kirima gia Kirinyaga* (Mt. Kenya), His usual resting-place. Gikuyu was shown the beauty of the land at the foot of the mountain called *Mukurwe wa Gathanga* (in Murang'a district) which *Ngai* then gave him to occupy with his descendants. *Ngai* then gave him a wife called Mumbi and nine daughters from whom all the nine clans of the Agikuyu originate (Kenyatta 1938, Mugo 1982). The naming of clans after the daughters had an important bearing on the identity of a Gikuyu woman because it made women to be highly respected as the original founders of the clan system, and hence accorded a considerable amount of autonomy especially in the economic sphere.

Having looked at the geographical and historical background, we shall now embark on the Gikuyu traditional institutions and assess their impact upon the identity and status of women. It is worth noting that the social, economic, political and religious institutions in Gikuyu traditional life are so intertwined that it is very difficult to divorce one from the other. We shall however attempt to discuss each in turn.

2.3 Gikuyu social organisation

Gikuyu social organisation is a strong bond of communal relations governed by family, clan and age-set affiliations.

2.3.1 The family

The family was the smallest social-political unit. It consisted of a husband, his wife\ wives, and children who together lived in a homestead. Each family was multi-functional. It was regarded as a complete social, economic,

political, religious and administrative unit. Every family group formed a family council (*ndundu ya mucii*) with the father as the head. He owned everything in the homestead (Kenyatta 1938:9) and also settled disputes of all types.

He was to a great extent an autonomous authority. He ruled over his wife \ wives, unmarried sons and daughters. He ensured that his wife\ wives in particular recognised his authority and submitted to him as the head. According to Njeri (oral interviews; 12\7\1999), some husbands were so arrogant that when they reached the entrance of the homestead, they could not call the wives to meet them, instead they coughed (*Kuthamara*). Then all the wives responded *yuni* as though each had been called by her name. Pretending to be very drunk, the husband had to be lifted up from the floor and carried by the wives to his *thingira* (hut). Each of them then hurried to her hut and brought her husband's share of food, whether he wanted to eat or not.

The authority of the husband was further exercised through wife beating following the Gikuyu erroneous belief that a woman could not be submissive enough to the husband without being beaten. In most cases, nobody could rescue her "*tondu muthuuri ni kwathana arathana gwake*" (because the husband is exercising his authority in his home) (Njeri, *ibid.*).

The authority of the husband was therefore exercised through a relationship of dominance and submission in a Gikuyu homestead. Such a relationship has not been completely eradicated to date whereby although wife beating has subsided, several Gikuyu men still retain the dominant status. There are still cases of violence against women (*Daily Nation*, March 8, 2000: 25). Some women are only seen but not heard in their homes.

After the death of the father, his authority was passed not to the wife\ wives but to the elder son of the first wife who was regarded as a *muramati* (trustee) (Kenyatta 1938:2, Routledge and Routledge 1968:145). In this case sexual status transcended age status because women did not inherit property, neither did they have legal independence or individuality.

Having seen that women had no room for decision making in the family, we shall now assess the situation in a wider social context called the clan.

2.3.2 Clan (*Mubiriga*)

A clan was composed of several family units (*mbari*) who bore the same clan name. They are believed to have descended from the same ancestor who is traced as far back as seventy or eighty generations (Kenyatta 1938:1).

Each clan had a *mbari* council, which governed it (Muriuki 1974:115). The council was composed of “all initiated males who had attained elder status” (ibid.:115-116). The leader was called a *muramati* (guardian). His duty was to be a spokesman in the affairs of the *mbari*. He also ensured smooth running of the *mbari* and convened *mbari* councils when appropriate.

Women were never elected as members of the *mbari* council. They were not even consulted when major decisions affecting the clans were made in spite of being clan members. They, like women in most Kenyan communities, were seen as lacking in leadership qualities such as wisdom, command of respect and impartiality (Kabira and Nzioki 1993: 4-12).

Whenever a woman lodged a complaint about mistreatment by the husband, it was discussed in her absence. Even if the husband was in the wrong, the council insisted that the woman should check her behavior, otherwise she would be sent back to her parents. Then the elders very secretly called the husband separately and advised him to treat the wife more fairly (Njeri, 12th July 1999, Wagatu, 13th May 1999, Nyawira, 20th July 1999; oral interviews).

Asked why the council did not correct the husband in the presence of the wife, the informants said that such an action would embarrass the husband before the wife after which she would become domineering and despise him.

Besides the family and the clan the other most important social organisation was the age-set. Let us now assess whether women age groups had equal involvement in public affairs as men age groups.

2.3.3 Age-set (*riika*)

An age-set comprised of all those people who were circumcised at the same time. Every Gikuyu male or female belonged to a particular age-set. Age-sets brought cohesion in the tribe even more than the family or clan. They cut across lineage and territorial groupings (Muriuki 1974:116).

Male age-sets were divided into several groups which formed a council of warriors (*njama ya ita*) under the leadership of *muthamaki wa riika*. This council was concerned with raiding expeditions and defense (Lambert 1956:101, cf. Muriuki 1974:121, 124, Kenyatta 1938:205).

Although every woman also belonged to a particular age group, they never at all joined the warrior group. They were among those to be protected together with the children and the elderly men. The fact that after circumcision a male acquired a higher status by joining one council after another, reveals that even the youngest adult male had a higher status than the most senior woman did in the council of women. Sexual status counted more than age status (cf. Presley 1992:25). What then was the council of women? Did it have any place in the public domain?

2.3.4 Women's Institutions

Although women were at the periphery of the social-political organisation, they had women's institutions called *ndundu ya aka* (women's advisory

council) (Lambert 1956:95, Kenyatta 1938:111). In every neighbourhood there was a body of elderly women. They were involved in all matters regarding clitoridectomy, ensured good behaviour in women and that a sacrifice was made whenever the rains failed or when the harvest was good. However, women's councils did not accord them public status because they contributed nothing in matters of politics, warfare or regulation of the judicial system.

2.4 Social -Economic organisation

So far we have observed that women were not empowered in the social organisation which was dominated by male leaders. We shall now look at the social –economic organisation including gender roles and their implications for the status of women.

The Agikuyu were mainly farmers. Besides growing several types of crops, they also reared animals. Women were in charge of food supply, storage and marketing. After storing enough food to last until the next season, every wife with the consent of the husband was free to market or distribute the surplus in any way she wanted. Her ability to manage the economy accorded her much prestige (Kenyatta 1938:63).

As opposed to other sectors, for example, the political sector, women were greatly empowered in the economic sector. They exercised a lot of freedom in this sphere without much interference from their husbands. As a result of this economic independence, Gikuyu women joined a trade network connecting their villages to the wider world of East African trade which stretched as far as the Indian Ocean. More importantly, they traded with different ethnic groups who occupied different climatic zones. However, women had access to resources but no right of ownership, hence their economic autonomy was still limited.

Our search for the identity and status of women in the social –economic sector would be incomplete without considering the gender roles, which actually shaped the identity of both men and women. It is these socially constructed roles that defined ‘the woman’s place’ in the society. It is to these that we now turn.

2.4.1 Gender roles

Among other distinctions between male and female, the Agikuyu have a well-defined boundary between domestic domain and public domain. As a result of different gender roles that they were required to perform, both boys and girls were socialised separately through apprenticeship from the age of six years.

The father was responsible for the education of the boy. A boy joined his father in activities such as hunting, herding, cutting down trees and many others. They were also prepared to be warriors by making toy bows and arrows. Girls on the other hand were taught by their mothers. A girl joined her mother in the field and in housework, which included cooking, fetching water, firewood, grinding and nursing siblings. All these roles prepared them to cope with the numerous duties of a woman after marriage.

Both boys and girls were socialised in such a way that by the time they reached the age of initiation, they were well acquainted with adult roles (table 1).

Table 1
Traditional Gikuyu division of Labour by gender

Men	Women
Heavy work in the homestead building e.g. cutting wood and doing frame work: fences and granaries, cutting drains, making roads	Cutting and carrying grass for thatching houses and plastering

and bridges.	
Guarding homesteads at night	All house work: cooking, carrying water, washing, fetching firewood, carrying loads
Cultivating: clearing, cutting and pruning big trees, breaking virgin soil, pruning bananas	Preparing ground for sowing, weeding, pruning
Harvesting: cutting and burning stalks, spreading ashes	Harvesting crops
Hunting	Grinding maize plants and millet
Wood carving, black smithing, bee keeping	Making pottery, weaving baskets
Preparing skins	Dressmaking
Slaughtering and distributing meat	Pounding sugarcane for beer
Warfare, legal and ritual duties	Overseeing women's social life
	Taking care of children

Source: Presley 1992:15 cf. Cagnolo, 1933, Kenyatta 1938, Routledge and Routledge 1956, Middleton and Kershaw 1965.

This table shows that both men and women had a share of agriculture work for the upkeep of the family. However, as we shall see in chapter 4, the situation has changed today, where some men are no longer bread -winners.

Men had a greater share of the duties which required greater strength such as clearing virgin land, felling trees and planting crops such as bananas and yams. They also performed the most risky duties, which endangered their lives such as hunting, night watching and going to war. However, a critical evaluation of gender roles and position reveals that most of the men's work was only seasonal or periodic. On the other hand, women's roles involved a daily routine that could not be interrupted such as childcare, drawing water and firewood, daily grinding and cooking. Thus on top of her bigger share of agriculture work, and carrying both heavy and light loads, domestic roles of a woman covered the whole of her life span.

Secondly, the roles reveal that women were denied participation in the public domain where major decisions were made. They were relegated to the domestic arena and socialised to accept gender roles and positions as if they were inherent in their nature. Such convictions of women are the greatest causes of gender stereotyping even today as we shall see in chapter 4.

We shall now turn to the political organisation and assess the identity and status of women. Political organisation here refers to how people were governed. Were women part of the governing councils?

2.5 Political organisation

The Gikuyu political \ legal system was egalitarian and was based on eldership. The elders formed councils which governed the people at every level. The smallest political unit was the family (see 2.3.1). Secondly, there was the village council (*kiama kia ituura*). This was composed of heads of several families. The senior elder acted as the president of the council. Third on the hierarchy followed the district council (*Kiama kia ng'ongo*). This council was composed of all the elders in the district. It was governed by all the senior elders in the villages. The senior most elder who was advanced in age and wisdom became a *muthamaki* (judge or president). Finally there was the National council which was composed of the leaders of the district council. They represented the whole population. This was governed by a president (*muthamaki*) who was elected during the meeting of the national council. Women were not members of these councils (Hobley 1967:211, Kenyatta 1938:194-194). In view of the above, Gikuyu women like women in many Kenyan communities were not empowered politically (cf. Kabira and Nzioki 1993).

Contrary to this political disposition of Gikuyu women under the excuse that women cannot be leaders, is the existence of a Gikuyu woman leader called Wangu. Wangu was imposed as the chief of Weithaga sub-location, Mugoiri

location of Murang'a district by chief Karuri in 1903, during the colonial period. She was credited by the missionaries who came in contact with her as "a woman of great vigour, authority, dignity and obeyed on account of her ability..." (cited in Cavicchi 1977:112, 113, 115). This indicates that women can be as capable as men in leadership.

Having observed that women had no authority or legal rights in the political sphere, we shall now find out whether they were involved at all in the religious sphere.

2.6 Religious organisation

Each gender had certain religious functions. Male children for instance communed with the ancestral spirits (Kenyatta 1938:13-14). Men were involved in offering sacrifices to God, others became seers or medicine men and acted as mediators between God and humanity like Mugo wa Kibiro (ibid.:41-44). In Kirinyaga there were sacred personages like Ngai wa Tonyi, Nyaga wa Kathiiru, Kamaru and others (Njanja, 31\10\1999, Njagi, 31\10\1999; oral interviews).

Female children too had religious roles. Their most sacred duty was to create and rear future generations. They were the connecting link between clans and generations through marriages (Kenyatta 1938:195). Older women on the other hand acted as witnesses and participants in various rituals (Kenyatta 1938:26-29, Presley 1992:28). Elderly women qualified to offer sacrifices because they were "considered to be immune from worldly mischief..." (Kenyatta 1938:245).

According to Mwaura (1996: 253-269), women were also spiritual leaders, healers, diviners, mediums, herbalists, prophetesses and medicine persons. In Kirinyaga, there were esteemed women who had supernatural powers such

as Mathimi, Wangigi, Wanjui and Kabugu *wa* Maria (Njanja, 31\10\1999, Njagi, 31\10\1999; oral interviews).

Although both men and women performed religious duties, we notice that women were not allowed to participate fully in the religious sphere. Young women were insignificant and even the elderly women who became specialists were regarded as 'ritual males' (Mwaura 1996:253-269) rather than 'ritual females'. Their status was transformed into male status through ritual. Secondly their religious powers were not humanly endowed. They were not given by the society by right but rather, they were Supernatural powers, which the society had no control over. As Mwaura (2000:81) puts it,

Their (women's) authority did not spring from their position of status in society but was Supernaturally endowed... It was and is charismatic leadership which transcends structures and gender divisions.

Except for these divine powers, generally speaking, women did not fit in the societies' definition of religious status.

2.7 Rites of passage and their significance in the formation of gender identity

In the previous sections we have found that men dominated almost every area of the social –economic, political and religious life. Their power to dominate came with initiation, a very important rite of passage that endowed men with authority and introduced women to their place in the society. This is what we shall discuss in this section.

Van Gennep (1977) describes rites of passage as symbolic ceremonial performances that marked every individual's transition from one social or religious status to another. Chronologically among the Agikuyu, these rites are birth, naming, initiation, marriage and death.

While we recognise the social and religious significance attached to each of these rites, we shall mainly address the rites of initiation and marriage because of their importance in reinforcing gender identity.

2.7.1 Initiation (*Irua*)

The term initiation comes from the latin word *initium* which implies a new beginning. Among the Agikuyu, it marked transition from childhood and eventual incorporation into adulthood. Both boys and girls underwent this rite. Initiation for boys was regarded as circumcision and for girls, clitoridectomy. Let us now look at this rite and its importance for gender formation of both boys and girls.

(a) Circumcision of boys

Circumcision of boys involved removal of the foreskin of the penis. It was a test of their masculinity and manhood, which had to be achieved through physical pain amid determination, fierceness and self-control. It was symbolic in that it signified that childhood values were completely abandoned. An initiate was accorded a new status and became a full member of the community.

More importantly, the neophytes learnt gender roles. Before undergoing initiation, they underwent both practical and theoretical education where they were introduced to Gikuyu traditions, religion, folklore, mode of behavior, taboos and sex. The physical and psychological harassment imposed during circumcision enabled the initiated men to join the group of warriors. It also enabled them to hold various other important roles, responsibilities and privileges.

(b) Initiation of girls\ clitoridectomy

Every Gikuyu girl had to undergo clitoridectomy. Uninitiated girls were greatly despised and given names of contempt. Clitoridectomy involved the

trimming of the girl's clitoris. Like the boys, girls were supposed to show their courage and readiness to face womanhood. The rite accorded the girls respect, higher status, responsibilities and privileges associated with womanhood. It prepared the girl to withstand her forthcoming role of procreation. Before undergoing this operation, they were taught to be responsible mothers who could not bring shame to the tribe.

The clitoris was trimmed to reduce their sexual desires because girls were believed to be sexually weak. This belief is in line with Sanderson's observation that;

In male dominated societies there exists a widely held notion of the strong irresistible force of female sexuality. This notion may be held by both men and women. It suggests that a woman left alone without external coercion to guard her 'honour' will act impulsively for immediate gratification...This view may present a constant and worrying threat to which genital mutilation may be one of the many repressive responses (cited in Okemwa 1993:53).

Although it is argued that removal of the foreskin of the penis reduces sexual pleasure in men (Gennep 1977:73), it is women who are more disempowered sexually through the excision of the clitoris because the clitoris is the source of female sexual arousal. It was cut intentionally to remove excessive female desire that would lead women to hold male genitals during coitus, which was a taboo among the Agikuyu leading to divorce of the woman or her excommunication from the society if she broke it (see Wamue 1996:172). In this regard, many African feminist theologians have regarded this operation as 'Female Genital Mutilation' (FGM) (cf. Okemwa 1996, Dolphyne 1991).

Since initiation was the gateway to marriage, we shall now discuss marriage and its significance in the formation of gender identity.

2.7.2 Marriage

The most important purpose of marriage was not sexual enjoyment but procreation (Kenyatta, 1938:163). The more children a man had, the more prestige he had. Mothers were highly respected. Their title was honourable and sacred (ibid.:9). As White puts it, “the position of a woman in her family is more sacred than that of a king upon his throne” (cited in Okemwa 1993:17). Such a great emphasis on marriage and procreation as we shall see in this section accelerated polygamy and gave no room for barrenness.

The issues related to marriage, such as dowry, polygamy, barrenness, divorce had an impact upon the identity of a Gikuyu woman. It is to these that we shall now turn.

(a) Dowry (*ruracio*)

Dowry was very important in Gikuyu traditional society. It had to be paid or at least agreed upon before a girl was married. Only then could her husband be regarded as her legal owner and the children born regarded as his. The amount of dowry according to Gikuyu law was between thirty to eighty sheep or goats. Less than that would make the girl appear to be too cheap and valueless (Wagatu, oral interviews; 13\5\1999).

The purpose of *ruracio* as Rosemary Nthamburi (1987:104) rightly observes was “to replace her (the girl) at home and signified that she was a valuable person and above all, it added to the wealth of her father”. *Ruracio* helped cover for the expenses that the father incurred when bringing up his daughter (Cavicchi 1977:60). It was also a gift of appreciation to her parents for bringing her up.

At this stage it is worth analysing the consequences that dowry has on the identity and well being of a woman. It has serious negative consequences. First, it is through it that a wife becomes the ‘property’ of the husband and is treated as such. The language used in Gikuyu for marriage is *kugura mundu*

muka, meaning to 'buy' a wife. Such a language dehumanises the wife by turning her into property. Secondly, dowry can lead to forced marriages where the daughter is forced by parents to marry, not out of love and commitment but because the man is rich.

Finally, payment of dowry may cripple a newly married couple financially. Some informants stated that they had to borrow a large amount of money to cater for dowry expenses and the entire wedding preparations. Some women stated that they had to provide from their own resources, to cater for what their own parents demanded for bride price since their fiancées were not able to pay. Such a couple begins their new life with unnecessary debts.

Our view is that dowry destroys the purpose of marriage and should therefore be abolished. Rather, there should be organised celebrations and exchange of gifts between the two families to mark their new relationship. Should it be given under any circumstance, it should be given to the parents of both sides particularly as a token of appreciation for bringing up both the boy and the girl.

(b) Polygamy

Polygamy was part of life among the Agikuyu. A large family was considered necessary for a man's prestige and also for economic reasons, as a source of agricultural labour. Surprisingly, it is a woman who requested for a *muiru* (co-wife) and even suggested a suitable mate (Kenyatta 1938:176).

In order to manage a polygamous family, a man had his own hut (*thingira*) and each of the wives had her own private hut, land and some goats and sheep. Every woman was the immediate head of her household, but the first wife retained a higher status. For the sake of harmony and also to avoid jealousy (*wiru*), the husband was supposed to share his love with all the wives equally. He visited each wife at particular days for conjugal relations.

It was also the duty of the wives to entertain their husband's visitors (age-mates), through sexual intercourse which was regarded as part of hospitality (Kenyatta 1938:181, Lambert 1956:66, Muriuki 1974:119).

Therefore, polygamy indicated a life of togetherness and sharing. However, the field research revealed that it is only in theory that a husband is supposed to devote an equal amount of sexual and economic attention to all his wives. In practice however, many husbands give preference to the favoured wife (in most cases the latest and youngest). This arouses jealousy and strife among the co-wives to an extent that some of them are sent away.

Co-wives address one another as '*muiru*' (my partner in jealousy). This implies that more often than not a polygamous marriage is characterised by jealousy and competition for the husband's attention. This is also affirmed by the Gikuyu saying that *aka eri no ta nyungu igiri cia urogi* (two wives of the same husband are two pots of poison) meaning as Cagnolo (1933:289) observes; "they are causes of death rather than happiness". This life of rivalry, fear, tension and competition is also prominent among co-wives in the Old Testament. Nasimiyu Wasike (1992:109) correctly observes that where cases of polygamy are mentioned in the Old Testament¹, they are reported "in a form of apology and criticism rather than exaltation...".

(c) Barrenness

As we have seen, the main purpose of marriage was procreation rather than sexual gratification. It was through the children that the memory of the parents was retained in the present life, long after their death because of Gikuyu system of naming (Kenyatta, 1938). A childless person would be forgotten soon after death. How then did the society relate to a barren couple?

¹ See the story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21, Jacob and his wives (Genesis 29: 30-31). Though Jacob's wives were blood sisters, they could not avoid conflicts as co-wives.

According to Kenyatta (1938:184) cases of barrenness were highly scrutinised to find out who was to blame. However, judging from both oral and written sources, women carried a bigger share of blame more than men did (Karani, 12\7\1999, Wagatu, 13\5\ 1999, Nyawira, 20\7\1999, Njeri, 12\7\1999; oral interviews, Njuno 1983:31, Mbiti 1969:110, Mugo 1992: 6). The main reason why women were blamed almost exclusively was given in the oral interviews “*tutieciragia arume nimathataga*” (we did not suppose that men can be barren), (ibid.).

Barren women were therefore stigmatised; they were objects of scorn. Those interviewed shared their bitter experiences. Nyawira for instance cited how she was chased away by her husbands in two different marriages and given names of contempt such as *ndata nguru* (an old barren) (Nyawira, oral interviews; 20\7\1999). Njuno (1983:30) records similar experiences where one of his informants was regarded as *ngomothi* (a useless fruit that dries up and leaves no seeds behind). Contrary to this, where a man was discovered to be impotent, his impotence was not publicised. An age-mate was allowed to step in very secretly and raise children with the wife (Njeri, oral interviews; 12\ 7\ 1999).

Such negative attitudes to barren women have serious negative consequences on their identity because the society implies that a woman can only be a full human being if she fulfills her role of procreation without which she is reduced to nothing. Since this view is instilled as the ideal, most barren women are not able to accept themselves as ‘full human beings’. Another respondent confessed that as a result of such frustrations, she had to commit adultery to prove her husband (who had already disowned her) and the entire society wrong. She is now a mother of three.

A barren woman therefore had no dignity, she contributed nothing to the perpetuation of human life. Whether the fault was hers or not, as Mbiti

(1969:110) clearly states “her failure to bear children is worse than committing genocide: she has become the dead end of human life...”.

The Gikuyu attitude to barrenness concurs with that of the Akans, where barrenness is regarded as worse than divorce. Oduyoye (1995:69) states that “while divorce cannot destroy a city, barrenness in a woman of matrilineal heritage is an obvious disaster”.

Such attitudes are persistent even today among the Agikuyu where a childless woman is despised by some people. However, the attitude is changing in that some childless couples have accepted the situation gladly. Some have adopted children instead of marrying a second wife and others live without children regardless of what the society may think about them.

(d) Divorce

Divorce was very rare among the Agikuyu. Every effort was made to keep the couple in harmony. Kenyatta (1938:183) however lays down the acceptable grounds for divorce. A man would divorce his wife for barrenness, refusal to render conjugal rights, witchcraft, habitual theft, willful desertion and continual gross misconduct. The wife could divorce the husband on the same grounds and also for cruelty, ill treatment, drunkenness and impotence.

It is however worth noting that Kenyatta’s view is only theoretical especially in regard to the grounds for which the wife could divorce the husband. Divorce was always related to women’s domestic failure even when men were to blame. It reflected badly on her parents and her entire clan. A divorced woman was despised and regarded as a *gicokio* (something that is rejected and returned to the owner). For these reasons, more often than not, women opted to live under cruelty of their husbands than divorce them. No

wonder the Gikuyu word for a woman is *mutumia* meaning a person who bears in silence. This was part of socialisation in girlhood

2.8 An overview of the Effects of Gikuyu traditional institutions upon women's identity and status

So far we have done a detailed analysis of every traditional institution described in this chapter and given its effects on the identity of a Gikuyu woman. In this section therefore, we shall only briefly emphasise a few important points.

Our description and analysis of Gikuyu traditional institutions reveal that a Gikuyu woman was suppressed by cultural attitudes, beliefs practices and even language. This suppression was experienced in all the traditional institutions. In the political institution for instance, women had no authority. They were not members, let alone leaders of decision-making councils at all levels. They were denied leadership positions by the patriarchal social organisation which was characterised by male supremacy. The main idea behind this denial was that the culture did not allow women to lead men since the former were regarded as inferior in the society. Our study argues that women are human beings. They equally share in all qualities including leadership qualities because as Kabira and Nzioki (1993) argue, these qualities are not male qualities but human qualities.

We have seen that the rite of initiation was oppressive to a woman. The clitoris of a girl was trimmed to reduce her sexual pleasure. This has far reaching effects on the dignity of a woman because she is reduced to a sex object. For this reason, a women's congress in Accra in 1989 described the act as perpetuating a kind of slavery because it is aimed at preparing a woman's body to give greater pleasure to men while she is denied the same (Mbuy-Beya 1998:30). Reduction of sexual pleasure makes a woman a passive participant during coitus yet she is expected to be sexually active (cf.

Okemwa 1993:53). During the international women's day on 8th March 2000, FGM was described as "not only physically and psychologically damaging but also a violation of human rights" (*Daily Nation*, March 8, 2000:25).

Initiation reveals sexism further because initiation for boys did not have the same meaning as initiation for girls. While the former demonstrated their strength and wisdom to deal with public affairs, the latter was not accorded the same in spite of their perseverance during the operation. It was meant to prepare them solely for marriage and procreation.

In view of the above, clitoridectomy is unnecessary and harmful to the health of a woman. Since the education imparted seems to be the only meaningful part of the ceremony, it should be modified and instilled in her at puberty and teenage years without mutilation of any part of her body. Such modification should be aimed at preparing girls to develop their identity as Christian wives and mothers and to eradicate all forms of female subordination.

Gikuyu marriage implied that the wife was 'bought' by the husband through payment of bride price. She therefore became his property. Such an attitude could not enable the couple to develop a mutual relationship. Instead, it was a relationship of dominance and submission. This kind of a relationship reflects Okemwa's (1993:38) observation among the Abagusii where a good woman is described as one who "responds quickly to her husband's demands ...even when her husband coughs". This kind of relationship robbed the woman her dignity as a wife and reduced her to an inferior being. It has far reaching effects even today because some men still regard their wives as inferior objects, insisting that "the advice of a woman is unreliable" (Kariuki, oral interviews; 19\11\1999).

It was also the responsibility of the woman to make her marriage work. She bore all the blame in cases of divorce. Her condition reflects that of an Akan

woman who is expected to make marriage work (Oduyoye 1995:68). It can be well explained in a Jamaican proverb that “if you stumble upon a brawling couple, don’t make any hasty judgements, for it is only the husband who knows what the wife has done to him” (ibid.: 67). Our view is that both the husband and the wife have a duty to make their marriage work since marriage is a mutual relationship. Leaving the entire institution to a wife is sexism and does not challenge the husband to be responsible for his responsibilities in it. Worse still, the husband finds it easy to escape from his irresponsible behaviour, always making the wife a scapegoat. Since this traditional attitude to divorce is still persistent today, the church should deal with it as a sin and challenge each partner to make the marriage work.

The inferior status of a woman was also instilled through gender roles which defined a woman’s place in the society. Girls were only prepared to be homemakers. The identity of a woman was not defined in her own right as a human being or through her own qualities and achievements but through her status as a wife and mother. We therefore concur with the views of some anthropologists like Meillasoux that;

In spite of her irreplaceable role in reproduction, she (woman) never intervenes as a vector of social organisation. She disappears behind man: her father, brother or husband. This condition of women is not natural. It stems from changing historical circumstances, always linked to her reproduction function (cited in Diagne and Ossebi 1996:39).

The only permanent roles are the biological ones. Gender roles are socially constructed and they should be dismantled if they are oppressive to a particular category whether male or female. Therefore, as Oduyoye (1994:40) insists, women’s energy should be tapped fully by eliminating the ‘home’ syndrome.

2.9 Summary and Conclusion

We have so far gathered that in traditional Gikuyu society, women had some roles in social, religious, political and economic spheres. They for instance participated in important rites and ceremonies as leaders and as community members. We have found that the division of gender roles gave them some autonomy especially in agriculture. Whatever they grew and whatever they had in their huts like goats and sheep was their own property. We have also noted that some elderly women had supernatural religious powers, which accorded them much prestige. Others were leaders of women's councils and were also highly respected. With such status, women transcended 'the woman's place' in the society.

However, although women had some power, they had no authority. They had no legal rights to rule, neither were their views sought in all councils. Women's agricultural autonomy was also less significant because they neither had right to own land nor any say in its disposal.

We have found that the roles of women were structured by the patriarchal culture in a way that clearly defined their place and worth in the society. Male children were more valued than female children. The latter were treated as outsiders (*andu a nja*) and as personal property.

The traditional institutions therefore treated the woman as an inferior being and stereotyped her to accept this subordinate status as God ordained. Some of these cultural beliefs and attitudes have continued to shape the roles and status of women in social, economic, political and religious spheres and hence remain as a big obstacle to the development of the identity of a Gikuyu woman.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM AND MISSION CHRISTIANITY ON THE STATUS OF A GIKUYU WOMAN

3.1 Introduction

Having looked at the identity of the woman in the pre-colonial period, we shall now examine her status during colonialism and the missionary era. In this era, the identity of a Gikuyu woman was affected both positively and negatively. The pre-colonial social, political and economic way of life was destroyed and on the other hand, western civilizing activities like education and system of government set in motion the process of change to modernity.

In this chapter, we shall evaluate the economic and political status of women in colonial Kenya and the impact of missionary Christianity on the identity of Gikuyu women. Prior to that, we shall give a brief historical overview of the colonisation of Gikuyuland (Kenya Highlands) by the British and the establishment of Christianity there in.

3.2 Colonisation of Kenya Highlands

Colonisation preceded missionary activities in Gikuyuland. The first contact between East Africa and Europe was through commercial activities. Up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, official British presence in East Africa had been limited to indirect influence through the Sultan of Zanzibar (Sandgren 1976:33, Oliver 1964:2). Although Britain had appointed a consul to Zanzibar in 1841, European powers had not yet developed interest to conquer East Africa. There were at least 300 traders and missionaries in East Africa but their activities were mainly concentrated at the coast.

As early as the 1870s, William Mackinnon had proposed the necessity of a British trading company which if made a charter would take over

administrative functions on top of counteracting the growing German influence in East Africa. The charter was finally granted and the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) was formed in 1888. This was later to have serious consequences on the Agikuyu in Kenya Highlands.

The IBEAC established a series of posts along the route from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. By 1890, the company was using the northern route to reach Uganda. This route passed through the Southern parts of Gikuyuland. The company established a stopping station at Dagorreti in 1891 from which their caravans received food and porters.

The company then handed over its stations at the coast and the interior to the British foreign office and in 1895, the British government declared what was then British East Africa (Kenya) a protectorate. The British crown assumed governance.

When the "Kenya Uganda" railway, which was began in Mombasa in 1885 finally reached Lake Victoria in 1901, more European activities were opened in the interior. The government extended its governance towards North Eastern Gikuyuland. This land was most attractive because of its fertility and favourable climate as described earlier by the explorers such as Joseph Thompson (1885), Teleki (1887) and Alfred Tucker who for instance compared it to the garden of Eden (Sandgren 1976:41, Castro 1995:39-40).

The British colonial forced occupied Gikuyuland by punitive expeditions meaning that they imposed their authority only by violence. Africans were forced to supply food or land. Through military expeditions which included "the raiding of grain fields and the snatching by force of cattle and women" (Ochieng' 1985:88), an out post was founded in Fort Hall (Murang'a) in 1900 and Nyeri in 1902. Another military expedition invaded Gichugu, Ndia

and Mathira in 1904, killed about 1000 people and confiscated herds of cattle (Castro 1995:40).

In 1902, the Crown Land Ordinance was passed by the British law which declared all land as crown land. This meant that Africans would no longer have right over their own land. All the Agikuyu became tenants of the government (Sandgren 1989:33). The ordinance also forbade Europeans from selling land to non-Europeans. This therefore meant that the Agikuyu could not even reclaim the lost land by buying it back.

After the completion of the Uganda railway in 1902, Sir Charles Elliot the then governor in Kenya invited settlers to occupy Gikuyuland and the Rift Valley in the hope that the export of their produce would recover the building cost for the railway worth British pounds 5 1/2 million. The first settlers arrived in the same year while the Boers and other settlers from Britain came in 1906 (Rosberg and Nottingham 1966:18-19).

Thousands of the Agikuyu were evicted from their ancestral land and became squatters in their own land. Since the European farms required heavy unskilled labour, a communal labour law was enforced in 1908, which required all able-bodied men and women to participate in forced labour in coffee, tea and sisal plantations. Women's involvement in colonial economy had repercussions on their identity, as we shall now discuss.

3.3 Women and Colonial Economy

Coffee was introduced for the first time in Kenya in late nineteenth century. Men were immediately recruited as labourers. During the First World War, women and children were forced to work in European coffee farms to compensate male labour since men joined the army as porters.

Between 1918 and 1920, several of the laws that had been passed previously were amended. The Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 for instance was amended in 1920. This law gave chiefs and headmen power to recruit African labour for public works by force (Gachihi 1986:41). The District Commissioner (DC) ensured that more women and children were recruited by arresting the chiefs who did not enforce the regulation. The practice of female labour comes out clearly from a letter addressed to the colonial secretary by the senior DC of Kikuyu province in 1929. He stated,

The only districts of this province which furnish female labour to farms are Kiambu, Fort Hall (Murang'a) and South Nyeri (Kirinyaga). Most of this labour is recruited daily from the nearest Reserves and return home overnight (KNA LAB 27\2 female labour 1928-1944).

Some missionaries like W.J. Rampley of CMS Kabare and others were against the practice but the DC stated "...it is my business to administer the ordinances as I find them..."²

Women and girls agonised bitterly about forced labour imposed on them. They were exposed to beating and rape by male labourers. Besides picking coffee, they also pushed heavy leveling machines in the construction of roads. Worse still, both poll tax and hut tax were introduced for both men and women to force them to work in European plantations, industries, government offices and to migrate into cities. As early as 1913, Sir Percy Girouand had stated that taxation was "the only possible method of compelling the native... to seek work" (Sandgren 1989:35). Communal labour and payment of taxes were therefore compulsory. Failure to comply meant that one had to pay a fine equivalent to the labourer's gross income for one to three months. This further forced women to work in plantations as wage labourers.

² See correspondences between the DC and W. J. Rampley in 1929 in KNA (Kenya National Archives) LAB 27\2 Female labour 1928-1944

Other grievances were that the Native Registration Ordinance of 1915 was amended in 1920. This enforced the *Kipande* system where Africans were compelled to carry an identity passbook (*Kipande*) which contained records of employment and tax receipts. This was racial segregation because other races such as Europeans and Asians were not required to carry a passbook. Other disasters were increment of taxes from 12 to 16 shillings per head, while wages were reduced by 1/3 (Murray 1974:82, Temu1972, Gachihi 1986). By 1920s Africans had become peasants in their own land and their economy was drastically affected.

Avenues to forward grievances began to emerge through formation of various associations. By 1919, local chiefs formed a peaceful association called the Kikuyu Association to raise grievances on the issue of land that was given to the soldiers for compensation after the war. A radical group of ex-mission school students led by Harry Thuku formed the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) which later became the East African Association (EAA). The association demanded representation in the legislative council, abolition of forced labour, taxation, *kipande* system and alienation of land. Thuku forwarded a list of these grievances in June 1921 to the colonial secretary.

This association was highly supported by both men and women. The association was later banned and Thuku was arrested on 15th March 1922 through the help of the African chiefs and the cooperation of A.W. MacGregor of CMS Weithaga (Murray 1974:85-86, Rosberg and Nottingham 1966:47). African men and women organised themselves to demand his release by force and many were killed. One of them was a Gikuyu woman called Mary Nyanjiru who led the demonstrations demanding Thuku's release. She was shot dead and another 150 more women were shot in this 1922 massacre (Njeri, oral interviews; 12\7\1999).

An evaluation of the above events clearly reveals that colonial economy and its ordinances, which were aimed at enforcing white supremacy over Africans, had serious consequences on the identity of a Gikuyu woman. First of all, the taking away of Gikuyuland had far reaching effects on the economy of the Agikuyu and the identity of women. It meant reduction of arable land, which led to acute food shortages. This badly reduced the economic autonomy of Gikuyu women.

Further still, recruitment of men in the war meant that they could no longer perform their traditional duties especially in Agriculture. This left women with the whole load of heading and managing households, yet this did not translate into higher status for them. They only remained managers and not owners. The enforcement of the communal labour law in 1908 and wage working meant abandonment of traditional law of domestic production. This reduced the traditional economic autonomy that women had.

However, on the other hand, women's involvement as wage labourers may have been a preparation in disguise for them to serve outside the home as wage workers after independence. Their protest against forced labour and oppressive laws through the EAA also prepared them to enter into the political arena during the struggle for independence as we shall now see.

3.4 Women and political involvement in colonial Kenya

3.4.1 The beginnings of Mau Mau rebellion

We have already seen how the Agikuyu organised themselves to channel their grievances through such associations as the EAA and others. The banning of the EAA in 1922 strengthened them to be more politically aggressive. The activities of the EAA were taken over by the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), a more organised political association.

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore in great details either the events leading to the Mau Mau rebellion or the events that took place at the time of the revolt. Our main interest is to explore women's involvement in the revolt and its impact on their identity. However, we can briefly mention that by 1940s, political parties such as EAA and KCA had been suppressed but none of the grievances they had raised had been redressed. On 1st October 1944, the Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed with Kenyatta as its first president (Bogonko 1980:34). This party took the grievances of KCA further (ibid.:39). More pressure groups arose within the African opposition ranging from religious movements, trade unions to an underground movement called Mau Mau. All these were linked in purpose in that they were against British administration.

The exact origin and meaning of Mau Mau³ is not clearly known, but the term refers to the events that took place between late 1940s and 1963. The colonial government referred to these events as emergency or simply a revolt. It was started by Kenyan peasants who held secret meetings where they took oaths to bind them together. They aimed at effecting reform in Kenya by force since constitutional means had failed. Mau Mau was born out of frustrations caused by racial discrimination in economic, political, social and cultural conditions, which had continued to deteriorate. Their aim was to fight for full independence under African leadership and also for the return of all stolen land. Various other ethnic groups in Kenya such as the Kamba, Masai, Nandi and Kipsigis had lost large tracts of land. However, the Agikuyu including Embu and Meru protested more strongly because they were farmers and had lost most of their best farming land.

³ Quoting from J. M. Kariuki, Bogonko (1980:70) indicates that the words are an anagram of 'uma uma' (Gikuyu words for 'out out'). They were meant to alert Mau Mau oath takers when the police were approaching). He also cites an additional meaning of the words as stated by Barnett D. C. and Njama that they meant 'Mzungu Arudi Uingereza, Mwafrika Apate Uhuru', meaning, 'Let the European return to England and the African obtain freedom (ibid.:70).

Each of the three Gikuyu districts; Kiambu' Murang'a and Nyeri as well as Embu and Meru formed an executive committee responsible for co-ordination of the activities of Mau Mau at district level. All these were linked to the central Mau Mau committee in Nairobi. Other committees coordinated the affairs of Mau Mau at village and ridge levels. It was at this level where women activists were actively involved.

A state of emergency was declared in October 1952 when Kenyatta⁴ and other African leaders were arrested. Freedom fighters hid in Mt. Kenya and Aberdare forests where they were being sought by colonial administrators to be killed. During this period there was a series of orders from the government aimed at controlling people through curfew, travel restrictions, individual registration and many others (O'Baar 1985:5). Let us now see how women were involved in politics of protests in the struggle for independence.

3.4.2 Women as political activists

The grievances that led to formation of the Kikuyu Association, YKA, EAA and then KCA prepared women gradually for a deeper involvement in politics of protest up to 1963 when Kenya gained National Independence. They joined these nationalist associations before and during the KCA and continued to the Mau Mau revolt period. They were fighting for improvement of their economic status, access to the political process, better quality education and to regain alienated land. The songs of protest, which they sung especially after the banning of EAA acted as a precursor of the songs, used in African nationalistic politics. The songs were called

⁴ Kenyatta was implicated in management of Mau Mau although some historians think he was neither a member nor a leader. However KAU was identified with Mau Mau because both had the same aims but used different means of achieving them (Bogonko 1980:81).

*mithirigu*⁵. They proved to be more powerful weapons of political expression and mobilization.

Therefore when the Mau Mau revolt started in late 1940s women played a big role in its formation and spread. They were active participants in administering oaths, which led to their imprisonment by the British under the emergency orders of October 1952. Presley (1992:128) cites Rebecca Njeri, a Gikuyu woman as one of those imprisoned. The district annual report described her as “ex-woman leader of Mau Mau, close associate of Kinyatta (sic) victolic tongue’... stirring up all the hate she can”.

Besides their involvement in oathing ceremonies, women were also involved in the army. Some of them held senior positions in the military and lived in the forest (Mwaura 2000:83). They served as soldiers in the Mau Mau fighting forces. One such woman is Elizabeth Gachika who had this to say; “We were doing just like men. We could shoot and so forth...I shot many (Europeans)...I went with the men on raids...We were the ones who fought for freedom... “(ibid.:126). Presley (ibid.:136-150) further indicates that women were taken to detention camps. At the end of the emergency in 1956, out of 27841 detainees, 3102 were women.

Other important involvements of women were: acting as spies and couriers, hiding firearms and carrying messages from villages to the detention camps. They were also entirely involved in feeding their families as well as feeding the fighters in the forest (see Mwaura 2000:83). Women leaders in the villages organised for such food provisions. Such women leaders were chosen on account of the number of oaths that one had taken because the

⁵ ‘Mithirigu’ were songs of protest against the oppressors such as colonialists, settlers, missionaries and government appointed chiefs. They were sung by shaking and patting the buttocks as a traditional way of cursing the oppressor. They date from late 1920s (Sandgren 1976:245-266, Lambert 1956:99).

more oaths one took, the more loyal and committed to the movement, one was considered to be (Gachihi 1986:139).

Besides these involvements, women in the villages had very difficult experiences. Likimani (1985: 60), records their involvement in communal labour of road construction from 7.00 AM to 5.00 PM every day. This left them with only an hour before the curfew that started at 6.00 PM. This was the only free time for a woman to fetch water, firewood, gather some food to cook and also to do some work on her piece of land.

Likimani described communal labour as “deadly slavery”. Babies suffered Kwashiorkor, pregnant women were underfed, overworked and in the process many suffered miscarriages. Women were also harassed, intimidated and raped by *askaris* (home guards) and those who resisted rapes were killed (Muriuki 1974:144). The guards also stole crops from the gardens, which was a big blow to women since it affected food security at the household level.

Therefore, colonialism was a period of great torture in the life of a Gikuyu woman. With land grabbing by the Europeans, they lost their traditional economic autonomy. They were overburdened by communal labour, housework and reproduction. They were also harassed sexually, an act that was contrary to the traditional norms. However, her involvement in the wage labour and politics of protest enabled her to participate in public life.

Having discussed on the identity of a Gikuyu woman in the colonial period, we shall now turn to western mission Christianity and assess its impact on the same. This will be a stepping stone for the next chapter.

3.5 Establishment of Christianity among the Agikuyu and its impact on the status of women

In this section we shall discuss the planting of Christianity in the Kenya Highlands. We shall then turn to missionary methods of evangelism and assess how western missionary Christianity, theology and education impacted on the identity of a Gikuyu woman. Since we have dealt with colonialism and Mission Christianity in the same chapter, we shall also explain how the two movements became intertwined in Kenyan history.

3.5.1 Missionary occupation of Kenya highlands

Missionary occupation of East Africa can be divided into three phases. The first phase took place in the first four centuries AD when Christianity was concentrated in Ethiopia and Egypt. It however did not spread anywhere else until the 15th century, which marks the second phase. At this period, Christianity was introduced at the East African coast by the Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries between 1498- 1542. However, due to Muslim domination at the coast, Christianity did not take root until the 3rd phase in the 19th century that marked the European era of exploration, colonialism and the dawn of mission. This is the phase that we shall deal with in this section.

During this phase, explorers were mainly interested in Buganda and its position as the source of the river Nile. Travelers to Buganda were mainly in four groups: Arabs, traders, missionaries and emissaries of European governments. The only missionaries who served in East Africa until 1874 were the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The first was Johann Krapf, a German Lutheran pastor, who arrived in Mombasa in 1844 in his endeavour to reach the Galla from a south eastern base in Mombasa. He was then joined by Rebman in 1846 and Erhardt in 1849. Apart from their achievements in learning the local languages and translating the whole of the New Testament into Kiswahili; by the time Krapf returned to Britain in 1853 and Rebman retired in 1875, they had made only one convert (CPK 1994:9).

More effective missionary work in the interior began with the partition of Africa and the building of the Kenya Uganda Railway.

Missionary work in East Africa was however given impetus by David Livingstone who, appalled by the evils of the slave trade appealed to the British to open Africa to commerce and Christianity, which he was convinced would eradicate slave trade (Oliver 1966:7).

In following the recommendation of the Berlin Conference (1884) in the partition of Africa, in 1894 Britain took full control of Uganda protectorate, comprising of present day Uganda and the whole of Western Kenya, including the Rift Valley up to Naivasha. In the following year, she took control of the East African protectorate (now Kenya). Boundaries were changed to the present state in 1902.

This partition brought a change in mission in that missionary societies followed their national flag mainly for protection purposes. The granting of the Royal Charter to the IBEA Company in 1888 for instance expanded the work of Protestants in East Africa. Sir William Mackinnon who was the director of the company encouraged the Protestant missionaries to extend their mission work into the interior where protection would be more ensured.

Between 1900 and 1910, mission stations were established across the Highlands. Rev. Thomas Watson for instance, moved from Kibwezi to Gikuyuland in 1898 and established a mission that was taken over by the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM). In 1900, the Africa Inland Mission reached Kijabe from Kibwezi in 1901 and in the same year, the United Methodist Mission (UMM) reached Meru. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) which is our main focus here, reached Kabete in 1901.

The work of the Anglican church had started in Uganda in 1877 (Oliver 1966:41). With the continued growth of missionary work, the new diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa was inaugurated which comprised of present day Uganda, Kenya and Central Tanganyika. Its first bishop was James Hannington. This diocese was split into two in 1899, giving way to the diocese of Mombasa and Uganda. Mombasa diocese consisted of what was then British East Africa excluding the Western part of present day Kenya which was then in Uganda and Central Tanganyika (CPK 1994:18). Its first bishop was George Peel while Alfred Tucker remained the bishop of Uganda.

Determined to extend services into the highlands following the British occupation of the area, the CMS established mission stations in places such as Kabete (1901), Weithaga (1903), Kaloleni (1904), Embu (1910) and several others (Temu 1972:91-92). The two stations that were established in our area of research were founded at Kabare (Gichugu division) in 1910 by Rev. Canon A.W. Crawford and Mutiira (Ndia division) in 1912 by Rev. Laight. Mission work in the Kenya highlands continued to grow under white missionaries and 1955 saw the consecration of the first two Kenyan bishops. These were bishops Obadiah Kariuki and Festo Olang'. This consecration and later enthronement marked the real beginning of church growth characterised by numerical growth that led to splitting of dioceses.

In 1961, the diocese of Mombasa was split into three dioceses; Maseno, Nakuru and Mt Kenya⁶. Bishop Kariuki became the first bishop of the diocese of Mt. Kenya. His diocese stretched from Ngong' to the border of Kenya and Ethiopia. In 1975, the diocese of Mt. Kenya East was formed from the diocese of Mt Kenya. It was comprised of Kirinyaga, Embu, Meru, Isiolo, Marsabit up to Wajir and Moyale. Its headquarters was in Embu and

⁶ The details of subdivision of Anglican dioceses in Kenya are given in CPK 1994: 129. In this section we shall only mention the splitting of the dioceses which have a bearing on the diocese of Kirinyaga beginning from Mt Kenya diocese.

its first and only Bishop was Bishop Gitari, the current Archbishop of ACK. This diocese was split in 1990 to give way to Kirinyaga and Embu dioceses. The then Kirinyaga diocese comprised Kirinyaga, Meru, Isiolo and Marsabit districts and were under the same bishop. The diocese was further split in 1997 to form the diocese of Meru and the current diocese of Kirinyaga which comprises Kirinyaga, Isiolo, Marsabit and Moyale districts. It has continued to grow under the current bishop, Daniel Munene Ngoru. It has 5 archdeaconries, 22 deaneries, and 95 parishes (Diocesan staff establishment, September 1999).

3.5.2 The relationship between Mission Church and the State

As early as 1849 when David Livingstone, a missionary and an explorer toured Africa, he hated the evils of the slave trade and recommended Christianity, commerce and civilization as a better alternative. This was regarded as the 3 'Cs' formula. Later missionaries in Africa saw themselves as agents of this formula. Bishop Alfred Tucker of the CMS for instance pressed the British government to intervene in Buganda to establish British law and order. Although the initial motive of this formula was not evil,⁷ it had political connotations which led to collaboration between the missionaries and the colonial government.

By 1890s, the CMS and the UMM (United Methodist Mission) often acted as agents of the government administration. They even collected taxes for the government. To Charles Elliot the then commissioner for East African protectorate, opening a new mission station meant extension of European influence (Temu 1972:90-93). The missionaries were also praised by the colonial government for being agents of civilization.

⁷ They aimed at intensifying the anti-slavery measures throughout East Africa, bring greater opportunity for economic development, peace and constitutional rule to enable them preach the gospel in a peaceful environment (Anderson 1984:207).

For Protestant missions in Kenya, agriculture and industry was a means of evangelising Africans. They therefore acquired large tracts of land where they grew commercial crops. When the government called the church to contribute to the treasury, Bishop Peel of CMS Mombasa responded by appealing to the industrial Aid Mission Society in England to begin industries in East Africa.

Collaboration between the two institutions especially where the missionaries were given African land, made Africans to regard missionaries as government agents of oppression. This attitude led to a Gikuyu saying that “*gutiri muthungu kana mubia*” (there is no difference between a white settler and a missionary). The other popular saying among Africans was that the missionaries gave Africans the Bible and asked them to close their eyes for prayer. After the prayer, the missionary had taken the land and Africans were left holding the Bible.

However, sometimes the missionaries played the role of protesters. They for instance protested against the recruitment of women and children in colonial labour. But the evils of collaboration far much outweighed acts of mercy that many Africans did not notice the latter. Some rejected mission Christianity particularly when the missionaries as agents of civilization, condemned African traditional practices.

Having given a brief historical description of occupation of the Kenya Highlands by the CMS missionaries, we shall now evaluate the impact of missionary Christianity and theology on the identity of a Gikuyu woman.

3.5.3 The impact of missionary Christianity and Theology on the status of women

Anglican mission Christianity derived its theology from Church traditions, born by patriarchy, which had male dominated hierarchies. Theology

concerning women in the history of Christianity can be traced from the writings of the early Church Fathers, most of who regarded women as inferior to men (see chapter 5). During the reformation period, the reformers reformed the church but overlooked the reformation of women from this theology. Luther himself who was a protesting monk, theologian and reformer claimed that women were “fit only to go to church, to work in kitchens and to bear children” (cited in Oduyoye 1995:5). Such an attitude would not enable women to rise above the culturally defined roles and responsibilities.

The Church of England embraced such misleading theology coupled with some biblical passages like I Timothy 2:8-14, 1Cor.11:2-16, 14:33-36, which forbid women from speaking in public. Heeny observes that in 1880’s no woman in England was allowed to speak in council meetings, “their contribution to the discussions were expressed through male proxies” (cited in M’Passou 1992:37).

Such theology that was shaped by the Victorian cultural milieu was the one introduced to the Agikuyu. It had no room for African women in its male dominated ministerial structure. This meant that the traditional religious roles of women as healers, mediums, diviners, prophetesses and counselors were ignored.

Women were introduced to stereotyped supportive and nurturing roles such as cleaning and decorating the church, teaching catechism to children, teaching Sunday school, catering and being good wives and mothers. Such were the ‘Western values’ that were equated with ‘modernisation’ and ‘civilization’. Such roles only made women dependents, thus denying them some of the freedom in the economic sphere, which they possessed in the traditional society.

This kind of theology was however challenged by the East African Revival, which arose in 1926. It was Pentecostal in nature and stressed use of the spiritual gifts. It therefore opened avenues for use of gifts such as preaching even to women who as stated above had been mere spectators in mission churches.

3.5.4 The impact of Missionary Education on the status of women

The missionaries had a variety of methods of evangelism. They endeavoured to minister both to physical and spiritual needs. Therefore along with the Word of God, they sometimes fed and clothed the hungry and established health centres and schools.

Education was however the major tool for evangelism. Schools served as centres for teaching catechism. Christians were also taught the art of reading and writing. No wonder Christians were called *athomi* (readers). Men who received such instructions and were baptised became catechists, evangelists and leaders of the church in their localities. Examples of such Christians in Kabare were Samuel Mukuba (the late father of Archbishop David Gitari) in Ngiriambu, Ismael Nduki (Kiamiciri), Wilson Njiru (Mugumo) and others (Cole 1970:55). However, although several women are mentioned as having been baptised with their husbands there is no indication that they either became catechists, evangelists or leaders of their churches. Missionary theology kept them from leadership positions.

Education required the converts to detach themselves from the community. Although Africans did not agree with all that was taught, they had to receive it in order to find employment. Many also wanted to discover the art of reading and writing hence many lukewarm Christians were produced who continued to practice their traditional way of life. Protestant missions also laid great emphasis on learning to read for the purpose of enabling Christians to read the Bible.

The curriculum used ensured that the level of African education was far below that of Europeans, Asians and Arabs (Kanogo 1987:78-79). It was only aimed at preparing them for agricultural and industrial activities. Many educated Africans served as clerks and farm overseers in the colonial period (ibid. :79).

Furthermore, the curriculum was gender biased. Both the missionaries and colonial administrators were convinced that women would become wives but not future leaders. Therefore women were not prepared for civic and religious domains. A CMS mission conference held in 1942 on 'women's and girl's work' for instance recommended that;

Education should have as its goal the training of girls themselves for home- making...girls' teachers are best employed in teaching in the kindergarten and in teaching girls' subjects throughout the rest of the school (KNA Mss \ 61\ 567 Women and girl's education 1943).

Their curriculum was informal while that of men was formal. Women's curriculum included instructions in domestic arts such as sewing, knitting, childcare and hygiene. What was taught had to find its place in the new Christian home (CMS report, ibid.) Some instructions were also given on medical work and agriculture. They were prepared to be good wives of their Christian brothers whom they were encouraged to marry.

On the other hand, boys' curriculum covered reading in Gikuyu and Kiswahili language, dictation in Gikuyu, English and Kiswahili writing, arithmetic, nature study, geography, colloquial English reading, history, grammar and agriculture or manual training (Presley 1992:100-101, KNA Mss \61\ 341 CMS 1939-1940).

Women's curriculum therefore concurred with that of the traditional society which prepared them only for informal power and influence as opposed to

men who held formal authority. As a result, only very few women indeed acquired high levels of education. Furthermore Gikuyu society did not encourage female education in the early years of missionary period as it was not considered necessary for marriage (Njeri, 12\7\1999, Njagi, 31\11\1999, Njanja, 31\11\ 1999; oral interviews).

Gradually, some Africans who wanted to carry out their traditional practices and to offer quality education rejected the Eurocentric curriculum. Women activists also began to fight for equal type of education for both boys and girls. All these controversies led to the beginning of independent schools. We shall now briefly look at Gikuyu independent schools, assessing the female circumcision controversy in particular which had a bearing on the beginning of these schools, and its impact on the identity of Gikuyu women.

3.5.5 Female Circumcision controversy and the establishment of Gikuyu independent schools

The aim of the missionaries and colonialists was to 'civilise' Africans. To embrace Christianity meant to embrace Western culture and abandon African culture. Several Agikuyu were not prepared to abandon some of their customs. This led to serious conflicts as early as 1912. Some of the areas of conflict between the Agikuyu and the Europeans were:

- (a) polygamy –missionaries asked polygamists to send away all their wives except one. The Agikuyu interpreted such an act as inhuman because it did not cater for these other wives and their children. Missionaries did not realise that they were committing a more serious sin by advocating divorce.
- (b) Bride price –missionaries regarded it as tantamount to selling of a girl. The Agikuyu claimed that without it, marriage was no more than concubinage.
- (c) Widowhood -Missionaries held that a widow was free to remarry. For the Agikuyu, this would deny the children the right

to inherit their father's property and to belong to their paternal home.

(d) The most controversial was the female circumcision controversy, which occurred in late 1920s. The missionaries led by Dr. John Arthur of CSM at Thogoto, started the anti-circumcision campaign. They argued that "circumcision scarred the birth canal which caused problems during child birth resulting in extreme and unnecessary pain" (Presley 1992:91). They condemned even the educational values attached to the rite. Converts were asked to choose between female circumcision and excommunication from the church (*ibid.*: 93).

Many Africans resisted, refusing to abandon their cultural practices. Some women regarded clitoridectomy as their tribal identity hence an indispensable rite of passage. Dr. Arthur therefore called upon all the school instructors to sign a declaration in favour of the position of the missionaries. To his surprise, the instructors failed to comply and 80% of the pupils withdrew from CMS and CSM schools. The AIM (Africa Inland Mission) lost even more.

This controversy led to the establishment of independent schools and new churches⁸. There were two types of these schools: Kikuyu Karing'a Independent schools Association (KKISA) and the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA). The Karing'a advocated purity and preservation of Gikuyu cultural values and wanted nothing at all to do with the missionaries or the government. The latter wanted education and assistance from the government but wished to practice Christianity devoid of its Western trappings. In 1929, KCA solicited funds to sponsor them.

⁸ By 1933, two new breakaway churches had been formed. These were Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa, which was associated with the KISA and the African Orthodox Church which was associated with KKISA

Women activists began to fight for equal type of education for both boys and girls. In 1936 Without any support from the government, they founded a girls' wing at the Githunguri independent school and built a 'kiriri' (Girls' dormitory). This act contributed to transformation of the status of women because they participated fully in planning, designing and administering the new school(s).

3.6 Effects of Colonialism and Mission Christianity on the identity of a Gikuyu woman

The involvement of women in colonial Kenya was a combination of familial, ethnic and national loyalties. This involvement had both destructive and regenerative effects on the identity of Gikuyu women. They lost their traditional economic status because land was grabbed by the settlers and the little that was in their hands was left unattended since men, women and children became deeply involved in developing the economic status of the Europeans, communal labour and also in nationalistic organisation. Women suffered physical, psychological, emotional and sexual torture, not to mention that they were not relieved of their traditional roles of production and reproduction. Some left the rural areas and went to towns where they became prostitutes.

However, the colonial period marks a major transformation of the traditional status of a Gikuyu woman. Her involvement as a wage labourer prepared her to take a career after independence and rise beyond 'her place' in the society. Her active involvement in the nationalistic organisation also enabled her to break through the traditional political world of men.

It is however regrettable that whatever political empowerment women gained during the struggle, they lost at independence. According to Mwaura (1998:31); "although women were involved in the struggle against colonialism, political independence has not translated into women's political

empowerment". She observes that between 1963 and 1969, there was no woman Member of Parliament (MP). The first woman MP was elected in 1969 elections alongside eleven men. Women's representation only increased slightly between 1974-1979 but generally speaking women have been marginalised in the political arena at national level (ibid.:31).

The effects of mission Christianity as well, had both positive and negative effects on the identity of a Gikuyu woman. Positively, women received missionary education which enabled them to acquire skills in reading and writing, home science, agriculture and others. However, these skills did not accord them high status either in the church or in the society because they were of low quality. Such skills only prepared them to be home-makers, to teach in kindergarten and also to teach girl's subjects in mission schools.

The female circumcision controversy paved a way for girls to receive equal type of education with boys after independence and also led women such as Margaret Kenyatta to hold positions of teaching in these schools. However this was just an attempt. It did not eradicate the prevailing cultural attitudes and practice towards female education and empowerment. Furthermore, these schools were closed during the emergency in Gikuyuland and worse still, no Gikuyu male or female could get formal employment unless they collaborated with the colonial government.

The other positive effect was that missionary devaluation of some African customs enhanced the dignity of women. Mutilation of female genitals for instance is almost unheard of today in Kirinyaga diocese especially among Christians. Polygamy is also unheard of especially among young Christian families. It is however regrettable that serial and simultaneous polygamy and concubinage is in existence even among some Christians.

The negative effects were that women were not prepared for church leadership. They were confined to stereotyped roles that characterised European women in the 19th century. In the church, they were given feminine services of cleaning and decorating the church. In fact as late as 1959 one of the issues that came out clearly from a paper presented by bishop Obadiah Kariuki was that women lacked opportunity “to express responsibility in the life of the church”⁹. These roles have defined the status of women in the church for a long time, hence leaving their potential untapped as we shall see in the next chapter. Women’s participation in various lay ministries in the church did not originate with the missionaries but rather with the East African Revival Movement, which challenged all Christians to use their spiritual gifts including those of women.

Our findings in this chapter therefore concur with Oduyoye’s (1995:175) observation that it is only a myth that western churches have brought liberation to an African woman.

3.7 Summary and Conclusion

Colonialism and the missionary had a double effect on the status of women. Through the Europeans’ effort to suppress African culture in favour of Western civilization and modernity, the pre-colonial social, economic and religious status of women were torn apart. On the other hand, through difficulties and frustrations in the era of Western civilization and modernity, women themselves transformed their roles significantly when they became actively involved in politics of protest from 1920s up to the Mau Mau period. This involvement paved a way for positions in the political arena. Through their struggle for an equal type of education women have found their way to various other secular decision-making positions in Kenya although as we

⁹ Cited in “Summary of Proceedings of Consultation on Christian Home and Family Life”, held in Nairobi on 15th June 1956 (KNA\ Mss\61\525).

shall see later, inequality between men and women is still persistent in various sectors.

In the next chapter we shall evaluate the impact of the encounter between the church and Gikuyu culture on the identity of women in post colonial Kenya in Kirinyaga diocese.

CHAPTER 4

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ACK DIOCESE OF KIRINYAGA

4.1 Introduction

In chapter two, we observed that women had no legal right to rule and whatever autonomy they had was by male consent. In chapter three, we have seen that missionary Christianity did not uplift the traditional status of women. This was firstly because they were ignorant of the traditional religious roles of women. Secondly, it was because of patriarchal background of Victorian culture that influenced Mission Christianity and theology. However, the status of women in Kenya has improved gradually over the years since independence. Women are holding high positions of leadership and management. They have also participated actively in the life of the church as laity as well as ordained ministers. Nevertheless they are still marginalised in economic, political and religious spheres.

The aim of this chapter is to use the research findings to assess whether the church that challenges all forms of injustices and oppression and advocates for love, justice and abundance of life has made an impact on the prevailing theology and culture in order to accord the Gikuyu woman a Christian identity. We shall therefore look at the role and status of women in the church, assessing whether they have equal opportunities in decision-making positions and equal access to control of resources with men.

The Anglican church in Kirinyaga diocese has taken a major step to develop the identity of Christian women. The first bishop of the diocese, David M. Gitari who is currently the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Kenya, took lead in conscientizing both the church and the society through his sermons and speeches, that women continued to outnumber men worshippers in a ratio of 1:2, but their participation in all levels of the church hierarchy was far less. In his sermon preached during a Mothers' Union (MU) rally on

10th November 1985 for instance, he urged both the church and the society to “encourage women to participate in the decision –making process” owing to the fact that “women far exceed men in church attendance, but men dominate the church committees and parish councils” (cited in CPK Diocese of MT. Kenya East Newsletter 1985:12).

He appealed for ordination of women in several synods. In his charge during the diocesan synod held in December 1983 for instance he said,

...We have sometimes doubted the ability of women to serve the church. I hope this synod will this time support the motion on ordination of women. The failure of one or two (women) must not be used as a ground for objection for men are not exempted from failure either...I appeal to you as socially developing people of God to allow women to become full participants in the ministry of the church (CPK diocese of Mt Kenya East, Ordinary Session of diocesan synod 1983:17, cf. 1988:7, CPK diocese of Mt Kenya East Newsletter 1985).

He also called upon women to utilise their gifts effectively as lay people. As a result, there are many women in several positions of decision making in the diocese such as the ordained ministry, Church Army sisters, Lay Readers, Mothers Union and various other offices in the church organisation. We shall discuss each of these in turn.

4.2 Women in the ordained ministry

4.2.1 History of ordination in the Diocese

Discussions about ordination of women began taking place in the House of Bishops in Kenya in 1980 following the recommendation of Lambeth Conference of 1978 that the member churches could consider ordaining them (Lambeth Conference 1978:44-45 resolution No. 20). Although in 1980 the

dioceses agreed in principle that women could be ordained, each diocese was to be autonomous in taking up the issue.

Since 1979, with the initiative of bishop Gitari, women have been trained in theological colleges alongside men (CPK diocese of Mt Kenya East Synod 1983:17, min. 32.4). After three years of theological training at certificate level, women were licensed to be Lay Readers¹⁰ while their male colleagues entered the Holy Order by being made deacons. After one year of probation, women were commissioned as deaconesses while men were ordained to priesthood. This meant that women remained lay people not because of under-training but because they were female. They were posted in parishes to serve under their male colleagues, as their pastoral assistants. Sometimes they served under their male juniors.

Although the clergy and the deaconesses had received equal training, some clergymen did not treat the deaconesses as colleagues and co-workers but they saw them as subordinates. It was not unusual for instance for a deaconess to be asked to prepare tea or lunch during church council meetings. This was exploitation because she was denied her right to participate in the meeting and was relegated to the domestic domain.

Bishop Gitari raised the issue of women ordination in four consecutive Diocesan Synods; 1979,1981,1983 and 1986. The motion lost in the first three because majority of the male clergy opposed it (Resolution 51/83). The motion was finally passed in 1986 (Resolution 56 /86).

After the creation of the diocese of Kirinyaga in 1990, the ordination debate continued in the new diocese. Through much opposition and threats especially from two members of the Senior Clergy, the bishop succeeded in ordaining the first three women in 1992. Since then twenty nine more have

¹⁰ The role of a Lay Reader will be mentioned later in the chapter

been ordained in the diocese. The ordination of women has also gradually been accepted by several other Anglican dioceses in Kenya except for a few like the diocese of Mt Kenya West and the diocese of Mombasa. We shall now look at the debates that were carried out in the diocesan synods about the ordination of women.

4.2.2 Debates on women's ordination

The minutes of the four synods mentioned above and also field research reveal that there were hot debates against ordination of women. Arguments were based on historical, Biblical, cultural and generic factors. These arguments were raised by both men and women.

Basing arguments on the trend of the missionaries as a historical factor, some people held that the CMS only trained and ordained men but not women. Such an argument was based on ignorance of the fact that the church in Africa inherited an already gender biased tradition as mentioned in chapter three.

The biblical and theological arguments raised were that women were not part of the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament, Jesus chose only male disciples and that Pauline theology does not allow women to speak in the church. Such arguments were rejected in favour of the fact that the Bible should be taken in its social-cultural context through proper biblical hermeneutics¹¹ (Gitari, oral interviews; 1\11\1999).

Other arguments raised were cultural, based on the fact that women were never leaders in the traditional society. Those who were involved in religious affairs had to be of past child bearing age. Some members of the synod therefore held that deaconesses should be ordained to diaconate ten

¹¹ We shall deal in greater detail with such passages that have been used to marginalise women chapter five

years after completing their ordination training, others recommended that only married women should be ordained while others still claimed that ordained women should remain single (CPK diocese of Mt Kenya East, fifth ordinary session of the Synod 1983:38). In a later synod, some members argued that ordaining women would empower them to lead even men, which was against Gikuyu culture. This is reflected in min.18\86 which states; “Lay Readers are refusing because ordination of women will mean serving under women” (min. 18\86 18.5 diocesan synod 1986). It is interesting that such conservatives had no problem with women leaders in other fields.

It was also argued that once ordained, women would cease to be traditional wives and mothers. Such arguments were also rejected as mere prejudices born by patriarchy. Other arguments raised concerned the issue of uncleanness during menstruation and after childbirth. The bishop argued that women should not be stigmatised because of their biological make-up that is beyond their control. After all, “both men and women come from the same blood” (Gitari, oral interviews; 1\11\ 1999).

The 1986 diocesan synod where the motion was finally carried with a majority of 131 votes against 78, observed that the reasons that were strongly raised against women’s ordination were more cultural than theological. It was therefore argued in the Synod that, “...the time of preserving some of our discriminative aspects of our culture is now gone in our churches...” (min. 18\86 18.3).

4.2.3 Effects of ordination of women on decision making in the Church

The above arguments raised against ordination of women reveal that there is something in ordination that women were being kept from. They were being kept from high leadership positions in the church and all other privileges that are associated with ordination. By this rite, individuals are given authority to administer sacraments, which in the Anglican Church are baptism and

Eucharist. They also conduct church weddings and perform other pastoral and administrative duties. We shall now look at the status of the ordained women in the church and their implication on women's decision making.

(a) Status of ordained women in the Church

According to the diocesan staff establishment document of September 1999, there are twenty-nine ordained women in the diocese. This is the leading diocese in the Anglican Church of Kenya, followed by diocese of Embu with only ten ordained women. All the ordained women in Kirinyaga have been distributed in various positions as shown below. They are all well trained and hold at least a diploma in theology.

Table 2

Positions held by ordained women clergy in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga

Position	Number of women
Vicars in Charge	17
Heads of departments	3
Students	4
Secondment	5
Total	29

Source Diocesan Staff establishment September 1999

Vicar in- charge - this is a parish priest. He/she is the representative of the bishop in a parish. He/she carries out all priestly duties such as celebrating the Holy Communion, carrying out baptisms, chairing parish council meetings, preaching, leading services, burying the dead and performing all other pastoral and administrative duties in the parish (see Lloyd 1991: 46).

Heads of departments- the following departments are headed by women: Theological Education by Extension (TEE), Hospital Chaplaincy, Sunday school and brigade.

Students: Three women are pursuing a Bachelor of Divinity Degree and one a Master of Theology.

Secondments- five have been seconded to serve in other places outside the diocese

The above information indicates that all the ordained women in the diocese hold positions of decision making. However, have these women been allowed to actualise their full potential by being involved in high decision - making positions in the church hierarchy?. This question can only be answered by analysing the hierarchy itself.

Table 3

The Number of Men versus Women in the Structural set- up of Kirinyaga Diocese.

Position	Men	Women
The Diocesan Bishop	1	-
Archdeacon	5	-
Rural Dean	21	2
Parish Priests	78	17

Diocesan Bishop- He is the Chief Shepherd of the whole diocese. Some of his duties include pastoral oversight and administration of the entire diocese. He is also the chairman of the Diocesan synod, the highest decision making body in the diocese which comprises of all the clergy in the diocese and some elected lay members from each parish (Lloyd 1991:45, ACK Diocese of Kirinyaga Constitution: 1).

Archdeacon – he is in-charge of an area in the diocese called an Archdeaconry which comprises several deaneries. His duties include keeping in touch with the clergy in his Archdeaconry, chairing the Archdeaconry clergy chapter and council meetings, oversight of properties of the

church in his Archdeaconry and pastoral duties on behalf of the Bishop. He is in-charge of several deaneries (Lloyd1991:45).

Rural Dean – responsible for an area called the Deanery which is usually made up of about ten or less parishes. He/she takes care of the clergy there as their counselor and adviser and acts as a mediator between the clergy and the Bishop. He/she is also the Chairperson of the deanery council (ibid.:46).

Parish priest- see definition of a Vicar in-charge above.

NB - Rural Deans and Archdeacons constitute the members of the senior clergy who are bestowed with authority to make certain important decisions and recommendations at a higher level, sometimes on behalf of the bishop.

The above table reveals that women are not included in the high levels of decision making. Therefore even if they head parishes and departments, this does not uplift their status as far as the church hierarchy is concerned. The table shows that women are not among the senior clergy, who are mainly involved in making major decisions pertaining to the running of the diocese. There are only two women senior clergy in the category of a Rural Dean.

The consequences of under-representation of women in the church hierarchy are obvious. The views of the few women representatives are overshadowed, judgments made in meetings are not gender balanced and generally the views of women who constitute 80% of the total church population are underrepresented. Our view is that both men and women should be equally represented at all levels of decision making in the Anglican church because the church is made up of male and female. However we need to find out why there are very few women priests and the consequent low representation in the church hierarchy. This can only be achieved by assessing whether an equal number of men and women get access to ordination training.

(b) Women and Theological Education

Both men and women ordinands pursue a three years diploma course in theology. These students are mainly trained at St. Andrews College of Theology and Development. We shall now examine the number of theological students from the diocese, who have been trained in this college for the last five years.

Table 4

Men and women from Kirinyaga trained for ordination at St Andrew's college for the last five years

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total	
Men	8	5	1	5	7	26	
Women	2	1	0	2	2	7	

Source: St Andrew's College Register

Women constitute only 1\3 of men in these years. The implication of these figures is that fewer women are ordained every year as compared to men. Why then is there such a low registration rate of women in the theological college?

According to the principal of the college, "women still feel that this is a man's job and in this case there are not many who attend the interviews" (Mwangi, oral interviews; 1\2\2000). In response to the same issue, the diocesan bishop remarked, "only very few women apply" (Munene Daniel, oral interviews; 1\2\ 2000).

Therefore according to the two informants, women themselves have been reluctant to join the ordained ministry. This is a valid point because for a long time it has been instilled in women that the ordained ministry is a male domain. However, there could be other possible causes.

Since nomination exercise begins at the local congregation with the church elders, it is likely that some of the elders may still be opposed to women's ordination, hence reject women's applications for theological training. Such an attitude denies women the same right of a religious call to ordination. Secondly, the application may get approval at the parish level. Since this is not the final approving body, it is then forwarded to the main recommending body in the diocese namely the Bishop's Examining Chaplain, largely composed of the Senior Clergy. This board determines who should pursue ordination training, who should be ordained and who should go for further studies after ordination. According to its current secretary, there is only one woman in this board (Mwangi, oral interviews; 1\2\ 2000). Lack of gender sensitivity in this board may also be a major hindrance as Ruth James (1999:111) rightly observes, "there is notable absence of women from the interviewing and recommending boards. The male domination of such boards may discourage women candidates".

This low number of women enrollment in theological colleges is not only an issue in Anglican theological colleges but also in most theological institutions in Kenya. This was affirmed by research done by Ruth James in 1996 and 1998 in several colleges such as the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) Pastoral Institute in Kikuyu where there were only three women students in 1998, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) where women formed 16% of total students population in 1996, Pan African College where women constituted only 20% of the total students in 1988, and finally St. Paul's United Theological College where women constituted only 14% in 1998 (James 1999:112-113). The figures from St. Paul's college¹² are in line with the diocesan records, which indicate that currently the number of women who have had access to higher theological

¹² This college offers a Bachelor of Divinity degree and is mainly where Kirinyaga diocese trains its clergy for this degree

education in the diocese of Kirinyaga constitute only 1/4 of the total number (Diocesan Staff establishment September 1999).

Furthermore, the curriculum used in theological colleges is not gender inclusive. It should include more courses on women such as women in the history of the church, feminist theology, women and economic involvement, and many others. Such courses would equip both men and women ministers for a more focussed pastoral ministry.

Therefore, since only a few women are trained for ordination and also for the Bachelor of Divinity degrees and above, this indicates that only a few women can be involved in high decision making positions in the church. Priesthood and leadership in general continue to be male dominated. More women should be encouraged to join the ordained ministry right from the grassroot level and also to have equal access to higher institutions of learning.

How then are women clergy received by fellow clergymen, the Christians and the society at large?. It is to this that we now turn.

(c) The status accorded to ordained women by clergy men, Christians and the society.

When the first three women were ordained deacons in 1992, bishop Gitari reminded them that they were 'women priests' not 'men priests'. In other words they had to bring their extra-ordinary God given qualities of a Gikuyu woman including gentleness, politeness, chastity, motherliness authority, orderliness, sympathy and many others in order to promote the work of God (Wilding Pamela, oral interviews; 31\10\ 1999).

During the field research, it came out clearly from all the women clergy, men clergy and the Christians interviewed that as a result of these feminine contributions, women have received ready acceptance by Christians.

Parishes keep requesting the bishop to post women clergy to serve them (Munene Daniel, oral interviews; 1\2\1999). One male clergy for instance, felt that women clergy are more respected than male clergy in the parishes perhaps because men have a tendency to dominate while women seek to delegate (Murimi Samuel, oral interviews; 6\5\ 1999). Bishop Wasonga¹³ of ACK diocese of Maseno West, also affirmed this factor as a great strength in women. He said, “women do not feel the need to be in-charge, therefore they are very capable of discharging duties and the glory goes to them...they are tenderly in-charge” (Wasonga, 5\6\ 1999).

Asked whether Christians despised her because she is a single clergy woman, Rev. Beth Ndegwa denied having ever experienced such an attitude. She stated, “they see me as a leader”. She however explained that her good character and commitment to her work in the parish have won her acceptance (Beth Ndegwa, oral interviews; 14\5\ 1999). Several Christians also expressed appreciation for the ministry of ordained women. Jean Munene for instance said,

We have had three women priests now and we have never seen a ‘woman’ in that pulpit, we see a priest...in fact now we have no complaints. It is not like when we had male priests who believed ‘I am because I am a man,’ which is not true, he has to produce also.” (Munene Jean, oral interviews, 27\7\ 1999).

Another elderly man claimed, “*riu nirio twagia na atungatiri mena tha cia muciarĩ*”(at last we have got clergy with a ‘motherly’ affection) (cited by Muringi, oral interviews; 4\6\ 2000).

Rev. Stella Muringo, the first woman Rural Dean in the diocese, who was appointed to the post while young and single, claims to have received a lot of support and encouragement from Christians, both men and women clergy in

¹³ He was addressing women ordinands at St. Andrews College of Theology and Development, Kabare on 5th June 1999.

her deanery. Rev. Muringo serves the largest deanery in the diocese, which is composed of eight parishes. Seven out of the nine priests are men heading the parishes (Muringo, oral interviews; 2\11\ 1999). However, while some male clergy have received women clergy as co-workers and as equals, a few cannot still imagine themselves serving under a woman priest. These therefore are against promotion of women priests.

Generally speaking, ACK Christians accord women priests a high status as leaders. Our Roman Catholic informant also regarded ordained women from ACK as “encouraged enough to go beyond the ‘accepted’ mentality that ordination applies to men...” (Thaara, oral interviews; 14\2\ 2000). However, some other non-ACK informants gave a different view. Rose Wamai from the African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa (AIPCA) for instance claimed; “I cannot enter into a church where a woman is preaching. Women should not stand at the altar because they are always unclean” (Wamai, oral interview; 31\1\2000). On the same issue Dionysious Njeru a prophet- healer from the church of Israel held that “women should not participate in public worship in any way... Women’s ordination is unbiblical... Women should do no more than singing as a choir, cleaning the church and the minister’s robes as well as cooking” (Njeru, oral interviews; 31\1\2000).

Besides the status accorded to ordained women in the church, their position also gives them status in the society. Those interviewed said that the society regards them as leaders. Some of them are invited to open secular meetings with a word of prayer and a homily. Stella Muringo’s position as a Rural Dean for instance is acknowledged by the local chief, who invites her to almost all social gatherings. She also holds several other important secular positions (Muringo, oral interview; 2\ 11 \ 1999). Other women priests like Edith Njiri, Catherine Ruriga, Joyce Kirigia and Anne Muriithi are leaders in women’s development programs, which are community based. These positions accord them much respect.

Women have been accorded such respect not only because of their gender and office but also because of job performance. Those interviewed reiterated that commitment to the service as well as evidence of strong leadership qualities and good conduct cannot be compromised if one is to command respect. How then do women themselves perceive their role as ministers?

(d) The perception of women about their ordination and its implications for their identity

All our ordained women informants expressed that ordination brought liberation. When they remained deaconesses they were limited in their services. They lacked inner freedom, which prevented them from doing what they felt God was calling them to do.

Asked whether they felt as though they were doing a man's job, they said that they were serving God as women though in a male-dominated hierarchy. This perception maintains the identity of women in priesthood. It disregards the traditional view and also the view of the missionaries that priesthood is to be reserved for men. Although women performed priestly duties in the traditional society as stated in chapter two, they were regarded as 'ritual males'. Their feminine identity was lost. Ordained women in Kirinyaga feel genuinely called by God to serve Him as women. The church also expects them to serve God as women (Gitari, 1\ 11\ 1999, Munene Daniel, 1\2\2000, Mwangi 1\2 \2000; oral interviews).

Most clergy women regard their priestly position as a servant one rather than a title of prestige. They regard their roles as obligation to render service to God and humanity. For this reason, they have been able to associate with all types of people regardless of age or status. In meetings, they do not dominate but give the participants opportunity to express their views. They also see the need to delegate duties.

However, servant leadership and delegation of duties should not imply loss of the status of a leader and his\ her authority to chair meetings. Bishop Munene expressed such sentiments where a few clergy women are afraid to chair parish council meetings, and instead appoint a man from the council to do so (Munene Daniel, oral interviews; 1\2\2000).

Such an action makes the Christians to despise such a leader. Her withdrawal from chairing meetings has a bearing not only on her own identity but on the identity of women priests in general. This is because it gives the false impression that women are incapable as leaders. In our view, such a leader is suffering self-rejection, which may have been born by the stereotyping traditional and missionary attitudes that women are not to speak in the presence of men. In Mary Daly's (1973:53) words, this self-depreciation of a woman is a false humility which "is rooted partially in guilt feelings over being a rival to males or 'threatening the male ego'...".

The field research also revealed that there are a few others who interpret their priesthood status as a privilege, which elevates them to the 'place of men' hence they despise some category of Christians especially the underprivileged. This view of priesthood gives credence to Oduyoye's (1995:177) remark that "for some women, seeking ordination to Priesthood is asking to be co-opted into the ranks of the oppressor". Such pride paints a negative picture of the identity of women in leadership in that it leads to a generalised allegation that once empowered, women are not able to cope with their juniors, which indicates failure in the greatest test of a leader.

Although it may be argued that women can still serve God without ordination and indeed they do as we shall see below, ordination is necessary to those women who feel called because it empowers them for more effective leadership than when they are just lay people. We concur with Okemwa (1993:144) that "What women seek in ordination is the power associated

with it and the leadership positions it opens up. They also seek the permission, the feeling that they have been assigned specific responsibilities...”.

Ordination has thus developed the identity of women in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga by bestowing upon them such powers and all other opportunities attached to it. However, this does not always uplift her status at home because no matter what position she holds in the public arena, a Gikuyu woman remains the home-maker. Those interviewed expressed that although they have employed house-helpers who greatly assist in child-rearing and food processing, they still remain the main managers of their homes.

Besides their role in the ordained ministry, women are also actively involved in the life of the church as lay people. During the fifth ordinary session of the CPK diocese of Mt. Kenya East Synod (1982-1983:11) (where Kirinyaga was included), the following was recommended about the place of the laity in the church; “it is recommended that the ministry of laity be given its rightful place in the church and that opportunity be afforded to laity to realise their spiritual talents and how to use them effectively for the mutual building of the body of Christ”. Following this recommendation, both lay men and women have been empowered to serve the church. Let us now look at some categories of lay women in church life.

4.3 Women as Church Army staff

Besides the ordained women, there is another category of full time church workers called Church Army sisters. These are six in number and the seventh one has already been ordained. They are graduates of the Church Army College where they have been trained mainly in evangelism for two years. After graduation, they are placed under parish priests or given any other duty by the bishop. Those who are placed in parishes serve as pastoral

assistants. They do evangelism, administer the chalice at Eucharist, preach, teach catechism or assist in any other parish work as directed by the vicar. Five Church Army sisters are currently pastoral assistants and one is the diocesan bookshop manager.

Although these sisters are full-time workers, they are only empowered to do supportive roles. They are limited in their services and sometimes are treated unjustly by some of the vicars who regard them as subordinates rather than co-workers in the ministry. Our view is that those who feel called for ordination should be ordained even if this perhaps would call for further training.

4.4 Women as Lay Readers

The diocese has further empowered women by commissioning them to be Lay Readers. A Lay Reader is a lay person who has been licensed by the Bishop to assist the clergy on unpaid part-time basis. Lay Readers are very significant because of their roles in the church including leading public worship, preaching and burying the dead in the absence of an ordained clergy. They also hold bishop's special license to assist at Holy Communion by administering the chalice.

Suitable committed Christians are recommended by the members of their local churches and then presented to the bishop for approval and commissioning. The fact that many congregations have appointed women to be Lay Readers shows that they have confidence in women leadership. Some of these women are senior Lay Readers as well as the vice chair persons of their congregations. The bishop commended them for effectiveness in pastoral work and is now encouraging every congregation to have at least a woman Lay Reader (Munene Daniel, oral interviews; 1\2\2000).

However, although women Lay Readers have been credited with the development of the spiritual identity of other women, they have not been successful in developing the material identity by challenging women to move beyond their traditional 'place'. They are in a position for instance to influence women to join decision making fora such as church, deanery and archdeaconry councils and also the synod where women have been under represented because of their low self esteem.

4.5 Women in the Mothers' Union (MU)

The Mothers' Union is an Anglican organisation, which promotes the well being of families worldwide. The aims of the MU are: to strengthen marriages, encourage mothers to bring up their children in a Christian way, encourage the members to hold regular meetings and to be examples in righteousness and faithfulness (Church of the Province of Kenya 1983:7).

Church women become MU members through enrollment by the bishop. Some of the entry qualifications are that one should be a strong Christian, baptised and a communicant (Church of the Province of Kenya 1983:8). However, all women in the church who do not meet these requirements are invited to the meetings and are expected to give all the physical and material contributions that the MU requires but they cannot participate in voting (Ruita, oral interviews; 3\11\ 1999). These are therefore not legally MU members. They include the category of single unmarried mothers, divorcees, and women who have not been legally married in the church.

In the church, the MU participates actively in church development (Preparatory Documents for the First Ordinary session of the Synod 1998:66, Ruita, 3\11\ 1999, Mwaniki, 3\11 \1999; oral interviews). They are also active in worship where they use their talents in singing, leading worship and preaching. The other major role is to clean the church. Women do the cleaning of most of the church buildings in the diocese. Asked why women

are the only ones who perform these services, majority of the respondents both men and women said that women do it voluntarily as part of their service to God. They regard it as their duty, "it is their main duty at home and they are good at it" (Wachira, oral interviews; 1\2\ 2000).

However, there are some congregations such as Mugumo, Kianyaga, Karaini and Kiaritha where men have been employed to clean and decorate the church. This makes it difficult to come to terms with the views that cleaning and decorating the church is a feminine role. If this is a feminine role, why then should a man be employed for the same services instead of a woman?. The only possible conclusion here is that there is a patriarchal influence in the cleaning and decorating of the church where women are expected to be totally self-giving as care takers who offer their services free while men are paid for similar services. This is one of the unjust circumstances that the church should liberate women from, if the identity of a woman is to be developed.

The other role of the MU which is related to the above is cooking and feeding visitors. It is a common practice to see women busy cooking while the service is going on. This role has also been defined by patriarchy where women are involved in taking care of the private sector even when they are expected to be "sitting at the feet of Jesus". While it is important to extend African hospitality to the church, our view is that other avenues of feeding people should be sought in order to give women an opportunity to attend the church service fully. It has been observed that women miss important activities and speeches (even from the bishop) because they are busy preparing lunch. This is exactly the practice that Jesus denounced in Luke 10: 38-42 when Martha busied herself with serving while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to be taught. Jesus regarded listening to the word of God as more rewarding than serving food (vs. 42).

Besides their involvement in the Church, the MU objectives require the members to have a deep commitment to their husbands and children. It has played an important part in the spiritual nurture of the families. Unfortunately, the aims lay the whole burden of family care to the woman. She must make her marriage work under all circumstances. Our view is that the MU cannot succeed fully in developing the identity of women at home unless there is a Fathers Association (FA) with similar objectives to challenge men to take their role as husbands and fathers seriously, and also to involve women in planning and development projects in the family. Without this initiative, women remain at the periphery of development at home. We hope the newly formed FA will take this challenge.

A critical evaluation of the MU reveals that it does not liberate women from all unjustifiable situations both in the church and at home. In practice, it has helped them to maintain their traditional 'place'. In the church for instance, the role of cleaning and cooking is an extension of women's roles from home to church. Thus the MU does not enable women to challenge tradition and as such, they do not bring dynamism as far as development of the identity of women is concerned.

Further still, although the MU claims to develop the identity of widows, unmarried single mothers, and barren women, through seminars, this is just theoretical. These categories are immediately put off by the MU aims and meetings, which give emphasis on care for the husband and the children. The traditional attitude to barren women and single mothers is still lingering in their minds. Nyawira, a barren woman for instance claims to have been despised by some MU members (oral interviews; 20th July 1999). Some widows and other single mothers also claimed to have been categorised as prostitutes not only by the society but also by some MU leaders (Wanjiku, oral interviews; 27th July 1999 cf. Mbuy-Beya 1998:31). Such attitudes make it difficult for single mothers to seek any assistance from men.

Our view is that since single as well as childless women belong to the church, the MU aims should be revised in order to accommodate them. Otherwise as it stands now, practically speaking, it seems that it is only the women who have husbands and children who 'bear the image of God'.

Besides the categories of women mentioned above, there are other lay women who do important functions within the church structure. These are; women principals and teachers in church sponsored schools, women in Christian community services, secretaries and accountants in the diocesan office and many others. Girls are also actively involved in teaching Sunday school children and girl's brigade, preaching and reading lessons in the church. All these positions indicate that the church has empowered women in her broad ministry.

4.6 Women and Formal Education

One of the ways through which both men and women are empowered, is education. Since 1963, education was acknowledged as a right of every citizen by the Kenyan government. Education has an important bearing on women's emancipation because as Mwaura (1998:30) has observed, it is through education that "reduction of infant mortality and morbidity, lower fertility, higher income, improved nutrition, health and political awareness at the family are realised". Records indicate that there has been an increase in the proportion of girls in primary school between 1963-1989 from 34% to 43% consecutively (ibid.:31). Since then educational trends have declined nationally.

The Anglican church's involvement in provision of education dates to the beginning of the twentieth century. The CMS began to take education of women seriously after 1928 in her endeavour to eradicate clitoridectomy and enable women to fight for their rights. The Anglican church has continued to

educate both boys and girls in their primary and secondary sponsored schools.

According to 1999 education records, there are 50 primary schools, 4 boys' secondary schools, 8 girls' secondary schools, and 21 mixed secondary schools. This amounts to 83 ACK sponsored schools in Kirinyaga.. The tables below indicate the number of students and teachers consecutively between 1998 and 1999.

Table 5

Number of boys and girls in ACK primary schools in 1998 and 1999 in Kirinyaga

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	18,313	19,051	37,364
1999	17,485	18,061	35,546
Total	35,798	37,112	72,910

Table 6

Number of boys and girls in ACK secondary schools in 1998 and 1999 in Kirinyaga

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	4,169	4,838	9,007
1999	6,464	6,202	12666
Total	10,633	11,040	11,673

Table 7

Number of teachers in primary and secondary ACK schools in 1998 and 1999 in Kirinyaga

	Primary Schools 1998	Primary Schools 1999	Total	Secondary Schools 1998	Secondary Schools 1999	Total
Male Teachers	532	508	1040	336	372	708
Female Teachers	594	564	1158	233	239	472
Total	1126	1072	2198	569	611	1181

Source: Records of Education, through Mr. David Gichira, Diocesan Education Secretary

Table 5 and 6 show that both boys and girls get equal access to primary and secondary schools, indeed with girls outnumbering boys. Table 7 indicates that female teachers outnumber male teachers in primary schools but they are

outnumbered in secondary schools. The lesser number of female teachers in secondary schools may suggest that less women get opportunities in higher levels of learning.

The church has therefore developed the identity of both men and women through education. The aim of the church in introducing segregated boys and girls schools was mainly to maximize on academic achievements. This aim has been met. In the past it was assumed that boys were better academically than girls but for various reasons, girls have been proved to perform better (Mararo, Oral interviews; 1\2 \2000). An interview carried out with Mrs. Jean Munene, the principal of Kabare Girls' secondary school, reveals that over half of the students who entered the universities in 1998 from sponsored schools in Kirinyaga district were girls (Munene Jean, oral interviews; 27\7\ 2000). Such girls make a great impact in the society except that unfortunately there is no available data since there is no network to trace the positions they hold after school. Mrs. Munene however noted that many of the female teachers in her school were former students of the school. Other products of the diocesan sponsored schools are principals of secondary schools, women priests, tutors, architects, doctors and many others.

However, we can only judge the impact of education on women's emancipation by looking at the entire national situation since formal education in the church also falls under the Ministry of Education in Kenya.

According to the current development plan in Kenya, 65% of girls and 40% of boys drop out of primary schools nationally before they reach standard eight (Kenya Government Development Plan 1997-2002). There are fewer girls than boys who enter secondary schools (47.4%) after sitting for the KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education). In the public universities women constitute only less than 28% of the student population and majority of them pursue courses in humanities (Mwaura 1998:31).

The above information has a bearing on the identity of women in that their low level of education and the type of courses taken in the universities affect their future careers and this in turn affects their influence in decision making. In 1993 for instance, out of 58,336 women in the civil service, 53,545 were below job group G (non-professional). Women constituted 21% of job group H (graduates). Above that there were only 6% women (Mwaura 1998:31).

Since the church cannot be divorced from this national situation of education of women, we hold that she has power to eradicate all the cultural conditions that hinder women from attaining full humanity. Although education has to a great extent enabled women to enter into the professions associated with men (including ordination to Priesthood), it has not influenced women to go beyond their subservient roles even in the church. It remains a great challenge for the church as well as the educated women to use education positively to enable women to challenge their roles both in the church and society.

4.7 The Church and involvement of women in Economic Development

The church regards economic development of her members as crucial not only for their own welfare but also for the welfare of the church itself. She is therefore equipping women with skills for economic development. She has encouraged parishes to organise seminars aimed at economic empowerment. There are also loan facilities from a diocesan association called Maranatha. The MU has also been actively involved in encouraging women to form small groups like Merry go-rounds¹⁴.

The church also works with other non- governmental empowering organisations (NGOs)

¹⁴ These are welfare groups where women pay monthly contributions, which enable them to start income generating projects, or give the money to individual members in turns.

such as NCK (National Council of Churches of Kenya) and NCWK (National Council of Women in Kenya) and others to equip women economically and also conscientise them about their rights through civic education. Some prominent church women both lay and ordained have been appointed leaders of these groups (Njiri, 2011\ 1999, Ruita, 3\11\ 1999, Mwaniki, 3\11\1999; oral interviews).

Although these groups and organisations have uplifted the economic status of women, women still remain economically marginalised. Many Christian respondents claimed that they were no better than single women. In spite of being married, their husbands are absentees who spend their earnings on alcohol and mistresses. Worse still, they are only managers, never decision makers. Such women are overburdened with the triple roles of reproduction, production and management.

The above situation confirms a survey carried out by the Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment in 1991 that on the overall women spend 88% in unpaid labour especially in the rural areas (cited in Nyukuri 1977). Women provide 70% of agriculture labour but access only 10% of national resources, head 1\3 of Kenya's households and work for an average of 62 hours in a week. Sixty percent of women are not formerly educated, and feminization of poverty has become a reality (Muthuri and Kimonye 1997:1,14). A similar world wide economic marginalisation of women is reflected by Linda Tripp (1992:21).

Efforts to empower women economically in Kirinyaga have been weighed down by among others social and cultural barriers, lack of access to land ownership, lack of education and exposure, poor family planning and poverty. Most women are also employed in low paying jobs while others are self-employed in small businesses such as trading in food and drinks. Furthermore women lack the required property security such as title deeds to

enable them access formal credits from banks and other financial agencies. Therefore the economic development of women remains minimal.

In view of the above, we realise that women have only been involved in welfare –oriented activities. Worse still, the structures that enhance their economic dis-empowerment have not been addressed. We therefore concur with Mwaura (1998:32) that the church should address structures that create poverty. These may range from national structures, patriarchal, to church structures, which also hinder economic empowerment through underpayment.

4.8 The Church and the Development of Spiritual identity of a woman

So far, we have laid great emphasis on the development of the identity of a Christian woman on their material empowerment. This would be an incomplete perception of Christian identity if it lacks the spiritual dimension.

The field research revealed that majority of women who went to church confessed Jesus Christ as their ‘personal saviour’, meaning that Jesus had delivered them from the bondage of sin and given them a new life in Him. They also saw Jesus as their healer, a friend who understood their social, cultural, political and economic difficulties. In other words, Jesus could not be divorced from their daily experiences both good and bad.

The researcher could not help trying to analyse how Christ relates to liberation of these women from all that which distorts their full humanity. Salvation to most of them basically meant deliverance from their state of sin leading them to inherit eternal life. Their daily difficult experiences were just a passing cloud that did not worry them as they passed to a better life. At some point, such testimonies sounded like a consolation of some kind coming as a result of their desperate situations in life.

However, women have seen Jesus as one who identifies very well with them as he did with the women in the gospels. He gives courage to those in difficulties, power to the powerless and he is the voice of the voiceless. Nasimiyu Wasike (1991:72) indeed sees Christology as central to the experiences of an African Christian woman today.

Although the theme of Christology is very important and applicable to the daily situation of African women, care must be taken that women do not give in to unjust situations as they often do, because they hold that challenging such evils makes them lose their Christian identity. We therefore concur with Hinga (1992:192) that African women will only be able to confidently confess Christ as their liberator, as a partisan in their search for emancipation only if they are "critical of any versions of Christology that would be inimical to their cause". If women take part in the struggle to eliminate sin in their own lives, in the church, and in the society, this will become God's struggle too. God will work in them to bring liberation.

The research also revealed that although women claimed that Jesus enabled them to go through all hardships some lived an ambivalent life when faced with culturally related illnesses and misfortunes. They turned to the traditional means such as diviners, mediums, healers and the current mushrooming prophet healers from African Instituted Churches. Although often discouraged from consulting them by church leaders, they pay continued visits there in hiding.

The other spiritual dilemma of their spiritual identity is the menstruation-pollution argument. Some women expressed doubts about their cleanness to approach the altar during menstruation, regarding it as a sin from a biblical and a cultural point of view. So far, the church has no written policy regarding this issue.

4.9 Evaluation in relation to the study

Going back to our objectives, we are seeking to find out the extent to which the encounter between the church and Gikuyu culture has developed the identity of a Gikuyu woman.

From the description and analysis given in this chapter, we have found that women are tremendously involved in church life. ACK Kirinyaga diocese has gone ahead in dismantling some of the cultural beliefs and attitudes that keep women in a state of subservience. Women, both young and old can now preach, lead worship, administer the chalice during the Holy Communion service, evangelise and perform many other roles in the church, which they could not perform during the missionary era. Ordination of women serves as a major breakthrough that overturned the prevailing theological and cultural prejudices that hindered women involvement in religious sphere.

However, our indicators reveal that the church has not been able to eradicate sexism completely. Women clergy for instance are not part of the Senior Clergy. This position confirms Maitland's findings that in spite of ordination in Protestant Churches, women are still discriminated against, they do not have equal access to positions of leadership (cited in Mwaura 1997:19).

Table 4 also indicates that women have not had equal access to control of resources with men. The fact that only fewer women find their way for ordination training every year means that the number of ordained women is only a handful compared to that of men.

Women are also under-represented in church councils, boards and the synod where important decisions are made, hence their views remain unheard while men continue to dominate the meetings. It may however be argued that women themselves are reluctant to be elected in these positions because of

their heavy burdens of housework (Munene Daniel oral interviews; 1\2\ 2000). Nevertheless their reluctance also reflects sexism, where husbands are unwilling to develop their wives by sharing home responsibilities so that the wife can get an opportunity to attend to other duties outside the home.

We have also described the extent of the spiritual ambivalence of an African Christian woman. This ambivalence reflects the dilemma of an African Christian. We have already stated in Chapter 3 that the kind of Christianity introduced to Africans was unrelated to the traditions of their past. The African spiritual worldview was regarded as unreal. This gave no solution to an African who continues to be haunted by the spiritual powers. The traditional society offered a ready solution to these spiritual realities since women were endowed with supernatural powers to serve the community as priestesses, diviners, mediums and healers. Since these roles were abolished by Christianity and indeed are highly condemned by the Anglican Church, some Christians unfortunately seek solutions outside the church. Many Christian women therefore turn to the traditional ways of problem solving but do it in hiding because they think they should not. Their Christian identity is therefore affected because they live with this guilt and are unsure of their Christian stand, which when discovered is questioned by other Christians and may even lead to excommunication. The church should be more sensitive about the African situation and encourage use of spiritual gifts like prophecy and healing to deal with spiritual reality.

The menstruation- pollution issue which keeps women from receiving Eucharist during menstruation in fear of defiling it, also reveals that the church has not liberated women fully from this cultural and Hebrew thought patterns.

We have also seen that some of the duties that women do in the church such as cleaning, cooking and serving are an extension of feminine roles that have

been defined by patriarchy. Men are paid a wage for the same roles if they have to do them. This practice which has gone unchallenged by the church is often regarded as normal and sometimes as the will of God. Some feminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983:176-177) regard this as sexism, whereby women are regarded as a servant class for menial tasks that men do not want to do.

Therefore the church has not been able to eradicate factors that keep women in a state of subservience including patriarchal system of government, ignorance, poverty, gender stereotyping and many others. A Gikuyu woman thus continues to experience an identity crisis since she is not fully liberated from this state to a life of fullness of Being. The injustices that women continue to experience in the church lead Oduyoye (1995:182) to conclude that "in this world of rising expectations, few people will continue to take the church seriously if it persists in preaching Christ but does not live Christ".

However, there is still hope to develop the identity of women further because there are some influential men and women especially in the ACK, who are strongly fighting for this cause. They have already made a major step to empower women especially by ordaining them. Another significant revolution is that for the first time in the history of ACK, a woman, Mrs. Susan Mumina was appointed the Provincial Secretary in August 1999. Perhaps this is just the beginning of a conscious, serious, systematic, and continuous move to enable women recover their full humanity.

4.10 Summary and Conclusion

Our research findings have revealed that ACK Kirinyaga diocese has greatly contributed to the development of the identity of a Gikuyu woman. The first step that was taken by the first Bishop David Gitari, was to encourage lay women to use their God-given talents to serve the church in various ministries as well as in church leadership. As a result, the gifts of women

have been felt in the church where they have been involved as Lay Readers, vice-chair persons in congregations, Mothers' Union leaders and members. Women also lead worship, fellowships, carry out evangelism and various other roles in the church.

Besides encouraging women to serve as lay people, the bishop also harkened to the call of the Lambeth Conference of 1978 that the member churches could consider ordaining women to diaconate and to priesthood. He therefore made this an agenda in the diocesan synod of 1979 but the motion lost even in the following two synods (1981 and 1982) until in 1986 when the motion was carried with a majority of 131 votes against 78 votes.

We have noted that ACK diocese of Kirinyaga has the largest number of ordained women in the entire Anglican Church of Kenya. These women hold various important roles and status in the church and through their extraordinary talents, they have been able to bring a special dimension of ministry that was not there before.

However, we have observed that the church has not succeeded in eradicating sexism including all cultural factors that keep women in a subordinate state. The Church hierarchy for instance is still dominated by men. Ordained women have not gone beyond the level of a Rural Dean and even here, they are still the minority. Gender roles continue to define the identity of a woman in the church. The traditional demeaning attitude to single mothers and childless women is also still persistent in the church and especially in the MU circle. Therefore, the church has not interacted with culture fully to develop the identity of an African Christian woman. The Christian woman continues to live with an identity crisis in the church.

CHAPTER 5

THE BIBLICAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE IDENTITY OF AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN WOMAN

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we have examined how culture and church traditions have been used to keep an African woman in a subordinate state. Neither mission Christianity nor the ACK has fully been able to liberate women from this state. For a long time, the Bible itself has been used to justify marginalisation of women because of the male biased interpretation of particular texts and in particular the second creation story (Gen. 2: 21-23) and the woman's contribution to the fall (Gen. 3). According to the traditions that have shaped the place of women in the church, the second creation story portrays Eve as inferior because she was created second and out of the rib of Adam. In the story of the fall, she is regarded as the one who was deceived by the serpent hence she is seen as the source of death and evil in the world. These interpretations have influenced the theology of the church for many centuries. Some early prominent Christians like John Chrysostom and St. Augustine went as far as claiming that women do not bear the image of God as shall be quoted later.

In this chapter, we shall use biblical evidence to search for the meaning of the identity of a Christian woman. We shall examine whether subordination of a woman is a fundamental biblical principle grounded in creation and continued by Christ and Paul. This will enable us to evaluate whether both culture and Christian theology have any biblical support for regarding women as inferior. We shall therefore do a critical evaluation of the place of a woman in the Old Testament addressing ourselves particularly to the creation stories. We shall also look at her status in the ministry of Jesus and in the epistles of Paul.

5.2 The place of a woman in the Old Testament

5.2.1 The Place of a Woman in Creation

The Bible identifies two distinct accounts of creation in Genesis 1-2: 4a and 2:4b-25. The first creation story presents a cosmic picture of God's activity, which culminates in the creation of humanity (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 2 gives a detailed view of the creation of man and woman and provides the transition to their fall as described in Genesis 3.

In this section we shall examine the two accounts of creation of human beings as recorded in Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:18, 21-23 and find out whether there is any evidence of the woman's inferiority.

Genesis 1: 27 says;

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

The Hebrew term used here for human beings is *adam*, meaning humanity. Verse 27 therefore indicates that humanity is bisexual, composed of both male and female. None is portrayed as inferior to the other because as Teresa Okure (1990:49) puts it, this humanity "is a unity in nature and diversity in sex". Male and female are therefore equal partners created in the image of God. The bisexual nature of humanity implies complementarity. It is an anticipation of the New Testament doctrine of the sexes' spiritual equality (Kidner 1967:52 cf. Galatians 3:28).

Scholars have given different views as to the implication of the 'image of God' in humanity. Some locate it in humanity's reason, creativity, speech, and spiritual nature. Others argue that humanity has taken the place of God as His representatives on earth (see different explanations as cited in Myers 1987:515-516). However it is not our intention to define the image of God in man, rather, our argument is that both male and female equally share all what

it implies to be created in the image of God. They for instance share in God's Kingly rule on earth as implied by verse 28 where both have been given dominion over all creatures (cf. Ps. 8:5-8).

In Genesis 2: 18, 21-23 God intends to make a helpmeet, fit for the man he has already created. He says, "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him...So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. then the man said, 'this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of man'. This passage has often been used to support the claim that woman is inferior to man. It seems to be the passage quoted in 1Cor 11:9 and 1Tim 2:13.

However, a closer evaluation of the passage reveals that the woman was not inferior to the man. The passage indicates that both were created from the same material. Furthermore some scholars even argue that this material was not 'male' but a sexually undifferentiated earth creature from which in verse 23 God established *issa* (woman) and *is* (man) (West 1993). Secondly, the fact that the woman was created as the 'helpmeet' of the man (Vs 18), does not make her inferior either. The phrase *ezer kenegole* (a helper corresponding to him) implies a notion of similarity as well as supplementation. Elsewhere in the Bible, it is only God who is portrayed as a helper to man (Gen. 49:25, Exo. 18:4, Deut.33: 26,29, Psa. 33:20, 70: 5, 89:19). It was also used for powerful allies who come to assist a difficult military situation (2 Sam. 8: 5, 1Kings 1:7).

Thirdly, Adam himself does not regard the woman as unequal. He rather stated, "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..."(2:23). Adam therefore does not take the creation of a woman from his ribs as a

cause for glorification but for special gratitude (Bonhoeffer 1966:60). The woman as a companion becomes an object of man's love. The union then becomes the perfect and highest expression of the unity and harmony, which God had established in His creation.

Let us now examine the place of a woman in the Jewish society to find out how far it reflects the equality between man and woman as portrayed by the creation stories. This will give us a better understanding as to why Jesus related to women in the way he did.

5.2.2 The place of a woman in the Jewish society

Jewish culture was male dominated. Women were regarded as subordinates, only important as wives and mothers. Girls for instance did not receive equal education with boys because according to the Talmud, daughters do not possess wisdom. Women did not participate in public life following the rabbinic rules. It was believed that their freedom of movement always resulted in sexual excesses. They were concealed by their clothes to an extent that a man did not recognise his own mother (Jeremias 1969:359).

Betrothal called for 'acquisition' of the woman by the man. This was like acquiring a gentile slave who was acquired by money, writ, or intercourse (ibid.:367, Okure 1990:50). In case of danger, the husband had to be saved first unless the wife's chastity was endangered. Women were also legally inferior. They had no right to bear witness in a court of law following Genesis 18:15 which portrays a woman as a liar. According to the legal formular, a woman, a gentile, and a child were placed at the same footing. In the religious sphere, they were confined to a separate court in the temple and were forbidden to enter it after childbirth and during menstruation (Jeremias 1969:372). A woman could not pronounce benediction.

However, did women hold any positions of power in the Jewish society?. Biblical evidence shows that there are powerful intelligent women mentioned in the history of Israel such as Rahab (Joshua 2), Michal (I Sam. 19: 11-17), and Abigail (I Samuel 25: 14-42). Deborah is depicted as an outstanding Judge who was used by God to do what men had never done before during wartime (Judges 4-5). Others were Esther, a Jewess who saved her nation when in danger (Esther 5) and Ruth who became the ancestor of Jesus (Ruth 1). Evidence from inscriptions in Diaspora also show that some women may have been leaders of the Synagogues in Diaspora (Kloppenborg and Hanegraaf 1995, 58). Other inscriptions portray women as presbytera (elder) indicating a member of the Jewish governing body in Diaspora (ibid.:59).

Therefore God does not portray women as subordinates. He used them to achieve a divine purpose, but because of its patriarchal culture, the Old Testament and other later Jewish writers present women as subordinates.

5.3 The place of women in the Ministry of Jesus

On recognising the plight of women in the Jewish culture, Jesus developed a critical attitude towards the Jewish place of a woman. Women are therefore severally mentioned among the multitudes who followed him (Mtt. 14:21, 15:22, 38, 20:20, Mk. 3:32, 5:25, 6:3). Jesus in this case instructed both men and women equally about the Kingdom of God, allowing them to learn at his feet (Lk. 7:36-50, 10:39). This was against the practice of the Jews where women did not have access to education. They could not also mix with men in the temple.

Jesus restored the dignity of women. He for instance healed the woman with the issue of blood (Mk. 5:25-34). In verse 25 'flow of blood' would make her ritually unclean, hence a source of contamination (cf. Lev. 15:19-30). This woman was therefore breaking the law by being in the crowd and also by touching Jesus. In verse 27, she approached Jesus from behind. Okure

(1992:222) suggests that she did this because of the social-cultural norms. First, she was unclean as stated above and secondly in the Jewish society it was indecent for a woman to speak publicly with a man, let alone touch him. For fear of breaking these norms, she only touches the hem of Jesus' garment from behind.

In verse 30, Jesus recognised in himself that power had gone out of him. According to Taylor (1966:291), 'power' in the pagan world was what devotees worshipped and it had its cause in a divine Being. In the New Testament however, *dynamis* is the power of the living personal God of 'a mighty work' which manifests his power, hence in this passage, it reflects the divine healing power which dwells in Jesus. This is an act of challenge to the Law and also to the attitude that the Jews had towards women because it reveals that Jesus can use not only an ordinary woman, but also an "unclean" one who has faith in him, to manifest his power.

In verse 32, Jesus did not bring the woman forward to embarrass her but to assure the crowd that she had not defiled him and also to make her deep faith in him known to people. Jesus attributed the woman's cure to her faith as he did also to Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:52). This implies that this faith which according to Taylor (1966:293) "derives its content and virtue from the object in which it rests", is constituted and made effective by God equally in both men and women.

In verse 34, Jesus addresses her as 'daughter' and tells her to go in peace. This indicates that Jesus gives her a new identity by establishing a fatherly relationship. He also restores her full humanity since 'peace' has to do with fullness of life in all dimensions. This passage therefore shows that Jesus loved women and restored their dignity as human beings created in the image of God.

Some of the other passages where Jesus restored the worth and dignity of women are; John 8:1-11 where he forgave the woman caught in adultery and convicted her accusers of their greater sins, and John 4 where he held a theological conversation with the Samaritan woman who was not only a woman but a Samaritan¹⁵ and a prostitute.

Mark 15:40-16:8 is an outstanding passage in our search for the place of women in the ministry of Jesus. This long passage may be regarded as a unity giving the witness of women to the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It indicates that women stayed on and identified that the same Jesus who was crucified, died and was buried is the same one who was raised on the third day from the grave. The disciples did not witness resurrection because they had run away. Women were therefore the right people to proclaim resurrection (Mk. 16:7) because they were witnesses. They hence became the first post resurrection apostles to the apostles, in spite of the Jewish claim that the witness of a woman was unreliable. Their witness of death and resurrection has an important bearing on Christianity because if there was no witness that the Christ who died is the same who rose again, then the claim of Christianity about Jesus' victory over death and hope for eternal life would be in vain.

Jesus therefore aimed at restoring women back to their place at creation. To Jesus, as Oyeronke puts it, a woman was "first a person, an individual and then a woman" (Oyeronke 1998:184).

However, opposers of ordination of women argue that although Jesus associated with women and restored their dignity, he never intended them to be leaders because in the circle of the Twelve apostles, he never chose a

¹⁵ Samaritans were inhabitants of the region of Samaria and adherents of the Samaritan religious tradition. The Jews believe that these are the people who were settled by the Assyrians in the Northern Kingdom after its destruction and so they were regarded as neither

woman. Therefore, Jesus indicated his intention to exclude women, for all time from ordination to priesthood. This was one of the major arguments during the ordination debates in Kirinyaga diocese (chapter 4). Looking at the issue from a historical perspective, there is no evidence that the Twelve were representatives of the Old Testament priesthood, neither does their choice indicate that they were precursors of ordination into priesthood in the New Testament. In fact Catholic and Protestant traditions reveal that ordination began in the post-apostolic age. Furthermore, proponents of ordination of women wonder why the sex of the Twelve is more emphasised at the expense of other characteristics. For instance, did Jesus in choosing only Jews intend to exclude Gentiles from priesthood?.

Judging from a historical perspective, women cannot be excluded from apostleship. Historical evidence from the New Testament writers indicates that apostleship was understood in different ways and was not restricted to the twelve (Fiorenza 1977:135-144). Among the criteria of apostleship, the key aspect was seeing the risen Lord (ibid.:136). As stated above, women were the primary witnesses to the resurrection and therefore they cannot be excluded from the category of the apostles. Further still, in Paul's understanding of apostleship, apart from the twelve (the apostles of Christ), there were also the apostles of churches. These were official messengers to the churches (2 Cor. 8:23, Phil. 2:25). Phoebe who is referred to as *diakonos* seems to have had such a role to the church at Cenchreae (Rom. 16:1). She therefore fulfilled the functions of an apostle.

Finally there is the Lucan understanding of apostleship. Luke limits apostleship to the Twelve but also indicates that an apostle was one who accompanied Jesus from his baptism to ascension and was an eyewitness of the resurrection. Women fulfilled this criterion too (Mk. 15:40ff, 16:7, Mtt.

fully Jews nor fully Gentiles. Therefore 'Samaritan' became a title of contempt among the Jews (Myers 1987:907).

28:9f, Jn. 20: 8). Paul himself does not fit this definition and therefore as Fiorenza (1977:139) argues, “on biblical grounds it would be easier to prove that Paul was not entrusted with the ‘apostolic charge’ than to demonstrate that women were excluded from apostleship”.

Therefore, Jesus did not regard women as subordinates. The fact that he did not choose a woman apostle is no ground to argue against ordination of women because Jesus did not ordain any one to priesthood. Furthermore, there is no historical evidence either from the ministry of Jesus or from the early church that women were excluded from any of the functions that later came to be associated with the ordained priesthood.

The other passages that have been often quoted to justify subordination of women are Pauline passages.

5.4 The place of women in Pauline Epistles

Paul has often been categorised as a male chauvinist. There are three main Pauline texts that indicate that women are inferior to men. These are; I Corinthians 11: 2-16, 14:34-35, which reflects I Timothy 2:11-12 and contradicts I Corinthians 11:5. We shall evaluate these passages along other passages to find out whether indeed Paul regarded women as inferior and also whether or not he intended them to be silent in the church.

5.4.1 I Corinthians 11: 2-16

In this passage, Paul deals with the problems of the relationship of social customs to Christian morality. He is writing out of the background of the Patriarchal Jewish family, addressing Christians who lived in the midst of Greeks. The law taught that the wife was subordinate to the husband (Gen. 3:16). Paul was however dealing with conduct during worship, not the relationship between husband and wife. His emphasis was that women

should veil their heads in worship especially when they were praying or prophesying.

The veil of a woman in verse 5,6,10 is a symbol of her subordination to man (Robertson and Plummer 1971:230, Gilmour 1962). Removing it therefore would imply liberation or creating equality with men (Byrne 1988:51). Does Paul then advocate subordination of women?

In his regulation of the conduct of women in regard to the veil, Paul is greatly influenced by his Jewish culture where a Jewess could only appear in public, veiled (Conzelmann 1975:185, Jeremias 1969:359). There were perhaps some Christian women who were drifting away from this custom. The society regarded an unveiled woman as unfaithful to her husband or a prostitute because in the ancient Mediterranean world, women's hair was an object of male lust (Hawthorne and Martin 1999:585). Such an attitude towards hair would reflect badly on a Christian woman and perhaps even distract men in worship. If the veil therefore more importantly reflected moral decency, this passage cannot therefore be evidence of women's inferiority to men. It should rather at best remind an African Christian woman that moral decency is an indispensable virtue in the development of her identity. This should not be necessarily reflected in the veiling of the head, which may have little or no meaning in her culture but rather in her character.

Verses 3, 7-9 are the most controversial verses in the passage. They read;

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.... For the man ... is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man...).

Some scholars argue that the head means superior authority while others like Brown and Fitzmyer (1990) suggest that head means source of being. This second interpretation brings a theological complication because it implies that Jesus emanates from God in the same way as Eve from Adam and also that man emanates from Christ in the same way as the source of his being.

It is also argued that verses 7-9 refer to the second creation story (Gen. 2:18-24) where Eve was created out of Adam. Such a view fails to take into account our earlier discussions about this creation account that it does not at all suggest female subordination. Other scholars argue that Paul is talking about the state of a man and a woman after the fall when Eve was placed under the authority of Adam (Gen. 3). This would also raise another theological question as to what effect redemption brought in the subordinate status of women caused by the fall.

Some scholars also argue that Paul was doing an exegesis of the two creation accounts in Gen. 1:26-27 and 2:7, 21-22. He therefore combined the different sources of creation stories from P source (Gen. 1- 2:4a) and JE source¹⁶ (Gen. 2:4b-25) and almost contradicts Genesis 1:27 where even the female is created in the image of God. Since the author's exegesis does not reflect the original passage, they therefore argue that it cannot offer enough evidence to keep woman in a subordinate state.

However, looking at this passage alongside other Pauline passages, we would be wrong to assume that he was ignorant of Genesis 1:26-27 where even the female is created in the image of God (cf. Rom 8:29, 2Cor 3:18). It is only likely therefore that Paul brings the creation order (1Cor 11:7-12) in his argument to support why women should wear veils and not for any other reason. Indeed he hastens to add that while it is true that woman comes from

¹⁶ For more details about these sources, see Laymon, Charles (ed.). 1971. *The interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon pp. 1-3.

man, it is also true that men come from women (1Cor 11:11-12). In this case for Paul, man is not independent of woman, neither is woman independent of man.

5.4.2 Corinthians 14: 34-35 and 1 Timothy 2: 11- 14

These passages forbid women at all from speaking during worship. Scholars have given different views about this prohibition.

Some scholars argue that 1 Cor 14:34-35 was addressing a particular situation where women interrupted the service by chatting (*lalien*) or asking questions as a result of their ignorance of the law (Hawthorne and Martin 1993:590). They therefore hold that Paul maintained order in worship by suggesting that such women could receive more instructions from their husbands at home because husbands were more educated.

However, many scholars view that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is an interpolation added by the same writer of 1 Timothy 2:11-12. They have given various reasons for their stance. The first observation is that these two passages contradict 1Cor 11:5 where women are portrayed as taking an active role in the church in prayer and prophecy under only one condition that their heads must be veiled.

Secondly, they argue that I Cor 14:34-35 does not make the passage flow (Conzelmann 1975:246). Furthermore many scholars observe that the verses appear at the end of the chapter in some important manuscripts, and are dependent on 1Timothy 2:11-12 (Gilmour 1962:684-692, Brown and Fitzmyer 1990:811-812, Fuller 1976:6). For these reasons, scholars argue that the passage is not authentically Pauline.

The other important factor is that Paul had women colleagues. In Romans 16:3-16, Paul commends many women colleagues such as Priscilla who is

often mentioned before her husband possibly because of her higher social status (Hawthorne and Martin 1993:589), Andronicus and Junia as apostles and also refers to Phoebe as *diakonos* (deacon\ deaconess). This term has ministerial connotations referring to somebody who had administrative responsibility. Elsewhere, he uses the term for his own apostolic ministry (ibid.:589, Fuller 1976). Other women who are mentioned are Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Tryphaene, Tryphosa and Persis (Rom 16:12). If these women were Paul's fellow workers, they like him were involved in public proclamation of the Gospel. Paul could not have therefore instructed women to be silent in the church.

Finally, it is worth noting that none of the passages that reflect women as subordinates is universally held to be Pauline. Scholars have recently discovered that there are some documents that were purported to have been written in the apostolic age and bearing an apostolic authorship but indeed they belong to a later date possibly between AD 70-105. Such documents are Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) and 1 Peter (Fuller 1976). However, this evidence is not conclusive. Later scholars like Keener (1993:605-606) argue that although the style of the pastoral letters differs from earlier Pauline epistles, it is not enough evidence to suggest a different author. The many personal allusions especially in 2 Timothy is a stronger argument that the epistle was written by Paul. Therefore, a further proof of the hypothesis that later canonical Pauline writings were not genuine is required.

Concerning 1 Timothy Gerald West's (1993:51-59) critical reading of 1 Timothy 2:11-14 creates a deeper understanding of this text. West has used the three hermeneutical models of critical reading of the Bible¹⁷. His 'behind of the text reading' affirms that the book is not authentically Pauline and was

¹⁷ These are; reading behind the text (which emphasizes the historical and sociological context), reading the text itself, and reading in front of the text (use of thematic and symbolic context).

in conformity to the dominant hierarchichal patterns of the Graeco- Roman patriarchal culture which was male dominated. The text is a male reading of Genesis 2:13-14. He states: I and 2 Timothy and Titus are widely accepted to have been written in the first century, or even the beginning of the second century, in the name of Paul (but not by Paul himself)...The central concern of 1 Timothy is to construct the church according to the and hierarchy of the patriarchal Graeco- Roman household..."(ibid. 52-56).

Secondly, his reading of the text itself reveals that the subject '1' (Vs 9-12) reflects a male speaking, not God: "This is not God speaking but a male human being" (ibid. 54). He continues to argue that verses 13-14 also reveal an inappropriate reading of Genesis 2:13-15 and Genesis 3. The writer of 1 Timothy for instance says that it is Eve who was deceived not Adam but Genesis 3:6-19 holds that both were deceived and both were responsible to God. 1 Timothy also states that Adam was created first not Eve, however, the Hebrew term used in Genesis 2:7 does not indicate that God created a male. The term used is 'the *ha-adam*', commonly translated 'the earth' or 'the earth creature' (feminist translation). This is a sexually undifferentiated creature (see 5.1) indicating that both male and female originated at the same time. West therefore translates Genesis 2:7 as: "And Yahweh God formed the creature of dust from the earth and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life and the earth creature became a living being" (ibid. 55).

Thirdly, West's infront of the text reading recognises that the dominant theme in the text is "the household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15). This theme should be taken in the light of the entire Biblical message. If the writer has thus silenced women in the church, this does not concur with the theme of 'discipleship' and 'ministry' which is dominant in the New Testament, where Jesus has called women into discipleship and ministry.

West's arguments thus indicate that 1Timothy 2:11-14 does not contain enough proof for the church that women are inferior to men especially when it is read alongside other biblical passages and also when the social context surrounding its time of writing is considered. He clearly states that "the writer of I Timothy's reading is shaped by the androcentric (male-centred) attitude of his context. Unfortunately, this writer's reading of Genesis 2-3 has become the dominant reading in the church. But we do not have to hear only the dominant (male) reading of the Bible; women readers will not be silent" (ibid. 56).

Along with other Pauline passages discussed above, we therefore argue that Paul does not restrict women from using their gifts in the church in any of his passages. It is rather the mis-interpretation of the Bible by the church that has led to such restrictions. This male –biased interpretation has been taken as the will of God for an African woman. Let us now see how the Church Fathers and other Jewish and non-Jewish writers interpreted the Old Testament views about a woman.

5.5 The place of a woman in the theology of the Church Fathers

Jewish attitude to women is broadly reflected in Jewish writings. Ben Sira the writer of Sirac for instance holds that a woman is inherently evil and should not be empowered (Sirac 42:12, 9:1-9). Philo had similar sentiments when he argued that a woman could not participate in public life because their freedom of movement always results in sexual excesses (cited in Wegner 1983:551-556). During the last quarter of the first century, Josephus made similar remarks (Kloppenborg and Hanegraaf 1995:46).

The attitude of the Church Fathers did not differ from the prevailing Jewish attitude to women. Tertullian for instance regarded women as the devil's gateway "you are the devil's gateway...How easily you destroyed man, the image of God, upon us, even the Son of God had to die" (cited in Daly

1973:44). Augustine regarded women as inferior to men claiming that they are not created in the image of God. Tavard (1973:115) informs us that in Augustine's view, "only the man is made in the image of God, for only he expresses in his body the power and superiority of God, the female body expressing on the contrary, passivity and inferiority...In her the good Christian ...likes what is human, loathes what is feminine".

Other non- Jewish writers also held similar views with the Old Testament views about women. Among these, Aristotle and John Chrysostom argued that subordination was inherent in the nature of a woman, it had nothing to do with the fall. Aristotle's scientific theories about women indicated that in females the deliberative element of the soul is "without authority" and that biologically, women are "maimed" (Clark 1979:39). According to John Chrysostom, both men and women share a common human form (*morphe*) and likeness (*homoiosis*) of the deity in that they are both able to imitate God's goodness. But despite their common character and likeness of the deity, "power rests with the male alone; ...the woman was reasonably subjected to the man...Male domination and female subjection appear to be natural" (cited in Clark 1979:6 cf. Hawthorne and Martin 1993:587, James 1999:108).

These and many other writings about women influenced future theology. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century for instance wrote, "a woman is a misbegotten male and nothing misbegotten or defective should have been in the first production of things. Therefore, woman should not have been made at first production of things" (James 1999:109, cf. Tavard 1973:213). As late as 1976, Pope Paul VI through the influence of the same theology declared that women could not be ordained because only men bear the full image of Christ (cited in Mwaura 1997:30). This theology further influenced the church of England and consequently the western missionary founded churches in Africa such as the Anglican Church as discussed in chapter 3.

5.6 The relevance of the biblical evidence for our study

From our evaluation of the status of a Gikuyu woman in Kirinyaga diocese, we observed that although the church has made remarkable efforts to involve both lay and ordained women in various ministries in the church, so far it has not been able to eradicate factors that keep women in a state of subservience. These factors originate from the patriarchal culture as well as from Christian tradition, which regard women as inferior to men. However, from our Bible exegesis, we have gathered that humanity is made up of both male and female. None is inferior to the other because both are made from the same material and both are created in the image of God. Jesus affirmed these qualities in humanity when he restored their dignity by healing, forgiving sins, enabling them to be the first witnesses of his resurrection, making them heirs of the Kingdom of God and allowing them to touch him. Paul also though falsely accused of being a male chauvinist, emphasises that in Christ, both men and women are equal and they are dependent upon each other (Gal. 3:28, 1Cor.11:11-12).

In the light of this biblical evidence, we therefore argue that there is no biblical support whatsoever that women are inferior to men. This attitude rather comes from the patriarchal culture. It is this culture which has for instance constructed gender roles that have kept women in a state of subservience in the society and continued in the church. It is also patriarchal culture that has defined women only in terms of their reproductive roles hence robbing them of their full potential by confining them to the domestic domain. On the contrary the biblical view following the above interpretation is that both men and women are equal before God. We therefore concur with Musimbi Kanyoro (1996:151) that “there cannot be full partnership unless the churches re-evaluate and change the traditions and structures which tend to relegate women to the home, and to certain tasks considered to be women’s work”. Human cultures should be subject to the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Denigration of the identity of an African Christian woman has also been caused by mis-interpretation of the Bible. We have for instance cited some of the writings of the early Church Fathers whose theology greatly influenced the role and status of women from the third century through to the middle ages. It also influenced the Church of England and consequently the mission founded churches in Africa. Thus, as stated in chapter 3, women were confined to domestic roles and could not take any leadership roles in the church. Augustine's view on the nature of women that women did not bear the image of God and that they were inferior to men has been very detrimental to the church for a long time. These views still continue to influence Christian theology particularly in the Anglican and Roman Catholic tradition.

A critical evaluation in the light of our Biblical evidence reveals that the Church Fathers misinterpreted the second story of creation, stating that a woman was inferior to a man because she was created from man and she was created second. This view has been disapproved by our exegesis of creation stories. In response to the same, feminist theologians such as Oduyoye (1994:40) argue that "when we apply the Christian theology of creation in a way that diminishes the humanity of women, and makes men the norm of human beings or vice versa, that is sexism, we sin against God". Ruether (1983:114-115) also observes that "the fullness of redeemed humanity, as image of God, is something only partially disclosed under the conditions of history". She wonders whether Christology has been a model of redemptive personhood for women. Kanyoro (1996:152) on the other hand calls the church to repent and be "renewed in the image of man and woman –as Christ meant it to be".

The theology of the Church Fathers was also based on a misunderstanding of the story of the fall. They held Eve and consequently all women responsible for all evil in the world. However, biblical evidence holds both Adam and

Eve responsible. In her response to the prevailing view that women suffer subjection as a divine punishment for the sin of disobedience that Eve committed, Mary Daly (1973:44-68) argues that Eve and all women should be acquitted from this alleged sin which results from metamorphosing males' judgement into God's judgement. Women should be 'exorcised' from their self-hate that results from internalising the blame and guilt engendered by the myth. Saying no to such denigration is a woman's righteous rejection of injustices .

The church should therefore be liberated from all forms of inculcation of sexism created by wrong Bible interpretation. With their current theological training and ordination experiences, both men and women should initiate this liberation by being resources of feminist perspectives of interpretation of the Bible.

The church should read the Bible critically, applying all exegetical and hermeneutical approaches available and especially in regard to the passages that have been used to treat women as non-entities in the church. Eve's contribution to the fall for instance should not continue to define the identity of African Christian women in the church for all time. Furthermore, though sharing in the origin of death, Eve is the source of all life through her seed, Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, who is born of a woman. Eve's figure therefore provides insights of women liberation rather than subjugation.

Finally, theology is always contextual. The Bible should be taken in its context. Jewish cultural attitudes to women, which shaped their theology should not therefore continue to define the identity of an African Christian woman in the 21st century. Since the church in Africa is in the midst of social change where women have proved to have equal potential with men, the church should develop a contextual theology under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that allows women to participate fully in the service of their Creator.

5.7 Summary and Conclusion

Our search for a biblical evidence of the meaning of the identity of an African Christian woman has revealed that there is no biblical evidence that subordination of women is a fundamental biblical principle. Women's subordination stems from human disorder as well as from the development of human societies under patriarchy, leading to misinterpretation of some passages in regard to women.

In the two creation stories, humanity shares the same nature but only differs in sex, indicating that no sex is inferior to the other. Both equally share in creation in the image of God. In the New Testament, Jesus restored the dignity of women and even included them in the circle of discipleship. Paul does not regard women as inferior either. 1Corinthians 11:11 and Galatians 3:28 overshadow all the other passages that suppress women because they emphasise equality and interdependence between the sexes, putting women back to their place in creation.

The Bible itself is therefore liberative and should be used by the church to define the identity of an African Christian woman.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study has sought to respond to the problem posed in chapter 1 as follows; “to what extent has the encounter between the church and Gikuyu culture developed the identity of a Gikuyu woman?”.

We have responded to this question by use of both analytical and descriptive methods. The study has been analytical in the sense that we have analysed both oral and documentary evidence to evaluate how far ACK has developed the identity of a Gikuyu woman, by liberating her from all cultural and theological attitudes that continually deny her full humanity.

The study has been descriptive because we have attempted to describe the place of a woman in Gikuyu traditional society, her place in the era of missionary Christianity and colonialism and also in the current ACK diocese of Kirinyaga. We have also examined selected biblical passages to find out what status is accorded to women in the Bible.

In this study, a number of hypotheses were put to test and conclusions reached. The first assumption was that the identity of a woman cannot be fruitfully developed in isolation from, and in opposition to that of a man. This has been affirmed by the study in that the identity of women has not been developed fully because the church to a great extent has not liberated men from the patriarchal dictates. This is reflected by the fact that men still dominate the church hierarchy while women are underrepresented or even unrepresented in the most important decision making organs of the church.

Furthermore, even if a woman may hold the highest position in the church, at home she is subject to her husband who may not recognise her important

status and responsibilities and indeed may even suppress the roles by not giving her an opportunity, moral and any other support to enable her to attend to duties outside the home. Thus several women have withdrawn from holding any position in the church. Therefore the liberation of women can only be fruitful in a patriarchal culture if men are conscientized about the oppressive attitudes of patriarchy towards women. As long as women struggle alone and on the periphery, not much can be achieved.

Our second hypothesis is that women have an important part to play in developing their own identity. This has been proved by the study in that women themselves have broken cultural barriers in regard to women leadership by courageously joining the roles that have for a long time been associated with men, in particular ordination to priesthood. However, a gender approach needs to be mainstreamed in church policies, programmes and implementations to enable both ordained and lay women to build confidence and self esteem by eliminating all forms of gender stereotyping.

The third hypothesis is that the ACK diocese of Kirinyaga has not interacted with culture fully to develop the identity of a Gikuyu woman. Our findings in the above two assumptions are also applicable here, namely that the church has not fully eradicated from the minds of men and women, the cultural attitudes that have for a long time defined the place of a woman. We have also found that women's roles are still confined to reproductive activities in the home. Women today are still the homemakers in spite of education, status or employment outside the home. A woman's worth is still judged by her marital status and so unmarried women of past marriageable age are still despised. The church should therefore be a liberating force for women.

The fourth hypothesis is that the church has potential to reject, select and transform patriarchal conditions of a woman in order to develop her identity.

We have indicated that the church has been able to reject some of the cultural attitudes that defy the identity of a woman such as female genital mutilation and some of the beliefs that keep women from leadership positions. The church has also rejected the traditional mentality that female education is useless, by taking an active role in educating both men and women in primary and secondary schools.

However, on the other hand, although the church has the potential to assimilate, select and transform some customs, it sometimes falls short of the will to do it. We have for instance seen how missionary Christianity brought ambiguous consequences among Africans by condemning African traditional values as demonic. Such an attitude leaves no room for assimilation, selection or transformation of these values so that they can be incorporated into Christianity. As a result, Christians are left in search of what Allison Howell has described as ‘a search for key to conduct’ (Howell 1997:287-292). This is a search for guidance of behaviour in certain situations because when Christianity condemned Gikuyu customs, it gave nothing concrete as a replacement. Christians therefore keep asking a lot of ‘what do I do?’ questions when faced with situations that Christianity fails to address. In this case, the Gospel should be contextualised by incorporating compatible elements of African culture. This leads us to our next hypothesis.

Our last hypothesis is that traditional Gikuyu society has something to offer to the church in regard to the development of the identity of a Gikuyu woman. Our analysis of the traditional roles of men and women reveals that family care was a joint venture between husband and wife. This however has been lost in the Christian era where many women have been left alone by their absent husbands to care and provide for the family. Men should be challenged to recover their lost glory in family care.

Another traditional value was the agricultural autonomy that was accorded to women. We have observed that although today education has enabled married women to participate in wage labour and other economic activities, in most cases women use their own earnings only with the approval of their husbands or secretly. This is a denial of their rights, which the church should eradicate by restoring the traditional economic autonomy of married women.

Another important traditional aspect that contributed to maintenance of the dignity of women was the use of some taboos. Although not all taboos can be useful today, those that regulated codes of conduct can enrich Christianity. If these taboos are given a Christian meaning, their restrictions can help curb the increasing rate of crime, divorce and separation, sexually transmitted diseases and especially the killer HIV\ AIDS and many other social evils that have been caused by abolition of such taboos. Examples of such helpful taboos are: "A woman who has intercourse with another man when her husband is away diminishes his vital power and wishes him ill-luck, he cannot prosper", "A woman should not sleep with a man in the bush" (Wamue 1996:172). Although Wamue is right in indicating that such taboos showed the negative view that the Gikuyu society had on women in that they only affected "the woman's sexual behaviour, not a man's" (ibid.:173), yet they cannot be dismissed as far as upholding the dignity of a Gikuyu woman is concerned.

We therefore concur with several African scholars who are affirming that there are affinities between primal culture and Christianity. Mbiti for example sees the African heritage as constituting a preparation for the gospel (Bediako 1992:312-322), Tutu expresses that "no positive religion...has been able to start with a tabula rasa...the new system must be in contact along the line with the old ideas and practices which it finds in possession (Tutu 1987:46-48), Fashole Luke holds that "conversion to Christianity must be coupled with cultural continuity (cited in Bediako 1992:427-428) and

Kenneth Cragg describes conversion to Christianity as “a unity of self in which ones past is genuinely integrated into present commitment (cited in Bediako 1992:4).

However continuation of some of the so called patriarchal ‘values’ to Christianity in regard to women has caused the persistent problem of the identity of an African Christian woman. Our view is therefore that when the Gospel meets with culture, there must also be a conscious rejection of some cultural elements, which hinder the development of a Christian identity whether male or female.

It is for this reason that Jesus Christ rejected the Jewish traditional place of a woman and transformed it by giving women dignity as full human beings. The church has therefore to emulate Jesus by confronting and abandoning cultural practices and attitudes that are not compatible with the words of Jesus in John 10: 10 (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”) and the words of St. Paul in Galatians 3:28 (“...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”).

In this study therefore, a number of issues have been discussed and observations made. First, our study has revealed that the subordination of a Gikuyu woman is deeply rooted in patriarchal system of Gikuyu society. In chapter 2, we saw that the patriarchal social system has been structured in a way that clearly defines the place and worth of a woman . The identity of a woman has to a great extent been defined in terms of her role as a wife and a mother. These roles have been used to judge her potential, hence she has been relegated to the domestic arena. These undervalued social roles, constructed by men in their favour have been legitimised through prescriptions, prohibitions, obligations and taboos (see Diagne and Ossebi 1996:40). Gender roles therefore did not allow the woman to participate in

public life or own property in spite of her economic autonomy in the traditional society.

In chapter three, we have observed that western missionary patriarchal culture and church traditions that had been greatly influenced by male biased interpretations of the Bible, for a long time shaped the role and status of women in the church. Women were kept from holding important decision-making positions. Therefore, although the place of women has changed tremendously in Kirinyaga diocese (chapter 4), the traditional feminine roles, which were also the main roles of women in the Anglican missionary churches have continued to shape the roles of women in the church. Leadership in the church is largely dominated by men. Women still rely so much on men for decision making both in the church and at home.

Violence against women also remains an issue of concern. During this year's (2000) women's day celebrations, it was observed that, "...Ending violence against women in our families, communities and societies remains the greatest challenge facing humanity on the eye of the 21st century (*Daily Nation*, March 8, 2000:25). This is a challenge to the church too.

In chapter 5, we have sought the meaning of the identity of a Christian woman from the Bible. We have seen that there is no biblical evidence that a woman is inferior to a man. In both the Old and the New Testament, men and women are regarded as equal, complementary, and hence dependent on each other. The writings of the Jews and other scholars who claim that women are inferior to men are therefore based on a male biased interpretation of the Bible, influenced by patriarchal attitudes to women. We have argued that the church should liberate women from such attitudes.

What then is the identity of an African Christian woman?. A man or a woman's self-identity and self-worth does not begin with their roles and

positions but rather with the recognition of their own value in God's eyes as people created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-29). The most important search for identity therefore becomes a continued search of how well one reflects the image of Christ. Since the image of Christ excludes all forms of oppression by giving liberty, a man should seek liberation from his state of domination, and deal with it as a sin since it denies full humanity to his human partner. Likewise, a woman should seek her own liberation from all that contradicts the image of Christ in her including acceptance of her subordinate state. The church has a great role to play in bringing about this liberation because it claims to preach liberation from all types of oppression. Only then will it be a community set free by Jesus.

Liberation from sin in both men and women, consequently brings about the identity of an African Christian woman. This is a state of liberation from all unjustifiable situations that deny, diminish, or distort full humanity of women. This liberation then accords women fullness of life in Jesus Christ, characterised by such Christian values as righteousness, empowerment, human dignity and all other forms of justice.

6.2 Suggestions for further study

A comprehensive and definitive evaluation and presentation of all dimensions of the endeavour of the church to develop the identity of a Christian woman is beyond the scope of our study and is a task that remains to be undertaken in the near future. There are issues that have been covered only partially while others have not been mentioned at all in the study. There is need therefore to do further investigation in the following areas:

1. A further evaluation of aspects of Gikuyu culture that either enhance or deter the development of the identity a Gikuyu woman.
2. The role of the church in development of women in health and agriculture.

3. The role of the church in the political development of women. There may be some political issues affecting Christians in this era of multi-party politics in Kenya.
4. An evaluation of the impact of all other ACK dioceses on the development of the identity of Christian women and especially in regard to their ordination to the ministerial priesthood.
5. Doing theology from a woman's perspective. This should include doing further hermeneutics in culture and scriptures since they have been used to support women's marginalisation.

6.3 Recommendations

1. ACK diocese of Kirinyaga needs to encourage more women who feel called to the ministry to apply for ordination training. This will strike gender balance in the ordained ministry.
2. More ordained women who qualify should be encouraged and supported by the church to go for further studies. This will equalise the number of men and women with higher degrees in the diocese.
3. Ordained women should lead a life worth their calling by being examples of believers in conduct so that their ministry may not be despised (1 Tim. 4: 12, 16).
4. More ordained women who qualify should be included among the senior clergy so that the decisions made are gender balanced.
5. The Church Army Sisters who have the call for ordination should be given the necessary assistance by the church to enable them to be ordained.
6. More lay women should be encouraged to join decision-making bodies in the congregations, deaneries, archdeaconries and in the diocesan synod. Since women are the majority in the church, they stand a better chance to identify their needs and speak for themselves.

7. The church should be actively involved in enabling women to improve their self-image and to raise expectations of themselves beyond their biological functions, which have continually been used to define them.
8. The Mothers' Union should revise its aims and constitution in order to accommodate all categories of women in the church. Alternatively, another organisation should be formed in the church under a different name to care for the women who do not meet the requirements of a 'Mothers' Union' member.
9. The church should take an active role in challenging men to develop the identity of women.
10. The church should eradicate all forms of violence against women including wife battering, rape and sexual abuse in order to develop their Christian identity.
11. Church structures should be egalitarian not hierarchical so that both men and women may have equal access to positions of leadership.
12. The church should be more charismatic and dynamic in order to allow women to reclaim their traditional religious roles of healing and prophecy.
13. Since the ministry of the church is broad and is not confined to ordination, women should be encouraged to develop their identity by exercising priesthood of all believers, through tireless offering of their spiritual gifts to the service of God.

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APPENDICES

(I) KEY INFORMANTS

Name interview	Date of interview	Place of
(1) Agnes Ndambiri (Mrs.)	13\5\1999	Kathiriku
(2) Agnes Thiitu (Mrs.)	13\5\1999	Kathiriku
(3) Beth Ndegwa (Rev.)	14\5\1999	Kutus
(4) Catherine Thaara (Sister)	14\2\2000	Nairobi
(5) Charity Wagatu (Mrs.)	13\5\1999	Kathiriku
(6) Daniel Munene (Bishop)	1\2\2000	Kutus
(7) David Gichira (Edu. Sec.)	2\11\1999	Kutus
(8) David Gitari (Archbishop)	1\ 11\1999	Difathas
(9) David Wachira (Rev.)	1\2\2000	Kutus
(10) Davis Nyaga (Mr.)	31\10\1999	Kiamwathi
(11) Dionisio Njeru (Mr.)	31\1\2000	Embu
(12) Edith Njiri (Rev.)	2\11\1999	Kutus
(13) Faith Wanjiku (m/s)	27\7\1999	Kabare
(14) Fedis Wambugi (m/s)	31\1\2000	Embu
(15) Hannah Wanja (Mrs.)	31\1\2000	Embu
(16) Jackson Njagi (Mr.)	31\10\1999	Kiamwathi
(17) Jackson Karere (Mr.)	17\11\1999	Kabare
(18) James Kariuki (Mr.)	17\11\1999	Kagumo
(19) Jane Muringi (Rev.)	4\6\1999	Embu
(20) Jane Nyawira (M/s)	20\7\1999	Kianguenyi
(21) Jane Kuthii (Mrs.)	12\7\1999	Ngiriambu
(22) Janeffer Micere (M/s)	12\6\1999	Riagiceru
(23) Janet Ruita (MU sec.)	3\11\1999	Kutus
(24) Jean Munene (Principal)	27\7\1999	Kabare
(25) John Karani (Rev.)	12\7\1999	Ngiriambu

(26)	John Mararo (Adm. Secretary)	1\2\2000	Kutus
(27)	Johnstone Njanja (Mr.)	31\10\1999	Kiamwathi
(28)	Moses Njoroge (Principal)	1\2\2000	Kabare
(29)	Julius Kiobe (Mr.)	31\10\1999	Kiamwathi
(30)	Naomi Wangiri (Mrs)	30\1\2000	Embu
(31)	Pamela Wilding (Rev.)	31\10\1999	Kabare
(32)	Pauline Njeri (Mrs.)	12\7\1999	Ngiriambu
(33)	Peris Kanyua (Mrs.)	12\7\1999	Ngiriambu
(34)	RoseNancy Mwaniki (Mrs.)	3\11\1999	Rukenya
(35)	Rose Wamai (Mrs.)	31\1\2000	Embu
(36)	Samuel Murimi (Rev.)	6\5\1999	Gatunguru
(37)	Stella Muringo(Rev.)	2\11\1999	Kutus
(38)	Susan Kariuki (sister)	2\11\1999	Kutus
(39)	Virginia Karani (Mrs.)	12\7\1999	Ngiriambu
(40)	Winfred Munene (Rev.)	11\11\1999	Mutuma

(11) SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**A. Personal Details**

Name

Age

Highest level of education attained (highest class\ course attended)

B. Questions on the role of lay women in the Church

1. How have women been involved in the Church life in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga?
2. Enumerate the roles of men in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga.
3. Are there any duties that are reserved for either male or female members? Why?
4. Do you think the roles listed for question 3 should be performed entirely by the gender undermentioned?
5. Do the activities women perform in the Church give them status in the church, at home and in the society?. If so how?
6. What changes would you like to suggest about the roles of women in the church?.

C. Questions on ordination of women

7. In your own view, should women be ordained to priesthood? Explain.
8. What roles and status do ordained women hold in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga?.
9. What roles and status do ordained men hold in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga?.
10. Are these roles and status gender balanced? Explain.
11. From your own assessment, how do ordained women perceive their roles, do they feel as though they are doing a man's job?.
12. Describe your own views about the ministry of ordained women.
13. What changes would you suggest so far as decision-making in ACK diocese of Kirinyaga is concerned.

D. Questions for the ordained women

14. What made you become a woman clergy?.
15. What were the requirements for becoming a woman clergy?.
16. Have you encountered any obstacles in your ministry as a woman clergy?. If so were these obstacles in any way influenced by;
 - (a) Gikuyu traditional beliefs?
 - (b) Christian tradition or theology?
 - (c) Any other? Give details.
17. Have these problems been solved?.
18. Do men clergy regard you as equals?.
19. Does your position as a woman clergy give you status in the church, at home and in the society. Explain.
20. How do you perceive your role as a woman clergy? Do you feel as though you are doing a man's job? Explain.
21. What more should the church do to uplift the status of the ordained women?.

E. Questions for MU

22. When did you join the MU and why?.
23. What qualities are considered when joining the MU?.
24. What is the role of the MU in the church?
25. Does their role in the church give them status in the church, at home and in the society?. Explain.
26. What changes would you like to suggest in the MU to help give women full status in the above sectors.
27. How does the MU respond to the issues of
 - (a) Single unmarried mothers?
 - (b) Widowhood
 - (c) Barren women
 - (d) Other women who do not qualify to be MU members?
 - (e) Do you consider it adequate? Explain.

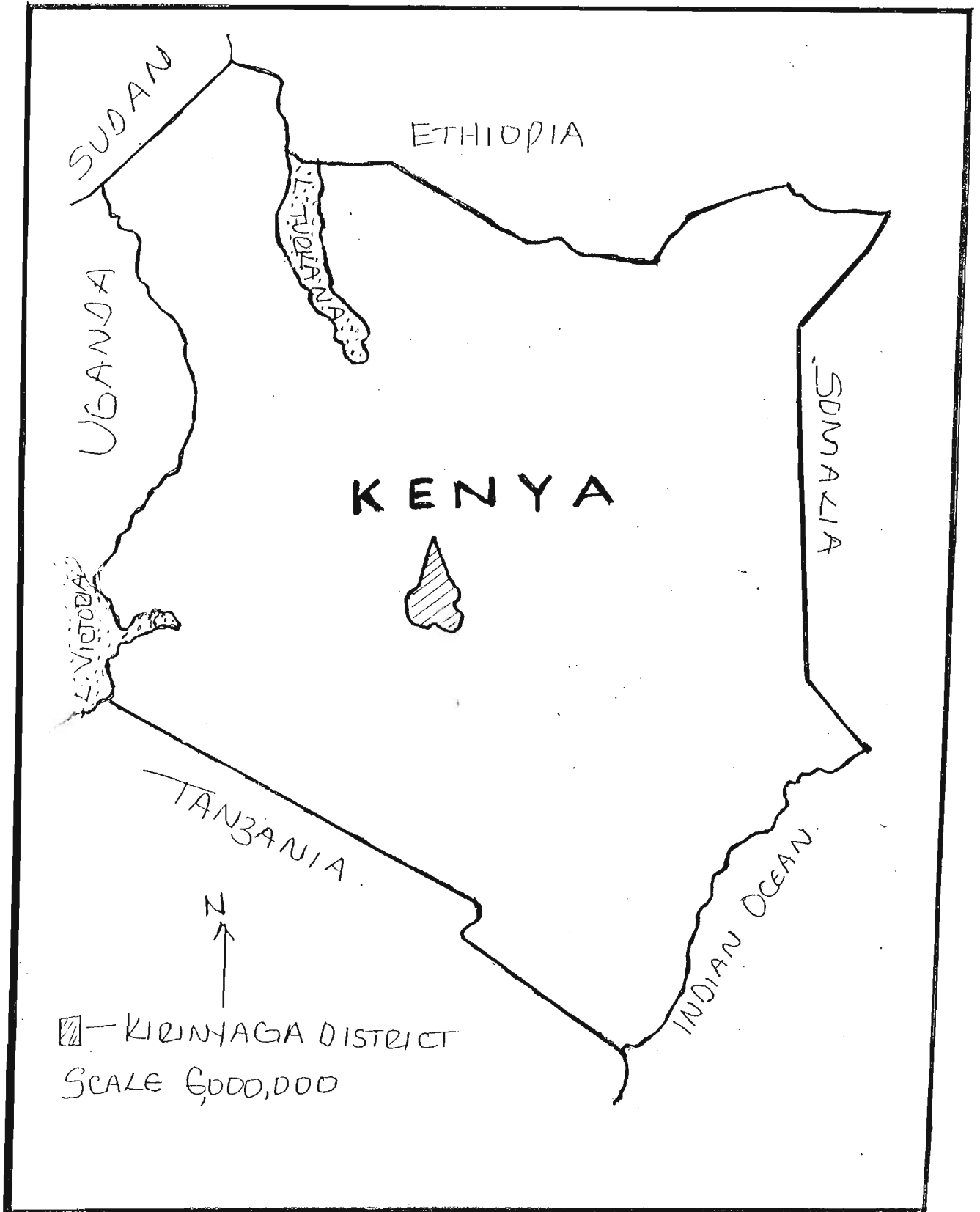


FIG 1. LOCATION MAP OF KIRINYAGA DISTRICT

DIOCESE OF KIRINYAGA



NYERI

EMBU

KIRINYAGA

GIGHUGU

Kerugoya
KERUGOYA
- KUTUS
Baricho

Kianyaga

Embu

Kutus

NDIA

Kagio

Saga a

MWEA

MURANG'A

FIG 2

